

A Note from the Newsletter Editors

Welcome to the November edition of the Rayleigh u3a Newsletter. We hope you like the 'new look' and the new u3a logo part of the new branding from National Office.

We would like to thank Sheila and Viv for producing this over the past few years. We have temporarily taken over as Newsletter Editors until we can find a permanent team, if any member is interested please contact either of us at:

valwhitehouse@rayleighu3a.co.uk Jimwhitehouse@rayleighu3a.co.uk

Val & Jim Whitehouse



Thank You to David & Heather Fryer-Kelsey

Our Secretary and Treasurer recently presented David & Heather gifts in appreciation for their time with the Rayleigh u3a.

David has been Chairman, Group Coordinator and Events Coordinator for the past three years and has left our u3a in a strong position for the new Committee to cope with the troubled times we are all facing.

Heather has been Group Coordinator for three years and she has helped to make our u3a friendlier, she has organised many coffee mornings, introduced new ideas and encouraged members to start new groups.

We look forward to seeing them both again in the future.

Message from the Chairman

Welcome to the November edition of the Rayleigh u3a Newsletter we hope you enjoy it. I hope that by receiving regular emails, weekly Members Contributions, and this Newsletter we can still keep in touch with one another. It has been encouraging to see how you, our members, are finding so many positive ways to get through this difficult time.

Your Committee aim to keep you up to date with any relevant information from National Office and have been planning ahead and have events and speakers ready for our meetings when we are able to get back to 'normal' times.

A few of our groups have managed to restart and we have some photographs and reports from these along with an introduction to the new Committee following the AGM on 12th September 2020.

Thank you for casting your votes, we received 54 by paper and email and 174 by the online poll, a total of 228. This is actually a higher number than the last AGM at the Mill Hall in 2019!

As always take care and stay safe.

Kind regards

Val Whitehouse

Chairman



50th Wedding Anniversary

We recently wished Les and Carol Shrubsole best wishes on their 50th Wedding Anniversary from the Rayleigh u3a Committee & Members.

We would also like to thank them both for all the work they have done over the years with the book stall and refreshments at monthly meetings. We look forward to seeing them both again.

The lovely card was made by Janet Ilet, one of our members.

Thank You

Our Chairman and Secretary presented a bottle of wine and card to Pete Huntly recently in appreciation of all the years he has dedicated to the Rayleigh u3a.

He has recently stepped down from his role as Web Master, handling the Gift Aid submission and Charity Commission returns after many years.

Pete was also Chairman and Vice Chairman and in appreciation we have awarded him a Honorary Life Membership of the Rayleigh u3a.

We will officially thank him in front of all our members when we are able to hold meetings.



News from the Secretary

Thank you all so much for your support and participation in this year's AGM which was very different from normal! But we did reach our quorum (which was 96) and in fact exceeded it with 228 responses and votes. All the resolutions/proposals were agreed with each one receiving approval of over 94% of the votes. The draft AGM Minutes were approved at the Committee Meeting and are available should any member wish to see them.

I am delighted to welcome **Val Whitehouse** to the post of our Chairman, **Jim Whitehouse** to the post of Vice Chairman and **Val Foley** and **Ray Lowe** as Committee Members. I am sure you will want to join with me to wish them well in their new roles. Also, our grateful thanks to **Elaine Woodcock** who steps down from her role as joint organiser of Educational Events but remains as a Committee member.

You may notice over the next few months that the u3a logo has changed following National Office's AGM where a new branding was launched. We now will be referring to ourselves as just 'u3a' as it is felt our brand is strong. If you are interested in finding out more, look on their website – <https://www.u3a.org.uk/new-brand-guidelines>.

With no news as to when we can meet all again, I hope you continue to stay safe and keep busy.

