

Rayleigh



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Newsletter Edition – No. 63 – September 2014
This Month's Meeting Thursday 4th September
Speaker – Wm. Tyler – 'The 60's Fifty Years On'

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

Welcome back after our summer break.

To summarise our activities before the break we enjoyed a wonderful celebration day at our July Meeting. Groups' Coordinator, Bob Wren organised the hall with tables from sixteen of our Groups displaying their activities and tables around the hall to allow people to sit and chat and watch the festivities. The Committee invited the original Steering Committee who started our U3A seven years ago and Founder Member, Marian Allen and I cut a special celebratory cake. Marian was presented with a beautiful arrangement of flowers made by our Flower Arranging Group. Photographs can be seen in the Newsletter and on the web pages.

We ended our summer session with 'Jazz on a Summer's Evening' at The Rayleigh Club attended by over 100 of our members. Kenny Baxter and his band did us proud and we all enjoyed a delicious Hog Roast.

Our final talk in the 'Talks for All' series was by Penny Waters, Herbalist who had an interested audience of over forty members learning about the ancient art of using plants for medicinal purposes.

This autumn we have a lot to look forward to with a full programme of 'Talks for All' and social events ranging from The Barn Dance to be held at the Hullbridge Community Centre, the Quiz at Holy Trinity Church Hall to our Christmas Lunch to be held this year for the first time at The Rayleigh Club on Thursday 4th December.

Sincerely,

Pete Huntly

Chairman, Rayleigh U3A

This Month's Speaker.

**The speaker at our meeting this month is Wm. Tyler, whose talk is entitled
'The 60's Fifty Years On'**

**Wm. Tyler was awarded an MBE in 2009 for spending a lifetime in adult education.
He currently lives in Witham and gives talks all over Essex, mainly historical, bringing the
Subject to life.**

Celebration Day for Rayleigh U3A

Thursday 3rd July 2014 heralded the 7th anniversary of the beginning of our U3A and to celebrate the Committee, under the Chairmanship of Pete Huntly, decided to organise something special and to make it a day to remember. An invitation was sent out to the original Steering Committee and those that were able were delighted to attend.



Members of the original Steering Committee of Rayleigh U3A

Groups' Coordinator, Bob Wren, organised the hall with display tables from sixteen of our Groups and arranged for tables round the hall to allow people to sit and chat and watch the festivities.

At 2.30 pm Chairman Pete Huntly welcomed everyone, especially honoured guests including Founder Chairman, Marian Allen, who recruited the original Committee and set us on the road to a successful U3A. He said it was good to know that under the leadership of a forward-thinking Committee, Group Leaders and Volunteers, the Rayleigh U3A has grown from the original 69 members at the first meeting to our present U3A of 450 members and over 60 groups. This is proof that we are innovative and pro-active producing an interesting Newsletter, Website, programme of Social Events and a series of 'Talks for All'.

Chairman Pete Huntly invited Founder Chairman Marian Allen to cut the special celebration cake which depicted the U3A logo, and refreshments were served.



Founder Chairman, Marian Allen, with our present Chairman, Pete Huntly

Maureen Huntly

“From the Depths” or “A Miner`s Lot”

Three holidays with our U3A Walking Group have taken us to three different mines to learn of the working lives of miners.

In South Wales, at Blaenavon Big Pit coal mine we were given helmets with lamps. Then down in the lift to the depths before a long walk, half bent to miss the support pit props. Many a loud clang was heard as our helmets hit the props and hoping our lights were still on. Beside our path was the track to transport coal out by trolley, previously hauled by boys and pit ponies – both cheap labour and neither well treated.

A boy as young as 4 or 5 might be in charge of opening and closing the wooden “door” to control air flow. He was in pitch dark for long hours – not surprising that he might fall asleep, so endangering miners` lives. No money could be earned until digging started, often a long way from the mine entrance.

My lasting memories are also of families` lives. Miners would arrive home exhausted and covered in coal dust. Wives had to boil water for the tin bath in a one room hovel. Many infants were scalded to death by falling into boiling water. We saw piles of sooty clothes, full of mites and maggots. There was little money for food and mothers must have been desperate to care for their families. Next morning it was time to start again, hoping the canary would stay alive for another day.

