

FEBRUARY 2023 NEWSLETTER

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Our new Membership year starts on 1st April 2023 and so it is time to renew your membership. Our preferred methods of paying your Membership fee is by Bank Transfer or by Standing Order. We know it can be difficult for members who do not do online banking, but processing cheques is becoming more complicated for our Treasurer so if you can use either of these two methods, it would help us tremendously.

Renewal details can be found at the end of this newsletter, together with a Standing Order form. We will accept cheques at our Monthly Meeting in March but cannot take cash. Any queries, do contact Amanda Lowe, our Membership Secretary on **01268 784792** or email: **amandalowe@rayleighu3a.co.uk**

Thank you so much in anticipation of your co-operation!

FUTURE MONTHLY SPEAKERS

WEDS 1st MARCH 2023

Our Speaker at the March meeting will be John Farling. His talk will be titled 'To Catch a Thief' and will be the memoirs, experiences and amusing stories of a Store Detective.



WEDS 5th APRIL 2023

Our Speaker at the April meeting will be a returning favourite — Charlie Haylock. He will be speaking on how different dialects have developed in spoken English.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH at SAXON HALL

6th December 2022

Eighty members arrived at Saxon Hall, looking forward to an enjoyable get-together and we were not disappointed! The venue looked festive, the food was delicious, the drinks flowed, the crackers were pulled and we played table games whilst eating chocolates at the end of the meal.

Our thanks must go to the Saxon Hall staff who were as professional as always.

Here are a couple of photographs taken from the day, and the rest will be added to the Rayleigh u3a website for you to see.



Our thanks go to **Debbie Bamber and Wendy Edwards** for arranging the event which we hope to repeat in December 2023!

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP 2

Our last meeting of the year was a social get-together, hosted by Jackie.

We all brought contributions: food (a lot was homemade) and non-alcoholic mulled wine. We made plans for our meetings in 2023. We had a lot of fun and are looking forward to our next meeting in February.



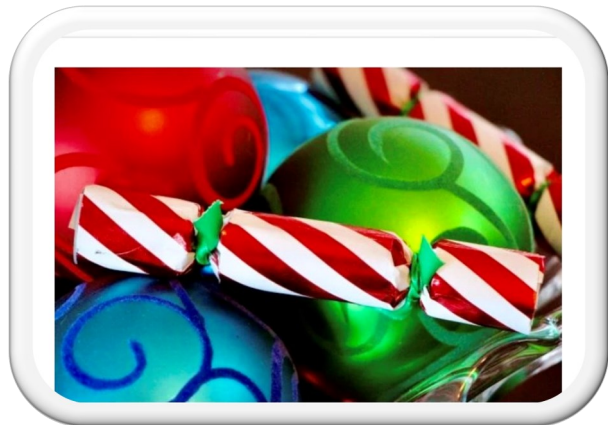
Amanda Gordon has been a member of the above group for a few years and has recently had a couple of winning photos published on the u3a online website (www.u3a.org.uk)

This is a rolling national photography project and fun to enter especially if you manage to take a winning photo. See Amanda's photos and captions below.

It's a Cracker!!

Christmas crackers are a festive tradition in my family and have certainly delighted my children over the years.

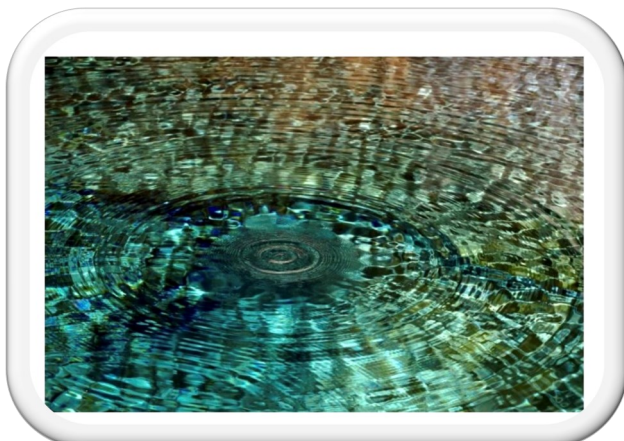
First made in about 1850 by London sweetmaker Tom Smith: he called them 'Bangs of Expectations' and rightly so.



Ripples

The photo shows water droplets making ripples in the lake inside the crystal caves in Grotto Bay, Bermuda.

We were visiting these spectacular caves as part of a special birthday celebration holiday. Absolutely beautiful and mesmerising.



STROLLING GROUP

Members visited the pier for a second time — some walked to and from the pier head and others travelled by train on the outward journey and walked on the return journey. All enjoyed the sun and a snack/lunch at Tomassi after the stroll. Much chatting too!