Best wishes, Debbie Bamber

Groups with Vacancies

If you are looking to take up a new interest the following Groups have vacancies and have restarted

Art	1 st Thursday	Amanda Lowe	amandalowe@rayleighu3a.co.uk
Book Reading 3	3 rd Friday	Margaret White	r_white@sky.com
Digital Photography 1	1 st Tuesday	John Edwards	edwardsj054@gmail.com
Walking 3	2 nd Tuesday	Maureen Hayes	hayes343@btinternet.com
Walking 5	2 nd Thursday	Sheila Loveridge	sheilaloveridge@gmail.com

Please contact the Group Leader for further details or the Group Coordinator:

Roz King – rosalingking@hotmail.com

MEET YOUR NEW COMMITTEE

Here are the new members of the Raleigh u3a Committee



CHAIRMAN Val Whitehouse



VICE CHAIRMAN Jim Whitehouse



SECRETARY Debbie Bamber



TREASURER Wendy Edwards



MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY
Amanda Lowe



SPEAKER SECRETARY
Valerie Skam



GROUP COORDINATOR Roz King



COMMITTEE MEMBER Val Foley



COMMITTEE MEMBER
Elaine Woodcock



EQUIPMENT COORDINATOR
Ray Lowe



COMMITTEE MEMBER
Sheila Farrant

Book Reading Group 1

Book Reading Group 1 have been busy, here are the books they have read as a group during lockdown:

Lamentation. by C. J. Sansom—A historical mystery novel, one of the Matthew Shardlake series set in the reign of Henry VIII. It is a story of loyalty, royal intrigue, courage, and faith.

The Kingmakers Daughter by Phillipa Gregory—This book is about two sisters who were used as pawns by their ambitious father the Earl of Warwick who wanted to become the most powerful man in England behind the throne of King Edward VI and how the sisters became very influential players in their own right.

Any Human Heart by William Boyd—This book is written as a lifelong series of Diaries kept by a fictional character Logan Mountstuart, whose life (1906 -1991) spanned much of the twentieth century. He was a writer, lover, art dealer and spy who led a very precarious life.

Maybe an idea of books to read for those members who enjoy reading?

Music Appreciation Group

The Music Appreciation Group sat on a warm September afternoon in David's garden listening to some recent classical music CD releases including a piano sonata by Joseph Wolf (a little known Austrian contemporary of Beethoven), Elgar's violin concerto, some Schubert piano impromptus and Dvorak's Serenade for Strings.



Book Reading Group 3

The group consisting of 8 ladies began life in July 2012, after lock down started we then met again when the libraries opened back in July this year. As yet they have been unable to have a proper meeting due to social distancing rules so just gather outside the library where they collect their book of the month.

They have read many different novels over the years with authors ranging from James Joyce and Ernest Hemingway [rather hard going] to more popular authors like Philippa Gregory, Susan Hill and Anne Cleeves.

Their most recent books have included 'Those who are loved' by Victoria Hislop, 'Normal People' by Sally Rooney, 'Cold Comfort Farm' by Stella Gibbons and Eleanor Oliphant 'Is completely fine' by Gail Honeyman.

(Book Reading Group 3 has one vacancy, they meet the 3rd Friday of the month if anyone is interested please contact Margaret White: r_white@sky.com).

Walking Group 3



Members of Walking Group 3 enjoyed a lovely morning in Danbury, they accomplished 5 miles, up hills, down hills and across fields under an electric fence. It gave them a lovely opportunity to have fun and see the wildlife and countryside.

Book Reading Group 2

A small group of 6 normally meeting in Janet Quin's house. One of the books they have read and discussed was "**Anatomy of a Scandal**" by **Sarah Vaughan**. They score the books out of 10 and would recommend any that score 7 or above – this one scored 7 and they agreed that it was a good book to choose as there are many points to discuss in it.

Since lockdown they have all kept in touch by email and the book for April was "**Our House**" by **Louise Candlish** scored 8. For anyone who is a fan of the psychological thriller, this is a must, the ending a genuine shock. From then they have all read reviews and friends' recommendations, keeping each other informed and Sylvia Mitchell sent them her emails as poems which they enjoyed and congratulated her on.