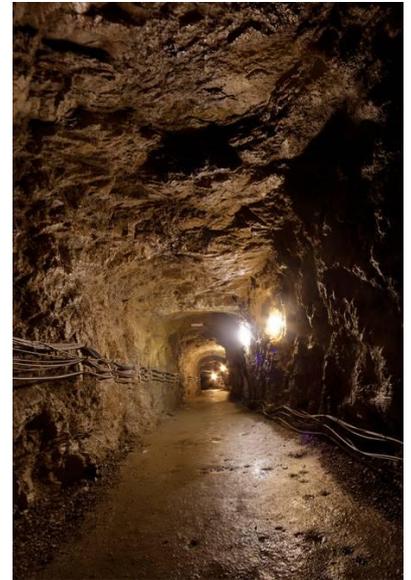
North Wales took us slate mining in Llechwedd caverns.

Welsh slate is 500 million years old and has been quarried here since 1836.

This time, complete with helmet, we were transported by trolley/train to work sites – a luxury not available to early workers. Slate miners mostly worked in family groups making them responsible for each others` safety. Each group worked a cavern and different jobs were allotted depending on age and ability. We tried gouging out a hollow in rock with a long heavy rod to insert dynamite. It took hours to be big enough to blast the rock open – one of many jobs for a boy. Another challenging pursuit was for one fit man to scale a ladder 50 foot plus, hardly supported, to test the roof. He leant from one side to the other of the cavern roof to ensure no loose rock fell on family workers below. One huge cavern we saw, called “Cathedral Cavern” was as its name suggests.

When slate was finally brought to the surface and assessed, up to 80% was discarded as unsuitable and payment made only for the remainder – what an insult for all the hard work and dangers endured.

Our final treat there was lunch, soup and a roll. We christened it slate soup and can only think it was meant to replicate “dish of the day” for the miners.



During a holiday in Cornwall we visited Geevor tin mine. The coast around Lands End and beneath the sea is said to have the highest concentration of tin and copper in the world. Suitably clad in waterproof jackets and helmets we were led through a rough, narrow, dark and very wet tunnel to the working site. Only our guide in front had a torch.

There are two main differences between tin mining and slate or coal – tin ore is “hard rock” and seams run vertically or at 45 degrees. Hard rock has to be blown out using dynamite which miners had to buy from their meagre wage. Explosions were set to fire at 1 or 2 minute intervals and if your candle went out whilst setting them your hand would tremble as you fumbled in the dark to finish before your partner in the nearby site set his off. Start time was agreed before the pair of miners started – but they had no direct contact underground. Miners had to work the seam above their heads – imagine the danger of falling rock! Those who mined under the ocean floor knew that one false stroke would be their last – by drowning. In a labyrinth of tunnels a blind miner would help others navigate when candles failed.

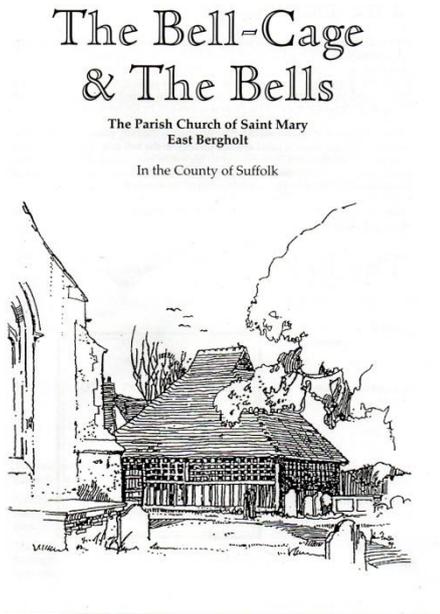
Men often walked several miles from home to mine before and after a long day. When they emerged covered in dirt, and wet with sweat it may be a freezing winter day.

Mining was dirty, dangerous work in unhealthy claustrophobic conditions, but it was usually the only work in those areas. Do it or die! “Health and Safety” non-existent and no compensation for death or injury. The “Bevan Boys” were not much better off than those fighting in the war. I have a lasting respect for all miners after my short insight into their lives and gratitude for keeping us warm in times of war and peace.