Photos below are some images (of designs on the backs of seats) that were thought to show great craftsmanship and in keeping with the surroundings.



SERENDIPITY 6 VISIT THE BIG STINK

The Great Stink was an event in London in July & August 1858 during a heatwave and the falling level of the river Thames caused by the aging and inadequate sewer system that emptied directly into the river.



The Metropolitan Commission of Sewers was set up to deal with the problem and Joseph Bazalgette was appointed as its head and drew up plans for a new radical sewerage system for the city. This sewerage system is still in operation today.

Opened in 1865 by Albert Edward the Prince of Wales, the Crossness Pumping Station is a beautiful and magnificent example of Victorian engineering and architecture.

Serendipity 6 had a guided tour around the building by Petra Cox who brought the place alive with her interesting and informative commentary. We watched an introductory slide show and then wandered around this fascinating building, hearing all about its history.

Four rotative beam engines built by James Watt & Company were used to pump London's sewerage into a reservoir before being discharged into the River Thames on ebbing tides.

The Crossness Engines Trust, a registered charity, was formed in 1987 to preserve the now listed buildings and a volunteer workforce continues the enormous task of further restoration to bring them back to their former glory. If any other Rayleigh u3a groups are interested in a visit, please look at the website www.crossness.org.uk



FESTIVE CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Serendipity 6 and **Visiting Interesting Places in Essex** Groups enjoyed a festive lunch at The Royal Oak. They had a surprise visit from Father Christmas and one of his helpers!



Thank you to everyone who contributed to this months Newsletter! It's so good to see what everyone is up to and what they are enjoying with u3a.

Do share your Group news with us by sending in photos and/or articles for the next Newsletter to:

Debbie Bamber
debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk
by closing date of 15th March 2023

ADVANCE NOTICE

The Sixteenth Annual General Meeting of the Rayleigh u3a

will take place on **Wednesday 3rd May 2023**

commencing at 2.00pm followed by our Speaker @ 2.30pm

A copy of the Draft Minutes of the AGM 2022 will be displayed on the Noticeboard at the March & April Meetings, will be emailed/posted to members (if requested) and will also be available to view on the Rayleigh u3a website.

We have vacancies for:

**Educational Events Coordinator
Membership Secretary
Newsletter Editor
General Committee Members**

**For more information, please contact the Secretary,
Jane Reeve—details below.**

**Nomination Forms will be available at the March & April
Members Meetings, from the website and can be emailed or
posted (if requested).**

**Completed forms must be returned to the Secretary,
by Wednesday 12th April 2023.**

**Any motions which you would like to raise at the AGM,
will need a Proposer and Seconder, and should also be
submitted to the Secretary by 12th April 2023.**

**Jane can be contacted on 07931 584140 or
janereeve@rayleighu3a.co.uk**

Secretarys' News

We held our January meeting back in the Mill Hall which seemed to be well received and certainly gives us more space. The Equipment Team ran a sound check prior to the meeting to ensure the sound system would work well. Thanks to Ray Lowe, Laurie Yarham, Ray Osborne, Bob Deeley and Jim Whitehouse for their hard work - without them our meetings would not run so smoothly. Val Foley has an interesting programme of speakers arranged for the coming year – our thanks to Val for her work coordinating the speakers.

We are now looking forward to our AGM in May. Please come forward if you can help us to run your u3a in any way. We need helpers at meetings, Committee members and Group Leaders. Please email me on janereeve@rayleighu3a.co.uk if you can offer your support or would like to know more about any aspect of the u3a.

My u3a Journey by Amanda Lowe

I joined Rayleigh U3A over 7 years ago, at the age of 62. I had just wound down a self-employed business as a mobile beautician and makeup artist. A friend had told me about u3a and I went along with her to a meeting. I joined and my life changed.

My first group activity was Digital Photography with June and Jackie. They made me feel very welcome. Armed with my little camera, we met once a month, amongst nature and always ended with a coffee and chat at a tearoom. We shared our photos, and I learned something from everyone - some who are novices like me.

I have always loved drawing and painting, but I was always too busy to take it up. As Rayleigh U3A did not have an art group, it was suggested that I start my own. I was a bit apprehensive as I did not have much knowledge to share. I advertised in the U3A newsletter for anyone interested and the first meeting was well supported by about 10 members. I explained that I am not a teacher but together we could learn from each other. My group has grown to 20 members. We have wonderful mornings together, not just about art but getting together and meeting new friends.