They eventually met up again in July in Janet's garden, they all agreed it was so good to get together and exchange news and suggest more books. Many had been read but they selected **Postcards From a Stranger** by **Imogen Clark** to read as a group. They were again able to meet in the garden on 11th September, it was a lovely afternoon and one of the group (they won't say who) had a special birthday, which they were able to celebrate. This book averaged a score of 7 so would be recommended.

Walking Group 5



In October 4 members of Walking Group 5 turned up on a wet and windy morning for a riverside walk from Ferry Road to Brandy Cove in Hullbridge welcoming a new member Helen to the group. They were fortunate to miss the heavy rain!

The group did not attempt to go further as the path was uneven, muddy, and slippery so they walked back and then walked in the other direction through the woods for an hour and 40 mins. They all enjoyed the walk and made plans for next month .

If you are interested in joining the group please contact Sheila Loveridge - sheilaloveridge@gmail.com

Ceramics Group

The Ceramics Group run by Brenda Parrott met at Clay Cottage. They had a lovely morning being creative and chatting. The plate in the photo (right) is a work in progress.

It is totally safe there, Nicole who owns Clay Cottage runs a tight ship. It was one person to a table, all the chairs tables paint pots and equipment, i.e. paint brushes and pots are all sanitised before a session which is for two hours. When they leave it is all sanitised again for the next people.

You do not have to be talented to join this group, there are plenty of moulds to paint and Brenda is always there to help if needed.

Anyone interested in joining should give Brenda Parrott a ring on 01268 779590 or email: dper756242@aol.com.



Art Group



The Art Group, run by Amanda Lowe meets on the 1st Thursday of the month at Clay Cottage.

October's project is making, designing, and painting Christmas Cards.

Behind the Scenes

If any Rayleigh u3a member wishes to see how the Committee works or peruse the Minutes please contact the Chairman or Secretary.

Did You Know?

Our current Membership is 460.

We had 228 replies at the 2020 AGM

29% of our Membership is Male

71% of our Membership is Female

89% of members have an email

A Strange Encounter

The first thing Rose noticed when driving through Rayleigh was the church at the top of London Hill. It was a fine-looking church that towered over the high street. Rose liked to paint and had painted a few churches. Rose decided that the next time she had a free day and it was fine she would come back to Rayleigh to make some sketches and take some photos of the church.

On a sunny day a few weeks later, Rose was at a loose end and decided to take that trip to Rayleigh to have a look at the church. Rose packed up her art bag with pencils and sketchpad and picked up a camera.

Rose parked the car and walked around the grounds of the church taking note of the building, a porch built in red brick and a tall bell tower in grey stone.



Rose took some photos from various angles as she walked around the church and found a bench where she could sit and sketch. As so often happened when Rose was sketching, she became so engrossed in what she was doing that she lost all track of time and place. Suddenly something made Rose look up and she saw a young lady watching her, Rose stopped sketching and smiled at the young lady who came and sat next to her on the bench. 'I'm sorry I didn't mean to disturb you, but you were so engrossed I was curious to see what you were doing, My name is Eleanor, I'm pleased to meet you. Eleanor had a soft, gentle voice with an accent that Rose could not place and was almost ethereal in her appearance with long flowing blond hair and a long floaty skirt. Eleanor asked Rose about her sketching and what had brought her to this particular church. Rose explained that she liked to paint and whilst driving through Rayleigh the church had caught her eye and she felt compelled to come and sketch it and take photos so she could paint it.

Eleanor asked Rose if she knew the history of the church and Rose confessed that she didn't. Eleanor told Rose there had been a church on the site since the Saxon times. There had also been a castle at Rayleigh which had fallen into disrepair. Richard the second had granted a license in 1394 to allow the people of Rayleigh to carry away stone from the Castle to repair the church and build a belfry. Eleanor seemed to know a lot about the history, particularly the building of the tower. As she spoke about the tower she seemed to drift away and Rose could feel the sadness emanating from her.

