

Educational Events

The first meeting in 2015 of the Education Committee on 5th January started the planning process for Educational Events for Rayleigh U3A for the next 18 months. We have to plan a long time in advance to book speakers and venues and for selling tickets.

To complete our previously planned series of fifteen 'Talks for All', the programme includes talks about different aspects of Policing. On March 17th Martyn Lockwood will talk about 'Victorian Murders in Essex' and then on April 21st Louise Giles and Llorien Walsh present 'The Detective Project'.

Our first event after these Talks is in the planning process and is to be a Study Day to be held at The Rayleigh Club on Tuesday 13th October. The subject title will be revealed when we have booked the speakers. We hope to have tickets for sale at the May meeting. Watch this space . . .

Educational Committee Members:

Maureen and Pete Huntly, Pat and John Pomfrett, Alan Moore,
Chris and Dave Towell, Irene and Fred Carter

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Members are advised that the 8th Annual General Meeting of the Rayleigh U3A is to take place on Thursday 2nd April 2015 at 1.45 pm at the Mill Hall, Rayleigh. Copies of the Agenda for this meeting and of the 2014 audited Accounts are enclosed with this Newsletter.

A copy of the Minutes of the 2014 AGM will be displayed on the Notice Board at the February and March 2015 meetings, and is also available to view on the website as a separate document.

There are five vacancies on the Committee for the coming year, as follows:

- Treasurer (No. 1 Account)
- Treasurer (No. 2 Social Account)
- Volunteer Co-ordinator
- Groups' Co-ordinator
- Joint Groups' Co-ordinator

Nomination Forms for Committee positions must be returned by Friday 13th March 2015 to the Secretary, Jackie Soilleux. Nomination Forms are available from the Secretary on request. Any motions which any member wishes to raise at the AGM, which need a proposer and a seconder, should be submitted to the Secretary also by 13th March 2015.

CONTRIBUTIONS from Members for the May 2015 edition of the Newsletter will be welcomed by the Editors and should be sent by 10th April 2015 to Roger and Liz Baker at rogerandlizbaker@gmail.com (tel: 01702 331166).

Rayleigh



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Newsletter Edition No. 66 - March 2015 This Month's Meeting - Thursday 5th March 2015

FROM THE VICE-CHAIRMAN

Our Chairman, Peter Huntly, has asked me to write this month's article for the Newsletter. He and his wife, Maureen, are on an extended holiday to Australia visiting family and friends. I also know Peter will be looking into his Australian ancestry.

Firstly, I and all members of the Committee extend a very warm welcome to all new U3A members who join us for the first time this year. I hope you all have an enjoyable year and I urge you to seek out the activity Groups you are interested in, or may be start your own Group. I must not forget all the members who renewed their membership for another year and I thank them for their loyal support.

Everyone, keep an eye open for the social events being arranged in the next few months, such as the 'Race Night' and 'Quiz Night'. Also check the green trifold, sent with your membership card, for the special afternoon Speaker Sessions on various subjects, such as 'Reflexology', 'Policemen's career and Tsunami', 'Victorian Murders in Essex' and the 'Detective Project'. All speaker sessions are held in the hall of the Holy Trinity Church and cost £2, dates and times are printed in your green trifold.

I must draw your attention to our AGM which is being held during our monthly meeting to be held on 2nd. April. We still have several vacancies for the Committee, and if you would like to help run our U3A please talk to an existing Committee member, or phone or E-Mail me direct. Again my numbers and those of other Committee Members are printed in the green trifold.

Finally, it is with deep regret that I have to inform you that a much valued member of our Newsletter Publishing Team, John Tyson, has died suddenly after a short illness. John was a wonderful and lively person who with his wife Irene and Roger and Elizabeth produced and published our Newsletter on time and with varied and interesting articles six times a year. John will be sorely missed and on your behalf, and especially from all members of the Committee, we send our heartfelt sympathy to his wife Irene, her family and friends at this sad time.

David Sheffield
Vice Chairman, Rayleigh U3A

THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER

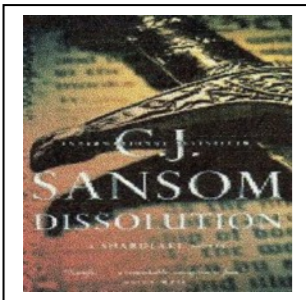
The speaker at our March meeting will be Brian Carline in a talk entitled 'The Reluctant Gardener'. After a 35 year career as a school teacher and success as a comedian reaching the finals of 'New Faces' in 1977. Brian is now a keen gardener living in West Hanningfield.

