



## **Newsletter Edition No. 67 - May 2015**

***Please note:* this month's meeting is on Friday 1st May 2015**

### **FROM THE CHAIR**

Dear Members,

I am honoured to be asked to continue to serve as Chairman of Rayleigh U3A and I would like to welcome the new members of our Committee – Treasurer Peter Joyce, Social Account Treasurer Brian Dennis, Volunteer Coordinator Val Curtis and Committee Member Pauline Goldring. Congratulations and best wishes to them all. A list of all the committee members and their contact details can be found within this Newsletter and on our website.

I would like to especially welcome our new members over thirty of which came together for a coffee morning on 7th April to find out more about our U3A. Group Leaders spoke about their group subjects, i.e. Music Appreciation, Theatre Trips, Walking, Serendipity and others had displays recruiting new members. It was a very successful morning and thanks to Membership Secretary, Gwen Greenwood, for organizing this event.

The Educational Events team is planning a Study Day in October which will focus on a number of historic anniversaries taking place this year. You will find an article about this within this Newsletter. Full details of forthcoming social events can be found on our website and details of tickets for sale on the noticeboard at our monthly meetings.

We are always looking for new ideas or suggestions, so please make use of the Suggestion Box at our monthly meetings. Please sign them as, after we have discussed your suggestion at our Committee Meeting, we will respond with a personal reply. Finally, do introduce yourself to me or other members of the Committee at our monthly meetings as we do want to get to know you and listen to your views.

Sincerely,

*Pete Huntly*

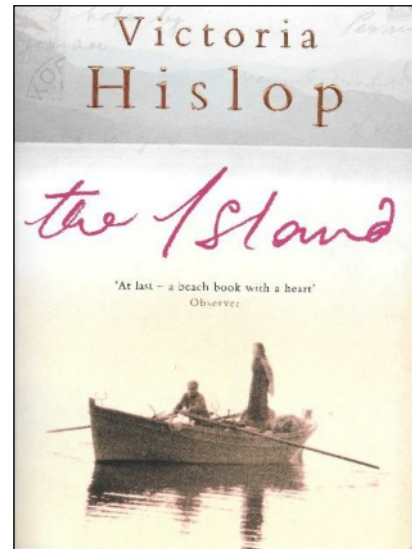
**Chairman, Rayleigh U3A**

## A Recommendation from Book Group One The Island by Victoria Hislop

It takes a brave writer to set her first novel on a Greek island, to populate it with an assortment of eccentric characters and follow the turbulent love lives of the women. All this against a backdrop of the Second World War. Brave because one might imagine that Louis de Bernieres's Captain Corelli's Mandolin had already cornered the market in quirky Mediterranean love stories. Victoria Hislop, however, has found a very different island, off Crete, for her first book. It is called Spinalonga and it is where lepers were banished to die.

Her story begins in London with Alexis Fielding, a self-assured young woman compelled to discover more about her Cretan mother's past, a past she is mysteriously unwilling to discuss. Her journey takes her back to Crete and to an old family friend who narrates Alexis's family history through three tumultuous generations.

The backbone of her tale is the relationship between two very different sisters: vibrant Anna who is as ambitious as she is beautiful, and Maria, obedient, sensible and faithful. While it might seem as though we've seen these types many times before, along with the loyal but dull husband, the lover who turns out to be a cad, and the lovelorn widower who all also appear in the book, *The Island*, which fascinates when it shifts to Spinalonga.



Leprosy may be the world's oldest known disease, but it is also one of its most misunderstood. To the fishermen and their families on Crete who can see the leper colony, the first symptom – dry, numb patches on the skin – is to be dreaded. Leprosy, they imagine, is highly contagious. It means a slow and agonising path to death, cast out by loved ones and forced to live out your days with an incurable illness.

Vera Henderson

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### Knit and Natter

**We need a few members - so come and join us ! We are a very friendly Group. We meet two afternoons a month - the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Tuesday and the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Thursday each month. Come to one or other or both. We knit or just natter. You can do your own work or knit squares to make into blankets which we give to various charities - wool and needles provided.**

**We meet at 9, Victoria Road, Rayleigh. If you want to talk to me, my phone No. is 01268 743082 or I shall be on the Book Stall at the monthly meeting in May.**

Doreen Oliver

## Simple Pleasures



Now where shall I plant these snowdrops, I thought, as I looked round my garden for a suitable spot. It was an unseasonably warm mid February day and I was clutching a brown paper bag of some 25 bulbs that I'd bought during a recent visit to Anglesey Abbey. While there, I'd been seduced by the stunning drifts of snowdrops, and wanted to start my own, albeit very small, drift of those little white nodding heads.