My next role, as you know me, is as Membership Secretary. When approached I was concerned but I agreed to give it a go with the wonderful support of the Committee. How wrong was I! I have now managed the role for 5 years. My confidence has grown. I get to speak to members every meeting and communicate also by phone and email. I am on the Committee and we have all become friends. Without our Volunteers, our u3a would not continue.

I am not Wonder Woman, but I want to get the message over that if I can come out of my shell and build confidence, so can you. Rayleigh u3a depends on the involvement of its members to succeed. Without your support we would not be able to hold our monthly meetings, Theatre trips and outings or Groups for activities and interests. If you can please offer to be a Group Coordinator, join the Committee or give your support as a volunteer in various roles such as • Technical team • Meet and Greet • Equipment set up and transportation • Selling tickets - Please contact me or any Committee member today or by email.

Thank you!

DRIVING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

A short Story by Sue Cairns

Matt pushed his way through the rowdy crowd of office workers, straining to hear his mother's voice on his mobile through the blare of Christmas music. "Hold on Mum. I can't hear you. I'll call you back". It was raining outside so he sheltered in the doorway of the pub and reached for his phone. He knew what she wanted, he'd been avoiding her calls all week. His mind was racing, struggling to soften the words of his refusal.

After leaving university, five years before, Matt had hardly been home. He loved his life in the bustling city. His job was going well and, with his latest bonus, he'd just bought himself a little car. Nothing fancy, but he wanted to impress Celia, the girl he'd been seeing for quite a while. He was hoping to ask her a very important question. "Hi Mum, how are you? How's Dad? Sorry I haven't rung, work has been manic".

She wanted him to go home for Christmas. Dad wasn't too well. He hadn't been back for the past two Christmases and the disappointment in her voice as he made his excuses, made him feel so guilty. He had intended to go home this year but Celia had said that her folks had invited him to spend the holiday with them and he'd found himself agreeing to drive her there on Christmas Eve.

"Sorry again, Mum. I'll definitely be down soon. I want you to meet Celia and show off my new car. Give my love to Dad." He slipped the phone back into his pocket and went back into the pub, searching for Celia amongst the crowd. Their eyes met as Celia hastily smoothed down her dress, pushing Simon away.

"Matty, Darling! Look, mistletoe!" And she leant into him for a kiss. "What time are you picking me up tomorrow? I can't wait to see your new car. Mummy is expecting us in time for afternoon tea. Did you manage to get the cigars for Daddy?"

Matt nodded. He'd been shocked at the price he'd paid for the box of cigars. Together with the expensive perfume for Celia and her mother, he'd had to cut back on the gifts for his own family. He hoped the garden centre voucher and flowers he'd hastily ordered, arrived in time. He earned a good salary but taking Celia to the clubs and restaurants that she liked was expensive.

The next day Celia looked doubtfully at the car as Matt loaded her cases into the boot. "What is it? Did you say a Fiat, Matt? It's a bit, erm, smallish. I hope it won't break down, it's quite old". Matt tried to smile through his gritted teeth. He'd been so proud of his car, and it was only five years old for heavens sake! Not a relic!

It had started to snow as they drove through the Surrey countryside. The house looked enormous as they made their way up the long drive towards it. Celia rushed through the huge oak entrance door, leaving Matt to haul in the mountain of luggage.

He stood awkwardly in the hall, not sure where to go and looked up when a tall man came down the grand staircase. "Hello old chap. Mark, isn't it?"

"It's Matt, actually".

Celia's probably in the drawing room, Mark. Follow me. Is that your old jalopy out there?" Celia squealed with delight when they entered the drawing room. "Jonty! How wonderful! Are you here for the hols?" She threw herself into his arms. "Yes, old dear. Your mater invited me when she heard that you were coming home. It was good of old Mark to drive you down."

"Matt!" muttered Matt from the doorway.

Celia's mother greeted Matt graciously and rang the bell for afternoon tea to be brought in. He made polite conversation whilst trying to balance a cup and saucer plus a plate of dainty sandwiches on his lap. Celia and Jonty were huddled together on the sofa, shrieking with laughter at some private joke.

It was a relief when Celia said that they should be getting ready for dinner. She showed him to his room, shaking her head when he pulled her inside. Single rooms? But they were practically living together. She said that he should come back down to the drawing room at 7.00 for cocktails.

Matt dressed carefully in his best suit. He wanted to impress Celia's parents. It was a nasty surprise to find that the men were all dressed in dinner suits, the ladies in cocktail dresses. "What on earth are you wearing, Matt? Where's your dinner jacket?" Celia hissed at him. Jonty, resplendent in an immaculate dinner suit and a red bow tie, handed him a glass of vivid coloured liquid. "Down the hatch, Mark old bean. You look like you need a drink!".