Notes from our Secretary, Jackie Soilleux

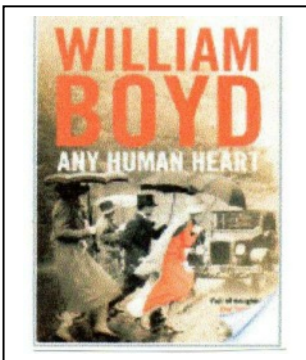
The U3A Trust has advised me of a number of forthcoming events to be held around the country, and also the availability of discounts for U3A Groups from the Royal Horticultural Society on gardening and days out. Full information and booking forms can be found on the U3A Trust website at www.u3a.org.uk or from info@u3a.org.uk telephone 020 8466 6139, or feel free to telephone me on 01702 552426 or email me at jsoilleux88@gmail.com. Information will also appear in the Third Age Matters magazine, in addition to being displayed on the Secretary's Notice Board at the Members Meetings in March.

NEWS FROM BOOK GROUP 2

Both our recommendations this month were read by the Group some time ago, but we thought they might be enjoyed by other readers. With all the current interest in the media about Wolf Hall and the Tudors, we thought that those who had not discovered C.J Sansom are in for a treat if they begin by reading the first of his six volume series, entitled Dissolution. Any Human Heart was adapted for a 4 part Channel 4 series starring Jim Broadbent as the primary actor.



The sights, voices and the very smell of this turbulent age seem to rise from the page. Through Shardlake, a hunchbacked lawyer, a flawed but strong and believable character, we are introduced to the fear and bewilderment felt throughout the country during the reign of Henry VIII. The author has cleverly created a mix of serious history and a first rate murder mystery and study of humanity.



Every life is both ordinary and extraordinary, but Logan Mountstuart's - lived from the beginning to the end of the twentieth century - contains more than its fair share of both. As a writer who finds inspiration with Hemingway in Paris and Virginia Woolf in London, as a spy recruited by Ian Fleming and betrayed in the war and as an art-dealer in '60s New York, Logan mixes with the movers and shakers of his times. But as a son, friend, lover and husband, he makes the same mistakes we all do in our search for happiness. Here, then, is the story of a life lived to the full - and a journey deep into a very human heart.

KATH HANDS

A Note from Jean Mackenzie

It is with some regret that I shall be moving away from Essex in the near future. I have decided to move to live near my sister and brother-in-law in Cambridgeshire. I would like to say a fond farewell to everyone in Rayleigh U3A, especially all my Theatre Group members. I would like to thank all members for their support and friendship over the seven years we have been together. I have enjoyed many theatre visits and have enjoyed organising them firstly on my own and then with Helena and eventually Sandra. Thank you all. Also, thank you Rayleigh U3A for all the interesting meetings, outings, etc. and everything else I have done with Rayleigh U3A. I shall miss you all but now I look forward to a new life in Cambridgeshire and a new U3A. Sincerely, Jean Mackenzie (Theatre Group Leader)

TWO COACH OUTINGS FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT



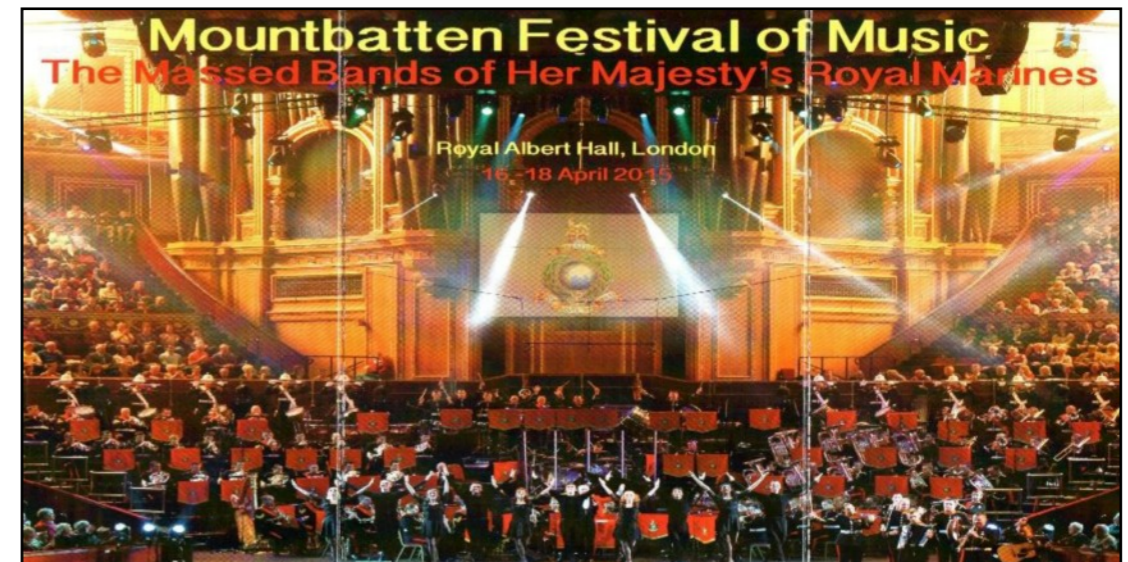
Your Social Committee has arranged a coach visit to Blenheim Palace on Wednesday 8th July. This year is the 50th. Anniversary of Churchill's death and other important anniversaries of his long life. Churchill said: `At Blenheim I took two very important decisions; to be born and to marry. I am content with the decisions I took on both occasions`.

