

# Rayleigh u3a learn, laugh, live

## DECEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER

### NEWS FROM THE SECRETARY

Our 14<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> November at 2pm. The meeting was well attended, and we easily made our quorum. The 2020 Accounts and Minutes were approved, and Jeff Bowen kindly agreed to do one more year as our Examiner of Accounts.

Ray Lowe, who has been our Interim Chairman since June, was unanimously voted as Chairman of Rayleigh u3a. Unfortunately, we had no nominations for Treasurer or Secretary, so both Wendy Edwards and I will remain in post until the next AGM in May 2022.

The meeting closed with a presentation of Lifetime Membership Certificate to Pete Huntly in recognition of his long service and commitment to **Rayleigh u3a**



The draft Minutes of this MEETING will be available on our website from January 2022.

*Debbie Bamber*, Secretary of **Rayleigh u3a**

## NEWS from AROUND RAYLEIGH u3a

### AUTUMN QUIZ NIGHT

Ten teams battled it out at the recent Autumn Quiz Night enjoying the ability to meet up with fellow u3a members again.

There was a new quiz master and the variety of questions kept us busy all evening.

A free raffle was held with lots of prizes. Each member of the winning team was presented with a bottle of wine, and the losing team members had a tube of smarties!



*Val & Jim Whitehouse*



## NEWS from AROUND RAYLEIGH u3a (continued)

### STROLLING GROUP

During the October stroll we visited Priory Park, the Priory and finished with coffee/biscuits at the Café opposite the Priory. Members of this group are increasing, and we are a friendly group. On this occasion the weather was beautifully sunny, which added further to the enjoyment of all.

Thank you, Carolyn, for taking and providing the photos shown below. Next time, we'll need to ask a passing stranger to take a photo, so you can be included.



Sheila Farrant - phone **0772 409 5299**, email: [sh.fa.40@gmail.com](mailto:sh.fa.40@gmail.com)

Val Skam – phone **01268 786172**, email: [valerieskam@gmail.com](mailto:valerieskam@gmail.com)

## NEWS from AROUND Rayleigh u3a (continued)

### CRIB CLUB

Below is a happy photo of the Crib Club restarting, after a pause of 18 months, due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

As you can see, we are celebrating the reopening of our **Rayleigh u3a** Crib Club, together with a belated celebration of our 10th anniversary, which should have taken place in April 2020. The **Rayleigh u3a** Crib Club was formed on the 21st of April 2010. The idea of competitive cribbage was based on a visit to a Spanish u3a Crib Club in Moraira Spain.

We currently have 17 active members with a maximum of 20. We meet, once a month and about 50% of our members are original Crib Club Founder Members.

The game is very competitive, and we all have individual score cards and we compete for 3 bottles of wine and there is also a booby prize of a Toblerone bar of chocolate which is often fought over.

We all hope to keep going for another 10years!!



*David and Jackie Sheffield*

### MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM FOUNDER MEMBER

Just to confirm that I have moved away from Rayleigh---after 40 years---to Southport. So, I shall have to abandon my membership of **Rayleigh u3a**

I see there is an active u3a here in Southport so I will investigate after Christmas. They have an interesting web site. I should have got over the move by then and the flat recovered from its just burgled look!

I have enjoyed all the years that I have been a member of Rayleigh u3a. I was in the founder group.

Why the long-distance move? My younger son and family live in Liverpool.

My best wishes to you all.

Sheila Read

**We send our best wishes to Sheila in her new Southport home and thank her for the support she gave to **Rayleigh u3a** groups.**



## NEWS from AROUND RAYLEIGH u3a (continued)

### DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP 2

Digital Photography Group 2 visited Thorndon Country Park in November. It was a crisp, bright morning with lovely sunshine before and after our hour in the woods, whereupon the cloud cover came over! We were looking for deer but didn't find any. There was plenty of foliage, human interest, squirrels, and bird life. We all saw something 'different' and there were some interesting close ups.