So here I was sitting in the garden looking as though I was making some sort of garden plan, which I was, but also I was taking the opportunity to relax for a few moments and reflect on a really enjoyable walk I'd been on the previous day at Dedham.

I like to know how many miles we've walked and my husband, John, told me that the previous day's walk around Dedham had been about 8 miles. My legs however like to make a counter claim and right now they were claiming at least 12 miles for the walk. So these few moments sitting in the garden, I told myself, were well deserved!

The walk we'd been on was one of our favourites from Dedham village to Manningtree and back into Dedham. We'd had a quick kit check before leaving the car park. Boots and rucksacks – tick, binoculars and bird guide book – tick. Every variation of cold and wet weather clothing – tick. Water and Kit Kats – tick. We were ready to go.

We had left Dedham village on the path that runs alongside the cricket ground. Barely ten minutes into the walk as we were crossing a rather boggy field we were intrigued by a pair of unfamiliar looking birds. They were paddling around the edge of a very large puddle that after recent heavy rainfall had re-invented itself as a lake. We made like we were experienced bird watchers, raised our binoculars and proceeded with a serious discussion about identifying features. Another walker came past us as we were engrossed in our deliberations and asked 'do you know what those birds are?' 'No, sorry we don't'. 'Oh, I thought maybe...' he tailed off. Silently to myself I finished his sentence... you thought we knew what we were looking at! Not so, we're quite okay with most of the regular birds and waders but this pair didn't fall into that category – and as the birds were not in our guide book, identification was going to have to wait.

Continuing the walk, which follows the route of Essex Way, we crossed the railway line, walked through woods and across fields to Lawford Church. It's a lovely walk and this was a particularly good day, gently warm and with a clear blue sky. In the woods there were several patches of wild snowdrops on banks and nestling under trees. Occasionally our footsteps and quiet chatting alerted rabbits to our presence as they scurried back into the bushes. Several times we used our binoculars to view the birds, and in particular a mistle thrush that we spent some time watching.

After Manningtree, where we walked a short section of the high street and then crossed the main road, we were on the sea wall alongside the River Stour. It seemed as though the river and the banks were teeming with birds, such as lapwings, teals, redshank and Canada geese. It was a glorious sight to see all of the activity, plenty of opportunities to use our binoculars and test our bird identification skills.

It was at this point in the walk, along the river bank, that we encountered the mud, extremely thick and gloopy. Our walking boots were almost being pulled from our feet. Time to change into our wellingtons. Yes, that's what I was carrying in my rucksack – wellington boots! At this point you might be wondering why we don't wear our wellingtons for the entire walk. Well, comfortable beyond about a mile, they are not!

We left the river bank and all the birds and on this occasion we didn't continue on the path to Flatford but returned to Dedham across the fields. Thankfully the Essex Rose tea shop was still open and we finished the walk with a well earned and most welcome afternoon tea.

So this brings me back to my garden, clutching my bag of bulbs, and yes I've decided on the place to plant them. It won't look like the display at Anglesey Abbey, but it just might look a little bit like the groups of wild snowdrops I'd seen in the woods around Dedham. And those birds - they were a pair of Egyptian geese – and that counts as a result for us!

**Janet Butcher**

# Coggeshall

SEVERAL OF OUR U3A GROUPS have visited places of interest in the small market town of Coggeshall over the past few years – whether it be the Local History Group visiting the National Trust property of Paycockes, the Gardening Group visiting Marks Hall, the Walking Group admiring the Grange Barn and the monastic ruins around it, or one of the Church Visiting Groups visiting the church of St. Peter ad Vincula (St Peter in Chains) as Group 2 did earlier this year.

The town originated from Saxon times and has well over 1000 years of history, as evidenced by many of the buildings still standing today. The modern history of Coggeshall begins around 1140 when an abbey was founded by monks from France. The monks farmed sheep and their skilled husbandry developed a high quality wool that formed the foundation of the town's prosperous cloth trade during the 15th to 18th centuries.

The Church of St. Peter ad Vincula is one of the largest churches in Essex, built in perpendicular style with 'wool money' in the first quarter of the 15th century (although there had been an earlier Norman church on the site). Its noteworthy size is testament to the affluence of the town enjoying the prosperity of the wool trade. At one time it was considered as a candidate to be a cathedral but Chelmsford was chosen instead. In 1940, the Luftwaffe bombed the church causing the roof of the nave to collapse and other significant damage, and it was not until 10 years after the war that the restoration of the church was completed. The tower of the church houses a peal of 10 bells, the heaviest in Essex with the oldest being cast in 1681 and the two newest cast only in 2000 to mark the millennium. They are all tuned to the key of D. When the tower was necessarily rebuilt in the 1950s after the bombing, it was intended to add a spire but this has never been done. As a consequence, it has been said that the tower is out of proportion with the rest of the church (i.e. too small) but as the old tower was one of the earlier parts of the original church it could equally be said that the church itself was too big! However, as you walk around the town there are various places where a good view of the church and tower can be seen proudly standing over Coggeshall.