On arrival you can explore the Palace Park Gardens, Restaurant, Visitors Centre, and all the attractions within the Pleasure Gardens. If you are feeling active, there is a 2 mile round trail to St. Martin's Church, Bladon, where Churchill is buried. There are self catering facilities in two cafes or you can bring your own picnic to enjoy in the designated picnic areas.

At 2.00 p.m. we shall all meet and be served tea or coffee in the Marlborough Room. Then a guide will give us a 30 minute talk on `Old Men and Necessary Women Servants of the Grand Palace` followed by a guided tour of the Grand Palace, taking 2 hours in all.

The cost is £33 which covers the coach and all the above mentioned. Reservation forms can be picked up at our desk at the monthly meeting where tickets will also be sold.

David Fryer-Kelsey



A return visit to the Royal Albert Hall has been arranged by Serendipity Two Group to see this year's performance by the Massed Bands of the Royal Marines of the Mountbatten Festival of Music on Thursday 16th April. The performance begins at 7.30 p.m. and our coach will leave Rayleigh around 4.00 p.m. Good seats in the Stalls have been booked. The concert is a glorious musical spectacle, celebrating all that is British. The cost of the concert ticket and transport is £47.50 per person and is open to all members of our U3A on a `first come, first served` basis. Tickets will be sold by Roger Baker at the monthly meetings or by phone (01702 331166)

POETRY WRITING WORKSHOP

Guest Speaker: Caroline Gilfillan - Norfolk Poet

Tuesday 14th. April 2015 1 - 4 p.m.

at The Cloisters, Holy Trinity Church, Rayleigh

Information and Tickets £3 available from Marian Allen,

20 Crown Hill, Rayleigh Tel: 01268 743339 marianallen@btinternet.com

A DAY AT ALEXANDRA PALACE (better known as 'ALLY PALLY')



Every January a specialist fair is organised for Group Travel Organisers at Alexandra Palace. We visited this year's show at the invitation of Cooks Coaches, hoping to obtain ideas for the U3A days out we organise throughout the year. We have visited this Travel Exhibition many times over the years gaining much help, expertise and ideas for our various trips. We find it very interesting, but a rather tiring few hours touring the exhibition. It is most rewarding, being able to meet representatives of various attractions and learning about places suitable for our Walking and Serendipity Groups to visit. Alexandra Palace is in itself a very interesting building - it has a reputation of being one of London's premier exhibition venues, and has magnificent views over London and stunning architectural features both inside and out. The annual Travel Exhibition is held in the Great Hall which is decorated in Victorian elegance and, because of its size, very suitable for events where large crowds are expected. The Palace was first opened as 'The People's Palace' in 1873 providing the Victorians with a great environment and recreation centre. Just 16 days after the grand opening of the Palace, which already had attracted many visitors, it was destroyed by a fire in the dome. Two years later a new Palace was opened centred around the Great Hall. In 1936, the first public television programmes were transmitted from there and the BBC continued these until the 1950s. Today the Palace is a Charitable Trust administered by the Borough of Haringey.

Liz and Roger Baker

NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION TEAM

Now that we have unfortunately lost the services of John Tyson, the Newsletter Production Team would very much appreciate a member joining us who has typesetting and layout experience. The Newsletter is published six times per year and consists of 8 to 12 A4 pages. Please give Roger Baker (Tel: 01702 331166) a call if you can assist us.



It seems appropriate that our Rayleigh U3A Social Committee has arranged a trip in July to visit Blenheim Palace, a place so associated with Winston Churchill, in the year in which there are so many tributes marking the 50th anniversary of his death, the 75th anniversary of his first becoming Prime Minister and the 75th anniversary of his finest hour at the Battle of Britain.

Blenheim was not only his family home but also his spiritual base, and his descent from the famous 1st Duke of Marlborough was always there as a bastion for him when life got tough. Churchill was of course a great admirer of the Duke and eventually wrote his biography.

Churchill from a very young age had this life long prescience of his place in history which he called 'my star' and this would sustain him through many crises, and that his destiny would be to do something in the world; this would desert him later in life.