Joan Anderson

NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS

Church Visiting Group Two



The church of St. Mary the Virgin in the Suffolk village of East Bergholt is unique in many ways. It has been a site of Christian worship for over 1,000 years, but the present building, perpendicular in style, dates from 1350 to 1550. The construction of the tower of the church begun in 1525 was never completed, and instead the bells of the church were installed in a cage in the churchyard. There are 5 bells weighing in total over 4 tons. East Bergholt is the only place in England where the bells are rung by pure force of hand applied directly to the wooden headstock of each bell, and not by a rope or wheel. You can see the bells being rung on the website page:

<http://www.eastbergholtchurch.co.uk/bells/>

At the time of our visit in July 2014 organised by Pat and Dave Filby, the interior of the church was embellished by over 2,000 red poppies knitted or crocheted by the ladies of the village, providing a sea of colour to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. The rector told us that they were not celebrating war, but rather they were remembering the enormous sacrifice that went on, not only for the men who went to war but also for the women who stayed at home and the children who had to manage without their fathers.

Liz Baker

Serendipity One

One of the Hidden Treasures of London is the Chelsea Physic Garden, a visit to which was organised by Pat Murray and Jackie Burrell. The Garden was founded in 1673 by the Society of Apothecaries of London so that their apprentices could learn to grow medicinal plants and study their uses. The word 'physic' meant 'pertaining to things natural as distinct from the metaphysical' but now it is recognised as defining 'medicinal drugs' and also as 'the art of healing'. When the apothecaries decided on this four



acre site beside the River Thames, it was famed for its market gardens and orchards, with ideal free-draining soil and a southerly aspect creating the special microclimate to cultivate many tender species including the largest olive tree growing outside in Britain. Today Chelsea Physic Garden is dedicated to promoting education, conservation and scientific research. There are free garden tours given by knowledgeable and entertaining guides. To find out more about the Garden and when it can be visited, go to www.chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk

Maureen Huntly

Serendipity Two

Nestled in the West Sussex countryside is Saint Hill Manor. The present house was built in 1792 of locally quarried Sussex sandstone, replacing an earlier building erected in 1567. It was designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, more famously known as the architect of the White House in Washington USA. The manor house has had a number of very different distinguished owners over the years, the most well known being the Maharajah of Jaipur, who introduced a number of Indian antiques into the House which are still there today, and Ron Hubbard, the celebrated Scientologist, whose family trust remains the owner. Our Group took tea in the 'Monkey Room' of the house, which features a unique 100ft. long monkey mural painted by Winston Churchill's nephew John Spencer Churchill. The mural which took 3 months to paint depicts 145 monkeys in total of 20 different species. Churchill wrote in his autobiography 'much as I tried to prevent it happening, the monkeys resemble human beings'. A capuchin monkey painting under a tree portrays Sir Winston Churchill. Hubbard was a prolific author and is recognised in the Guinness Book of Records as the most translated and published individual author in the world. In the grounds of the Manor is a college where throughout the year some 300 students from all over the world study scientology. We received 15 minutes tuition in scientology but at our age we treated it with scepticism ! More information can be obtained from the website: www.sainthillmanor.org.uk



Roger Baker

Walking Group Four

On a walk organised by Peter Abrey, the Group visited 'The Haven Plotlands Museum' in the Langdon Nature Reserve, Lower Dunton Road, near Basildon. A visit to 'The Haven' is an opportunity to step back in time to the 1930/40s and experience what life was like for one of the many London families who bought a plot of Essex countryside and built their own slice of 'paradise'. 'The Haven' is the last of nearly 200 Plotland homes that occupied the site and is now owned by the Essex Wildlife Trust as part of Langdon Nature Reserve. The bungalow belonged to the Mills family since it was built in the 1930s and it was still standing when the Trust took over the Reserve in the 1980s. A visit is well worthwhile giving you the opportunity to explore the bungalow, workshop and gardens, and see toys of yesteryear and original artefacts. There is even a mock WW2 air raid shelter.

The website

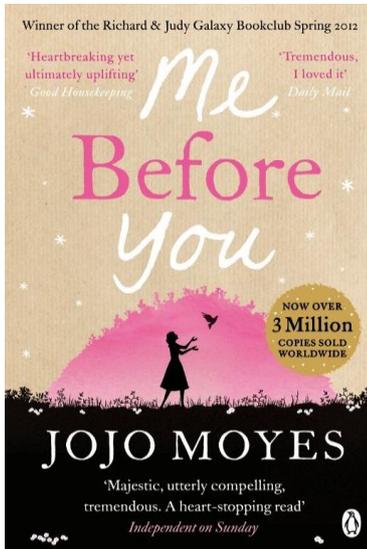
<http://www.essexwt.org.uk/haven-plotlands-museum> will provide you with further information and opening hours.