*Jackie Sollieux, June Jennings*

### SERENDIPITY GROUP 1

The photographs below were taken when the recently re-formed Serendipity 1 group visited Hyde Hall Glow for a very enjoyable evening at the beginning of November. Serendipity 1 comprises very new as well as not so new members making it a very, very friendly group. There are still spaces in the group so if you would like to be part of it just contact Wendy Edwards - telephone **01268 770845** or email [wendy2811@icloud.com](mailto:wendy2811@icloud.com)



*Wendy Edwards*

## STORY 'THE RIVER' from the WRITERS' GROUP

I stand on the decking, shielding my eyes from the sun. The lush green lawns stretch ahead, dipping into the river that runs along the end of the gardens. Next door, a young girl is playing on a blanket, her blonde curls, dancing around her shoulders. Beyond that, Mr Anderson is mowing his lawn.

"Hello Olivia." I say, "What are you doing today?"

"Hi, Mrs Drew. I'm having a picnic lunch." she informs me, lifting a plate of sandwiches to demonstrate. She introduces me to her friends - an old, shabby teddy, with buttons for eyes, three dolls of various sizes and a plastic donkey. "Would you like to join us?"

"Not today, my lovely. Maybe tomorrow?" Olivia nods and returns to her conversation. The donkey listens intently.

Mr Anderson raises a hand in greeting. "Afternoon Mavis." he calls. I wave back and stand for another moment, taking in this idyllic scene. I've always loved this place.

I slip off my shoes and step onto the grass. It's cool and soft and springy. As I pad down to the water's edge, I hear the river's gentle babbling and the rattle of the pebbles on the riverbed. Directly opposite my garden, is a huge Weeping Willow. This is where I am headed. This is where I first saw them.

I sit down on the riverbank and dip my toes into the water. It's cool and refreshing, rushing around my ankles. Easing myself gently down so I'm standing on the riverbed, I check my balance and begin to wade across to the other side, the soft reeds brushing against my skin, the current, tugging gently at my legs.

It's so quiet here, beneath the spread of the Willow. I can hear the birds, the soft rustle of the leaves in the breeze and the bubbling of the water, which is now up to my knees. The neighbour is still trimming his lawn, but the sound is muffled. I can just make out the gentle rumble of traffic, streaming along the main road, on the other side of the houses and the occasional delighted squeal from a child, playing in one of the gardens.

I slip beneath the branches, until I'm completely hidden from view. The small recess that had been carved out of the mud, by the tree roots is still there and I settle myself down, resting my back against the trunk. As I do, I'm caught in a wave of nostalgia. The earthy smell of the bank, the green-tinted cocoon, in which I find myself, the faraway sounds of life continuing outside my bubble and the anticipation that, at any second, they might appear, transports me straight back to my childhood. I'm old now, of course. Wiser, apparently. But I'm tainted by the real world and all its harshness. I know I'm not long for this earth and I'm glad, but here, right now, in this special, magical place, the years just fall away, and I wonder how I'd forgotten this place. I can't remember the exact moment when my sister and I stopped coming to the end of the garden, to wade through the water, but I know she stopped before me, because I remember sitting here alone, as a child.

So, I wait. And wait. And I must drift off to sleep, because when I open my eyes, it's dark. Pitch black, in fact. I'm disorientated at first and start to panic. But then I hear the soft rushing of the stream beneath me, and I begin to relax. This is where I am most at home. The night is warm and as my eyes adjust to the dark, I notice the stars twinkling softly through the branches of the Willow, like tiny fairy lights. It's beautiful here. My favourite place in all the world and I wonder now, why I haven't returned to this spot in the last 78 years of staying in this house. I don't even remember when I started to remember. Just snippets and images, flashing through my head. I'm momentarily filled with a deep regret, and I whisper a quiet apology to the place that had been my sanctuary throughout my childhood.

And now, I hear a sound. It is so familiar, so unique, like tiny, tinkling bells. I haven't heard it for nearly 80 years, but it is instantly recognisable. I feel my heart quicken in my chest and my hands start to tremble. They hadn't left! They're still here! I look around, trying to locate where the sound is coming from, but it's impossible to pinpoint. It seems to be everywhere. I'm surrounded!

