

FEBRUARY 2024 NEWSLETTER

So Christmas is well and truly behind us and we are already into 2024 and looking forward to spring. I am looking in my garden most days to see the shoots of the first spring bulbs - it is always a surprise as I can never remember where I planted them!

A New Year always brings the promise of new experiences and things to look forward to and we hope that you will continue to enjoy your membership of Rayleigh u3a. It is time to renew your membership (details in the Newsletter) and we would be very grateful if you could do so online as it makes the process much easier—just remember to check you are paying it to the correct account! If you have signed up for Gift Aid, please do see the small article in the Newsletter about eligibility.

As always, a Membership table will be ready at the February and March Members Meetings for us to take cheques if this is your preferred option. We do not take cash unfortunately.



table games and a draw for each of the lovely Christmas table plants.

We ended 2023 with a wonderful Christmas Lunch at Saxon Hall. We had nearly 80 members attend and a good time was had by all. The food, as always, was very tasty and the atmosphere was very convivial, with lots of chatting and laughing. We had a Christmas Quiz with prizes for the winning tables, as well as



Thank you to all the contributors to this edition of the Newsletter — we love to get news of what is happening in your groups and the photos are an added bonus. Do keep them coming by email to: debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk. Closing date for the April 2024 Newsletter is 12th March.

FUTURE MONTHLY SPEAKERS

7th February 2024

Our speaker for the February Main Monthly Meeting will be Ruth Shaw Williams who will be giving us a talk on Book Illustrating.



6th March 2024

Our speaker for the March will be Paul Westgate. Learn more about Hearing Dogs for the Deaf and how with the help of these specially trained dogs and over 3,000 volunteers they aim to help many more deaf people live independent lives to the full, doing things we take for granted.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 7th February - Main Monthly Meeting 1.45pm Mill Hall

Wednesday 6th March - Main Monthly Meeting 1.45pm Mill Hall

**Monday 11th March - Dementia Friends Information Talk 1.30pm
Holy Trinity Church**

**Tuesday 19th March - Fish & Chips Lunch with Entertainment
12 noon British Legion Hall**

Wednesday 3rd April - Main Monthly Meeting 1.45pm Mill Hall

**Wednesday 1st May - AGM and Main Monthly Meeting 1.45pm Mill
Hall**

Tuesday 3rd December 2024 - u3a Christmas Lunch!

NOTICES

Sadly we have been informed of the deaths of three of our members. We have sent condolences from Rayleigh u3a to their loved ones.

Val Cable - passed away in November
Barbara Emery - passed away in November
Val Farmer - passed away

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2024 – 2025

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

**Membership fee = £20 (Associate Fee = £16.50)
must be paid no later than 31st March 2024**

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

Payment by Standing Order – Complete a Standing Order form and hand it in to your bank or if you use internet banking, you can set it up yourself using the details below.

Payment by Bank Transfer – using the details below:

Account Name:	Rayleigh u3a Subs
Sort Code:	54 – 30 – 60
Account Number:	42232678
Reference:	Your surname and postcode e.g. Smith SS6 1AB

Payment by Cheque – made payable to **Rayleigh u3a**.

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

Please send your cheque to:
Debbie Bamber
Membership Secretary
3 The Saltings,
Hadleigh, Benfleet
Essex SS7 2BD

If you have any queries regarding membership renewal, please do not hesitate to contact Debbie on **07947 064799** or email: **debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk**

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

DATA PROTECTION ACT 2018. 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 Debbie Bamber (address above) who will post it to you once they have been printed.

ADVANCE NOTICE OF AGM

**The Seventeenth Annual General Meeting of the
Rayleigh u3a
will take place on Wednesday 1st May 2024.
At The Mill Hall, Rayleigh
commencing at 2.00pm
followed by our Speaker at 2.30pm**

A copy of the Draft Minutes of the AGM 2023 and Draft Accounts will be displayed on the noticeboard at the March & April Meetings, will be emailed to members and will also be available to view on the Rayleigh U3A website.

We have vacancies for a Chairman, a Vice Chairman and Committee Members

For more information, please contact the Secretary, Jane Reeve

Nomination Forms (available at the March & April Meetings, on the website and will be emailed) must be returned to the Secretary, by Wednesday 10th April 2024

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 10th April 2024.

Jane can be contacted on 07931 584140 or

janereeve@rayleighu3a.co.uk

GIFT AID

Just a reminder to those members who have completed Gift Aid Forms - to be eligible for us to claim back the 25% from HMRC for your membership, you **must** make the payment from your **own personal bank account** or your **joint account**.

Unfortunately last year we had to reject some claims as their fees had been paid from someone else's (usually their partners) bank account so were not eligible. Your co-operation would be greatly appreciated.

For members who have not completed a Gift Aid form, we would encourage you to do so as it is a valuable source of income for us. To be eligible you need to pay UK Income tax and complete a form which can be found on the website, or copies are always available on the Membership desk. We claim the money back annually from HMRC so there is nothing more for you to do. Many thanks!