Paycockes is a family house built around 1500 and it features elaborate wood panelling and carvings, again a testament to the wealth generated by the wool trade. The Paycocke family were originally butchers by trade and they exemplified a trend for successful butchers to acquire large flocks of their own sheep which would produce wool as well as meat. The wool could be used to make cloth and often the 'grazing butchers' as they became known would eventually evolve into clothiers becoming very





wealthy as a consequence. The house passed through several hands before being given to the National Trust in 1924 and is now open for us all to view.

The Grange Barn is a massive structure built by the Cistercians in the 13th century to serve the Abbey. It is one of the oldest surviving timber-framed buildings in Europe. Today the barn is as it was in the 14th century except that the original thatch roof has been replaced with tile. It survived the Dissolution of the Monasteries remaining in continual agricultural use until 1960 and is now in the care of the National Trust for its future preservation.

St. Nicholas` Chapel, Coggeshall Abbey`s gatehouse chapel stands in the grounds of what was the Abbey destroyed in the 16th century. The chapel survived the Dissolution of the Monasteries intact, albeit converted into a barn until being restored to a chapel in 1863. Originally built in around 1229, it is said to be the oldest surviving post-Roman brick building in the country. There was a brick-making industry around Coggeshall in the early 12th century, prompted by the exhaustion of the supply of recyclable Roman bricks. The chapel is still used for occasional parochial worship. It has a fine simplicity and charm, and is a haven of peace after a somewhat turbulent history.

All around you in Coggeshall is history. The Roman road of Stane Street passed through the town and there are over 300 listed buildings, including the White Hart Hotel where the Church Visiting Group lunched. The weekly market has been run every week since 1256 when a charter to do so was granted by Henry III. The town has been a haven for non-conformist chapels, and the Quakers were active in Coggeshall as early as 1655. There are Baptist, Methodist and Congregational chapels all with their own history.

A visit to Coggeshall is a delight for everyone with a historical bent.

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At our recent AGM Chairman Pete Huntly presented gifts on behalf of the members to David Clarke who served as Treasurer for 4 years and will remain on the Committee this year as Vice Chairman and Terry Gouldsmith who served on the Committee for 5 years.

# SIGNIFICANT ANNIVERSARIES IN 2015

## DEATH OF SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL on 24th January 2015

In January it was 50 years since the death of one of the towering figures of the last century: Sir Winston Churchill. The former Prime Minister's death in his London home was followed by a state funeral and thousands paying their respects along the route of his cortege to his burial site in Bladon, Oxfordshire.

Visitors can today follow in the footsteps of Churchill at many places across the UK associated with him, and with the history of the Second World War, including his birthplace, home (Chartwell) and his wartime cabinet rooms. Our **Social Events Team** have organised a coach trip to Blenheim Palace where Sir Winston Churchill was born on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1874. There is an exhibition to commemorate one of the country's greatest orators, historian and politician.

*I am pleased to announce on behalf of the Educational Events Team that we will be holding a*  
***Study Day on 13th October 2015 at Saxon Hall***  
*incorporating speakers to talk about three other significant Anniversaries.*

## 800TH ANNIVERSARY OF MAGNA CARTA

On 2nd - 4th February this year to mark the beginning of the Anniversary Year, the four surviving original 1215 copies of Magna Carta were brought together for the first time in history. The viewing was held at The British Library in London in collaboration with Lincoln Cathedral and Salisbury Cathedral. 40,000 people from 29 countries applied for tickets to view this amazing sight. Only 1,250 lucky people had that privilege. `Magna Carta` means Great Charter and is written in Latin. Its message is `No one is above the Law` and is still relevant today. It was signed by King John at Runnymede, Surrey, by the River Thames. It became part of English Law and entered our Statute Book in 1297.

Tickets for our Study Day will be on sale shortly when you can find out more about this amazing document.

## BATTLE OF WATERLOO – 18TH JUNE 1815

The 18th June 2015 will mark 200 years since the Battle of Waterloo; one of the most famous battles in English history. On a battlefield in Belgium, a coalition of nations led by the Duke of Wellington defeated the French forces led by Napoleon Bonaparte, in what the Duke would later call "a damned close-run thing".