And then one by one, the thin slivers of light appear, trailing across the space like fine dust. There are so many. More than I've ever seen before. Hundreds, maybe thousands, illuminating the space under the willow. They rise, out of the river and circle above my head. They dart around me, weaving in and out of the foliage. And then, as I hold out my hand, one lands on my fingertips. She folds her wings and turns to face me, her laughter dancing on the breeze - tiny, tinkling bells. And then she's off again, flitting and diving, leaving a trail of dusty light in her wake. Another two hover just above my head, dropping a garland of flowers around my neck.



## WRITERS' STORY (continued)

I feel the tears build behind my eyes and a lump form in my throat. The years haven't spoiled the magic and these creatures still welcome me, as they did on my very first visit, all those decades ago. I am surrounded by such pure and unconditional love.

The hours pass and I watch and laugh as my old friends dance around me, until I am so tired, and my eyelids begin to grow heavy. I can feel myself drifting, floating, moving gently, as though being carried. I'm being laid on a soft surface and despite my efforts to stay awake, I surrender to the comforting darkness of sleep.

\*\*\*\*\*

Olivia stared down at Mrs Drew, lying on the grass. She wore a flower garland around her neck and a smile played on her lips.

"Mummy!" She called, running up to the house. "Mummy! I told you I saw something out here last night. I saw lights and now Mrs Drew is-" but her mother was already halfway across the lawn.

Her hand flew to her mouth. "Oh, my goodness! Mrs Drew!" She turned and shouted at her husband. "Tom! Tom! Call for an ambulance! It's Mrs Drew. She must have fallen over!"

She looked down at her daughter. "I'm just going to get some blankets. You stay here in case she comes round. Poor old thing. She must have been wandering around out here last night. The light you saw, was probably a torch." She hurried away and Olivia sat down on the grass.

She stroked Mrs Drew's weathered cheek. "I saw them last night, too, Mrs Drew." She whispered. "I see them every night." She took the old lady's hand and brushed away the fine trail of glitter that was smeared across it. "I saw the lights. You'll be okay. You're with the water fairies now."

Gloria Millis

## SUNDAY LUNCH GROUP

This group restarted in October, and all were very happy to chat and dine together after so many months! There will be no meeting in December and the next planned date is 30<sup>th</sup> January 2022.



Viv Smith

## FUTURE EVENTS

MONTHLY MEETINGS	SPEAKER	INFORMATION
Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> January	<b>HOWARD SLATER</b>	The East End of London from the Huguenots to the Bengalis. The aim is to give a flavour of the history and culture of the area.
Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> February	<b>BERNARD LOCKETT</b>	The heritage of Gilbert and Sullivan - talk with music
Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> March	<b>EVE REGELOUS</b>	I blame it on the Beatles – a light--hearted reliving of the 60s
Wednesday 6 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>ANDREW BAKER</b>	Prime Ministers since the war ranked in order - some discussion
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> May	<b>ALISON MEES</b>	Living the African Dream – talk about wildlife, conservation and community – lots of photographs
Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> June	<b>NEIL HANSON</b>	Ghost writer – talking about his work
Wednesday 6 <sup>th</sup> July	<b>FOOLS GOLD</b>	Live performance of songs and stories

***TUESDAY 1<sup>st</sup> MARCH – FISH & CHIPS LUNCH RAYLEIGH – DETAILS TO FOLLOW***

### LIVE CINEMA SCREENINGS

#### **NATIONAL THEATRE**

**LEOPOLDSTADT** - a passionate drama of love, family, and endurance. Tom Stoppard's epic but intimate new play follows an Austrian Jewish family across four generations and half a century.

**THURSDAY 27<sup>th</sup> JANUARY** start 7pm

**THE BOOK OF DUST-LA BELLE** – Set 12 years before the epic **HIS DARK MATERIALS** trilogy, this gripping adaptation revisits Phillip Pullman's fantastical world in which waters are rising and storms are brewing.

**THURSDAY 17<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY** start 7pm

**HEX** - A vividly original retelling of Sleeping Beauty, a mythic, big-hearted new musical.

**THURSDAY 17<sup>th</sup> MARCH**

#### **ROYAL BALLET**

**THE NUTCRACKER --THURSDAY 9<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER**

**ROMEO and JULIET -- MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY**

If any member wishes to join other members at one or more of the above Live Cinema Screenings, or requires more details, please contact Sheila telephone **0772 409 5299** or email **sh.fa.40@gmail.com**