He wanted to follow his father Randolph into Politics rather than the army but had no money to campaign and even assuming he would gain a seat, Members of Parliament who were back-benchers were not salaried in those days, so first he needed to find some means of supporting himself. He received his commission one month after his father's death and it cost him £1000 to join his regiment the 4th Hussars, and to buy a charger. Throughout his army career he was never out of debt. He was a young man who had to make his own way. He was also asked to act as a War Correspondent in the Boer War and he came to the public's attention as a National Hero when he escaped being a prisoner of war and had a five day trek through hostile wilderness with no maps or compass and just four bars of chocolate to eat.

He made money by writing and was able to enter Parliament but had a stormy and controversial career there. Finally the moment and the man came together in 1940 when Britain stood alone against Nazi Germany. He inspired the public to fight on when all seemed lost and led them to final victory. For some time he was the voice of Western freedom but with the entry of the USA into the war and the success of the Soviet Union against the Nazis he was relegated to a secondary position.

Widely regarded as one of the greatest wartime leaders of the 20th century, Churchill was also an historian, a writer and an artist. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature and was the first person to be made an honorary citizen of the United States. He is still a hero there.

David Fryer-Kelsey



Our Group visited Wat Tyler Park on 27th January. We visit this site at least twice a year and we are always delighted by the number of birds we see. This occasion was no exception as apart from the more common birds we also saw a pair of Marsh Harriers and a Buzzard. We have watched the site develop over the years and it is not only a wonderful environment for wetland birds but we also see many invertebrates, mammals and insects.

Wat Tyler Park, named after the leader of the Peasant's Revolt of 1381, holds particular significance for the area as the revolt was begun by the men of the village of Fobbing, and the final battle of the revolt, the 'Battle of Billericay' where the Royal Troops slaughtered 500 peasants took place in Norsey Woods.

The area has a fascinating history. As early as 3500BC people lived and worked on the land. Evidence of salt production can be traced back to the Bronze Age (2500-800BC). Between the mid Roman and the Norman period there was a time of intensive settlement around the marshes. The land forming today's park was originally part of the Pitsea Hall Estate.

The land was subject to tidal flooding but was altered in the 17th century by Dutch engineers who raised the sea defences. In the 19th century the British Explosives Syndicate established a factory in what is now the Country Park. The factory manufactured nitro-glycerine based explosives. In 1920 the Nobel Explosives Company took over the site and whilst few of the original buildings remain, the protective blast barriers, in the form of large excavations or banks of earth, can still be seen



scattered around the Park. Basildon Council took control of the Park in 1969 and that is when they chose the name Wat Tyler. In 1980 the Park became home to a number of significant buildings which needed to be relocated from elsewhere in Essex.



The Park covers 125 acres within the South Essex Marsh area and contains a variety of habitats and a rich diversity of species which includes a number of locally and nationally rare species. In fact last year a spider was found on the site that was unknown to science.

The earth banks previously mentioned were built to direct any accidental blast up and over the adjacent buildings and so prevent a catastrophic disaster. During the last few years a number of these banks and the surrounding areas have been cleared of scrub and some areas fenced off for grazing animals. These grazing animals are seasonally introduced to help manage the growth. This has been done to attract invertebrates and mammals and encourage the re-growth of native wild flowers and plants and has proved to be very successful. Rare insects such as the Shril Carder Bee and the Roesels Bush Cricket are regularly seen. The cattle used for grazing these areas are Red Poll cows, native to East Anglia, and are a docile breed ideally suited as public access is allowed to these flower-rich grasslands.

As you enter the Park you will see a bird hide to your left which overlooks the Fleet, a reed-bed with a large lake. Beyond, the reed-beds stretch across Bowers Marsh and Canvey Marsh, the largest reed-bed area in Essex. The reed beds are home to hundreds of wild fowl and wading birds and are visited by bittern and spoonbill. This area of wetlands collects water from the local hills to the east that were formed in the last Ice Age and then enters the Thames via Pitsea and Vange Creeks.

Future nature projects being considered are the creation of south facing chalk hills, created from the chalk deposits being excavated during the Crossrail Project. This will encourage plants and flowers and in turn numerous moths, butterflies and insects not normally seen in the area and in an area close to Pitsea Station called the 'Untidy Industries'. This area was once the site of Plotlands and later for industrial buildings. The buildings are all now gone but the concrete bases and roadways are still there. The concrete retains the heat and has created a warmer mini-climate and is attracting some unusual species (this is where an unclassified spider was found). Work has already started to create sand banks for Solitary Wasps and Bees and will no doubt attract many other species.

Wat Tyler Park has a bright future. With plans for its improvement taking place it will become one of the best wildlife sanctuaries in the County.

David Carlton
Bird and Nature Watch Group