OFFICER & COMMITTEE VACANCIES

You will have seen that our AGM is looming ever closer and we will be looking for new members to join our Committee. Now I know most of you will just skip over this article, but please just pause for a moment and have a read as it is very important.

Our Committee (as stated by our u3a Constitution) is comprised of 4 Officers - Chairman, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer and several Committee Members, most of whom take on a role such as Membership, Social Secretary, Speaker Secretary and Groups Co-Ordinator. We organise and run the general administration tasks that are involved with the management of Rayleigh u3a.

It is not an onerous task to be on the Committee: we meet once a month on the second Friday morning for 2 hours and all support any events or meetings that Rayleigh u3a hold. We all work very well together, helping each other and generally enjoying ourselves!

We would encourage you to have a think whether you may be able to spare some time and perhaps use your skills and play a vital part in Rayleigh u3a. You would be most welcome to come along to a Committee Meeting to see what is involved without any commitment - just let myself or Jane Reeve our Secretary know and we will arrange this.

We used to have a Committee of 12 members but at the moment are running on 8 members. We are well aware that many members have 'done their time' on previous committees of which we are most grateful but we do need new members to volunteer their time.

Please do give it some consideration and see if you can help keep us going - we have over 430 members - we only need a few to offer their time!! Many thanks, Debbie.

debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk

janereeve@rayleighu3a.co.uk

UP-COMING EVENTS



TALK FOR ALL

Dementia Friends Information Session

Monday 11th March 2024

Mr. Mark Neville - Essex Dementia Friendly Communities Co-ordinator will be our speaker and will offer information on some of the issues faced by people living with dementia.

Strengthen your knowledge & understanding of dementia.

Questions & Answers after the talk

Did you know a person is formally diagnosed with dementia approximately every 3 minutes in the UK?

It is currently projected that 1 in 3 of us will live with dementia some point in our lifetime.



Cloister Hall, Holy Trinity Church, Rayleigh
Doors Open 1.30pm for Coffee/Tea
Talk commences at 2.00pm

Tickets: £3 per member—available at February and March Monthly Meetings

NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS

GARDENING GROUP 2 GET-TOGETHER

15 new members of Gardening Group 2 met for lunch and got to know one another for the first time. A full programme of gardens in Essex to visit is planned for this year and we are still looking for new members to join this new group.

If you are interested please contact Paul Reeve the Group Coordinator.

Sally Hender & Val Whitehouse



WALKING GROUP 5

Walking Group 5 met for their first walk of 2024 at Southchurch Park. From there they walked along the seafront to the pier.

On a bright but very cold day they walked to the end of the pier where they enjoyed a hot drink in the sunshine before making their way back to their cars. It was a perfect day for a walk.

Sheila Loveridge



VISITING INTERESTING PLACES IN ESSEX GROUP

Members of the Visiting Interesting Places in Essex Group visited a hidden gem in October. Have you ever visited Purfleet? Did you know Purfleet had such an interesting past?

We discovered this during our visit to the Purfleet Heritage & Military Centre which is housed in Magazine No.5 built in 1760 and is the last remaining Magazine of 5 that made up the Royal Magazines for Gunpowder on the banks of the River Thames.

During our guided tour we discovered that such well known people as Benjamin Franklin and Captain Cook had visited and historical vessels such as HMS Warrior, HMS Bounty, HMS Beagle, the Endeavour and Resolution had all been supplied by the Magazine.

The Grade 1 listed building houses a truly extensive range of artefacts and exhibitions covering local history, WW1, WW2, Colonial War, Trafalgar, RAF, Royal & Merchant Navy and the way we lived. It is also the second official museum for the Gurkha regiment.

If anyone is interested in visiting, please contact Paul Hounsell: paulhounsell64@outlook.com

There was so much to see that many of our members plan to revisit.

Val & Jim Whitehouse



SERENDIPITY 6 & VIPE GROUPS



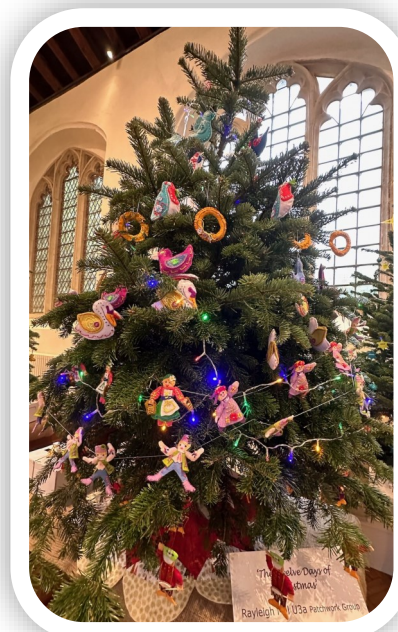
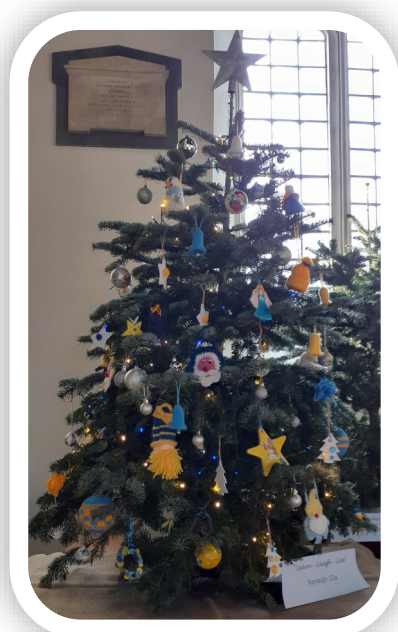
Members from Serendipity 6 and Visiting Interesting Places in Essex Groups met for a festive lunch at The Royal Oak.