A well built, distinguished looking man rose from his armchair and looked at Matt with a frown. "Is this your chap, Celia?" Celia replied "Well, this is Matt, Daddy. He drove me down".

"Oh so that's YOUR car. Move it round the back, like a good chap. Jonty's parents are joining us and I want it out of sight."

Jonty's parents arrived carrying exquisitely wrapped gifts which they put underneath the huge Christmas tree, thankfully hiding Matt's clumsily wrapped parcels. They shook hands (just finger tips) when Jonty introduced them to 'Mark' who kindly drove Celia down.

The meal dragged on. Course after course of rich food. Glass after glass of wine. Brandy and cigars after dinner. Matt's head was whirling. His stomach was churning but he managed to get as far as the doorway before he was violently sick. The silence was deafening until Jonty remarked that poor old Mark should go and sleep it off. They would see him again at breakfast before going to church.

Matt opened his bedroom window to get some fresh air. He was mortified, completely out of his depth. He had no idea that Celia came from such a privileged background. In the garden he saw two figures embracing. The red bow tie caught the light from the moon.

It didn't take him long to pack on Christmas morning. He explained to Celia's parents that he'd had a call from his mother and he needed to go home urgently. Celia and Jonty were still in bed. As he drove down the motorway towards his home town, Matt breathed a sigh of relief. What an idiot he was. He didn't belong in Celia's world.

His parents were about to sit down to Christmas dinner when he let himself in. His mother's face was a picture when she saw him. She hugged him tightly as he breathed in the familiar scent of home. Over her shoulder he saw his father struggle to rise from his chair. He looked so frail, but his face was wreathed in smiles.

"My boy! You made it. I told your mother that you wouldn't be able to resist showing us your smart new car. You can take me to the pub tomorrow!"

How stupid he'd been. This is where he should be, with his own sort. He'd be driving home for Christmas every year from now on.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2023 – 2024

Note: For renewals, no applications forms are needed. If, however, your personal details have changed i.e. address, phone no, email address etc, please notify Amanda Lowe by phone or email – details below.

Full Membership = £20 Associate Membership = £16.50

(To qualify for Associate Membership, you must hold a FULL membership at another u3a)

Membership Fees must be paid no later than 31st March 2023

There are 3 ways to pay – unfortunately, we cannot accept cash.

Payment by Bank Transfer – using the details below:

Account Name:	Rayleigh U3A
Sort Code:	54 – 30 – 60
Account Number:	42232678
Reference:	Your surname and postcode e.g. Smith SS6 1AB

Payment by Standing Order

Complete the Standing Order form and hand it in to your bank or if you use internet banking, you can set it up yourself using the account details above.

Payment by Cheque – made payable to **Rayleigh U3A**.

Important: Please write your name, address and postcode on the back of the cheque.

Bring your cheque to the March Monthly Meeting or please send your cheque to:
Amanda Lowe, Membership Secretary
24 Hambro Avenue, Rayleigh SS6 9NJ

If you have any queries regarding membership renewal, please do not hesitate to contact Amanda on **01268 784792** or email: **amandalowe@rayleighu3a.co.uk**

A Standing Order form will be also be available for download from the Rayleigh u3a website using the username and password on the back of your membership card.

DATA PROTECTION ACT 1988. By renewing my membership of Rayleigh u3a, I consent to the holding of my membership records on a secure database for the administration of Rayleigh u3a in accordance with the published Rayleigh u3a data protection and privacy policy, which can be seen displayed on the Secretary's notice board at monthly meetings or the Rayleigh u3a website.

If you would like your Membership card sent to you, please send a stamped addressed envelope to Amanda Lowe (address above) who will post it to you once they have been printed.

STANDING ORDER FORM

Due before 31st MARCH 2022 please. Payment by Standing Order or Bank Transfer would be helpful to cut down on paperwork.

Print this form and complete the details below and take or send to your Bank/Building Society

Name of your Bank or Building Society	
Branch Address	
Post Code	
Your Account Name	
Your Account Sort code -----/-----/-----	Your Account Number

Please pay Nat West Bank (Rayleigh Branch)

- **Sort Code: 54-30-60**
- **Account No: 42232678**
- for the credit of **Rayleigh U3A** the sum of £20.00 (Twenty Pounds) *or £40 if paying per couple* on 20th March 2023 this year and each following year until further notice.

Quoting Ref: Insert your name and post code eg SMITH SS6 8YZ	
Signature	Date

Your details

Title	First Name	Last Name
Address		
Post Code	Telephone Number	
Email		