Rose asked Eleanor if she was okay, Eleanor shook herself and said that there had been a terrible accident during the building of the tower. A young man called Charles who was working at the top of the tower had fallen and as a result of his injuries he died. Eleanor then changed the subject and asked Rose about her sketch and what she liked to draw and paint. They chatted for a while and Eleanor asked Rose to show her some of her other work so Rose bent down to get some other artwork out of her bag to show Eleanor. When Rose found the picture she wanted to show Eleanor, she found she was alone in the churchyard. There was no sign of Eleanor and the churchyard was still and quiet. Rose sat perplexed, wondering where Eleanor had gone and why she had not said goodbye.

When Rose looked at her sketch it was finished, and she did not remember completing it. When Rose looked closer, she could see she had drawn a man laying at the bottom of the tower. Strange. Rose looked at her watch and was amazed to see 4 hours had passed since she'd entered the churchyard. Rose gathered her pencils and paper together and got up to leave. On the way out of the churchyard a brisk wind blew up and Rose dropped her sketch, the wind caught it and carried it along until it rested against an ancient headstone. Rose walked across to the headstone and reached out to pick it up. The name on the headstone caught Rose's eye, Eleanor Cook 1375 - 1395. Intrigued Rose looked closer and tried to read the inscription. It was very worn and difficult to read but Rose remembered being told that if you rub grass on the inscription it makes it easier to read. Rose gathered together some grass and rubbed it across the ancient words. As it became clearer Rose could make out some of the words

'Here lies the body of Eleanor Cook who died of a broken heart three weeks after the death of her beloved husband Charles'

Rose noticed that the headstone next to Eleanor's had a bunch of wildflowers placed carefully at the base, she looked closer to read the name, Charles Cook 1370 -1395. Rose again rubbed grass over the ancient words and was able to make out that Charles died during the building of the church tower after falling from the top.

As Rose stood in front of the graves, she had the feeling that she had just had an encounter with the ghost of Eleanor who had come to lay flowers on her husband's grave. Rose looked again at her sketch, she paid attention to the figure at the bottom of the tower, why was it there and why could she not remember finishing the sketch, what about her meeting with the strange Eleanor, did she really meet her or was it a figment of her imagination. which she did not remember completing. Rose looked at the graves and the wildflowers so carefully placed on Charles grave and a cold shiver made its way up her spine.

Rose hurried out of the churchyard and as she walked back to her car she reflected on her experience and decided that it had certainly been a strange afternoon.

Sheila Loveridge

Flyover

I have been flying over these gardens and sitting quite happily on this fence for a long time.

I like to sit near the patio windows as I can see everything that goes on around me.

But now staring out at me is a woman. I don't know her! I stared straight back. People don't realize how big I am from a distance, I look small but now close up just a foot away she has that "Oh my goodness you are one big bird." I shake my tail feathers yes siree I am one big bird. And proud of it.

I am a seagull my name is Arthur the great. I fly inland to announce the tide is in every day, She doesn't seem impressed at my arrival but I like what she's done with this sturdy new fence Its better than the old one that rocked a bit too much.

We fly in with the tides, fly around in circles over the streets looking for a morsel to eat, maybe a chip or left-over cake. I like to say hello to my wood pigeon friends and we form a gang and play in the air swooping and circling and chasing the resident birds. I don't like the magpies, they squawk too much and are always fighting, so me and my buddies chase them shouting really loudly to frighten them until they take refuge in the eucalyptus tree and hide between the branches, I know they are there - but I don't like the tree smell so we leave them alone and rest up on the roofs,

One morning I went to swoop in and land on MY fence when I saw she had planted this green plant all over the fence so I couldn't land on my usual perch. I had to fly around until I saw another landing place. I turned to watch her, and she had this smirk on her face as if to say ha! you can't sit and stare at me anymore.

Now I liked that she had changed the garden and put some colour in it. The table and the chairs were useful, the blackbirds liked them to perch on. She's not a bad person when it's hot she puts out dishes of water for the resident birds, but I do miss my favourite perch outside her window I always thought of this as my garden.

So, I had a word with my wood pigeon gang and arranged for them to circle the garden every day and scream at her window at 5 a.m. in the morning just to let her know its daylight...ha ha ha.

Jackie Caine.