CHRISTMAS TREE COMPETITION

Holy Trinity Church organised their annual Christmas Tree Decorating Competition and we decorated two trees for consideration.

Firstly a tree was decorated in u3a colours and entitled Learn, Laugh and Live and we won 5th Place in the Clubs / Organisations / Societies section. Members crafted, painted, knitted and crocheted ornaments for the tree and members of the Committee spent a lovely morning assembling the tree - see bottom photo left.

However we were well and truly beaten by Rayleigh u3a Patchwork and Tea Group who won first place in this category! Their theme was The Twelve Days of Christmas and their decorations were amazing as you can see from the following article. Their tree is below right. Well done Patchwork and Tea members - I did sympathise with the member who got the 12 days task!



We received the following from the Church:

On behalf of The Friends of Holy Trinity Rayleigh I would like to thank so much for supporting this year's Christmas Tree Festival. It was a wonderful community event, with over 1400 visitors on the opening day alone! We hope that you enjoyed preparing the decorations and dressing your tree – the church looked beautiful thanks to your hard work and creativity.

All the trees were much admired and there were so many inventive decorations and interpretations of the themes. Visitors to the festival cast over 4,000 votes for their favourite trees.

Please pass on our thanks to everyone involved with your tree.

The Friends of Holy Trinity Rayleigh

Oh Christmas Tree

In November 2022, as leader of the Patchwork Group, I received an invitation from Rayleigh Trinity Church to decorate a Christmas tree. Knowing how long it takes to produce fabric decorations, I declined the invitation, on the group's behalf, but said we'd do something for the following Christmas.

Now we all know about fate. In December 2022 while waiting for a medical appointment and browsing through the waiting room's magazines, there were details of how to produce a mobile with the figures for The Twelve Days of Christmas. I spoke to the medical practitioner and with his permission took the magazine.

I showed the Patchwork Group this magazine and they were all keen to make up the items. I must stress that the magazine only made one of each of the twelve days groups and not all 78+ figures. Many ladies (and a few gentlemen), will be familiar with Woman's Weekly and its rather good patterns and templates, and the group members were no exception.

We all agreed which groups we would tackle, and with appropriate thread, templates, instructions and a fair wind we began in April. You see what I mean about needing time...

The figures were small and at times VERY fiddly to make, but we kept going, and suddenly they all were complete. We had met the October deadline, even if we had cursed along the way.

The tree was 'fun' to decorate with the resulting items, and I was pleased with the overall result. Now it was up to the good people of Rayleigh to see what they thought of our efforts by voting in the Church's Christmas Tree competition.

The results were announced and we came 4th overall (but 1st in the Clubs/Societies category). This was very good as there is no way we could beat the three main school entries. One lady put it 'Actually you came first.'

Having now had a little time to reflect, I am already starting to think about the next tree in 11 months time.....

Kate Sawyer



EXISTING GROUPS WITH VACANCIES

Please note that vacancy levels change over time, so please treat this list as indicative.

- ART** (1st Thursday morning)
- BADMINTON** (every Monday and Tuesday at 4pm at Rayleigh Leisure Centre)
- BOOK READING 4** (4th Monday afternoon)
- CERAMICS** (1st Tuesday morning)
- COFFEE & CONVERSATION FOR LADIES** (day may vary)
- CREATIVE WRITING** (3rd Thursday)
- CRIB CLUB** (3rd Monday evening)
- KNIT & NATTER 3** (day yet to be determined)
- LOCAL HISTORY** (2nd Wednesday afternoon)
- PATCHWORK & TEA** (3rd Wednesday afternoon)
- REAL ALE** (3rd Wednesday lunchtime)
- SIT AND SEW** (2nd Thursday afternoon)
- TABLE TENNIS** (3rd Wednesday and 1st Tuesday morning at Rayleigh Leisure Centre)
- VISITING INTERESTING PLACES IN ESSEX** (3rd Monday)
- WALKING** (there are 3 groups – some have vacancies)
- WINE APPRECIATION** (2nd Tuesday evening)

CONTACT PAUL REEVE, GROUP COORDINATOR FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST

paulreeve@rayleighu3a.co.uk or 07825 430159

Do contact Paul for a chat if you are interested in starting up a new interest Group - Paul will be able to offer you advice and support in getting started.