There will be exhibitions at Apsley House, London, and Wellington Arch. The Education Events Team are planning a coach trip to Stratfield Saye House early in 2016, where the family have lived since the 1st Duke of Wellington acquired the estate in 1818 following the Battle of Waterloo. The 1st Duke lived there until his death in 1852 and it is where his favourite charger Copenhagen is buried.

## 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

On 22nd June 1940 the French Government signed an armistice with Germany. Now Britain faced the possibility of a Nazi invasion followed by all the horrors of brutal occupation suffered by many countries across Europe. Led and inspired by the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, the people of Britain prepared to fight for their freedom.

No modern invasion can succeed unless the invading force has air superiority. So it fell to just under 3000 men of Royal Air Force Fighter Command to be at the forefront of British resistance. To the Prime Minister they were 'The Few'; to their leader, Air Marshal Dowding, they were 'My Dear Fighter Boys'. Well over 500 of them died between 10th July and 31st October 1940 – the official dates of the Battle and nearly 800 more did not live to see the end of the war in 1945. Today we honour them as men who played a key role at a fulcrum of British history.

**Remember** on 13th October you can hear eminent speakers talking about these significant anniversaries and Rayleigh's own Historian, Mike Davies, will be linking these three speakers and showing how these events affected England, Essex and Rayleigh.

**Maureen Huntly – Educational Events Coordinator**

### **RAYLEIGH U3A COMMITTEE for 2015/2016**

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<b>Speaker Secretary:</b> Fred Carter	<a href="mailto:efandicart@btinternet.com">efandicart@btinternet.com</a>	01268 766149
<b>Groups' Coordinator:</b> Bob Wren	<a href="mailto:bob_wren@hotmail.com">bob_wren@hotmail.com</a>	01702 525311
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<b>Committee Member:</b> Pauline Goldring	No E-Mail address	01268 770971
<b>Committee Member:</b> David Sheffield	<a href="mailto:dave@djsheff.demon.co.uk">dave@djsheff.demon.co.uk</a>	01268 743586

**Contributions for the July edition of this Newsletter will be welcomed and should be sent to the Editors, Liz and Roger Baker, not later than 10th June 2015**

# Gardening Corner

After a wet, but mild winter, thoughts turn to restoring the fertility of our soils using organic materials and slow release fertilizers. Roses in particular benefit from a mulch of well-rotted manure or compost made from your own bin or heap. While on the subject of roses, a spray of 'Roseclear' now, but ideally in April, will keep away leaf black spot, with another dose in July if any signs persist. It is essential that any dropped infected leaves are burnt to avoid contamination of soil around the plants.

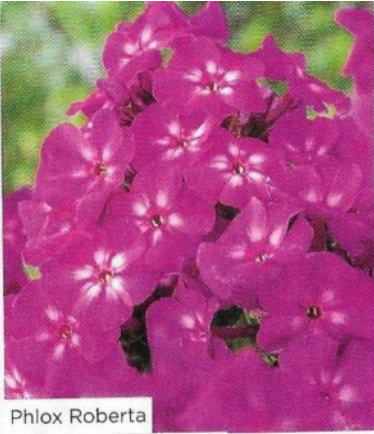
Back to fertilizers: Blood, Fish and Bone is an excellent general feed which releases nutrients over a long period. As the name suggests, it contains all natural ingredients and is relatively cheap compared with branded boxed packages.

Regarding manures: Horse manure can be collected free from a roadside pull-in on Church Road, Hockley. Go under the railway bridge towards Lower Road, Hullbridge, and you will find it on your left. Take your own bags and a shovel, or why not join the Rayleigh Horticultural Society who have an excellent store on the allotment site off lower Daws Heath Road. Membership is just £5 per family and they sell good bagged composts and

any of the above-mentioned sprays and fertilizers at competitive prices.



Phlox Nicky



Phlox Roberta

My plant for this edition of the Newsletter is the Perennial PHLOX. If you have some that can be divided, do so now to give you more plants for a long summer of colour, or buy from a wide range of colours available at good nurseries.

Good Gardening  
Brian Kersey (Tel: 01268 743959)

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## THE SPEAKERS AT OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS

At our meeting in May, the speaker will be Mike Benning. He will give us a talk entitled 'History of Policing before the Peelers'

The speaker at our meeting in June will be Chris Naughton who will talk about Flinders Petrie, the Father of Archaeology. Chris completed his BA in Ancient History and Archaeology in 1999 before going on to complete a MPhil in Egyptology in 2000. He is currently working as Director for the The Egypt Exploration Society.