Maureen Huntly



NEWS FROM BOOK GROUP 2

A suggestion was made recently by one of our group, that it might be of interest to our U3A membership to have a regular slot in the Newsletter, recommending some of the books we have read which scored highly at our monthly meetings and that we think others might like to read themselves. Our Editors have agreed and we are delighted to present our recommendations for this month.....



Lou Clark knows lots of things. She knows how many footsteps there are between the bus stop and home. She knows she likes working in The Buttered Bun teashop and she knows she might not love her boyfriend Patrick.

What Lou doesn't know is she's about to lose her job, or that knowing what's coming is what keeps her sane.

Will Traynor knows his motorcycle accident took away his desire to live. He knows everything feels very small and rather joyless now and he knows exactly how he's going to put a stop to that.

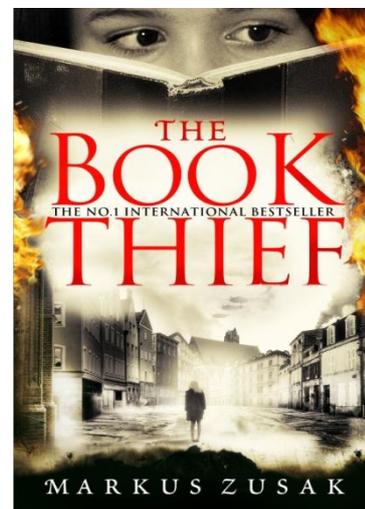
What Will doesn't know is that Lou is about to burst into his world in a riot of colour. And neither of them knows they're going to change the other for all time.

It is 1939. In Nazi Germany, the country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier – and will become busier still.

By her brother's graveside, Liesel's life is changed forever when she picks up a single object, abandoned in the snow. It is the Gravedigger's Handbook, and this is her first act of book thievery. So begins her love affair with books and soon she is stealing from Nazi book-burnings, the mayor's wife's library.....wherever there are books to be found.

But these are dangerous times and when her foster family hides a Jew in their basement, nothing will ever be the same again.

Kath Hands



Next Month's Speaker.

Our Speaker at our October meeting is Jim Buttress

His talk is entitled 'Britain in Bloom'

He has recently retired from his position as Head Gardener of the Royal Parks, a career spreading over 35 years. He has since become a TV personality appearing in a number of gardening programmes

André Rieu Appreciation Group



André Rieu is a Dutch violinist and conductor best known for creating the waltz-playing Johann Strauss Orchestra. André and the Johann Strauss Orchestra have turned classical and waltz music into a worldwide concert touring music act, as successful as some of the biggest global pop and rock music acts.

We are in the process of starting up and new members are welcome at the moment. We will meet one evening a month in a suitable venue and watch one of André Rieu's amazing DVD's, of which I've got several. There will be a break at an opportune moment for tea/coffee and biscuits.

If you're interested in joining this group, please contact me at:

peterabrey78@hotmail.com or on 01268 777245.

Peter Abrey
Group Leader

Notes from the Secretary - September 2014

I would like to bring to your attention the forthcoming events notified to me by the U3A Trust. The full information about these events can be found via links on the 'Events' page of the U3A website at www.rayleighu3a.org.uk, or feel free to telephone me on 01702 552426 or email jsoilleux88@gmail.com. Further information about these events will also be displayed on the Secretary's Notice Board at the Members meeting in September 2014.

U3A Explores Science at the RI on 30th. September
Exploring Elgar on 15th. October at the Elgar Birthplace Museum in Worcester
Inspiration Day at the Royal Opera House Production Workshop in Thurrock
U3A West End Sing Out on 22nd. October at the Playhouse Theatre in London

The Times and Sunday Times Cheltenham Literature Festival (with reduced prices and preferential advance booking for U3A members).

U3A Diaries (a slimline pocket style) for 2015 will be available to purchase at the September, October and November meetings. They will be on sale at the information desk Price £2 each.

Talks For All

Researched and arranged by Education Committee Members.

Tuesday 14th October at Holy Trinity Hall
Claire Ivey MNCH (Acc) - **'Hypnotherapy'**

Friday 24th October at WI Hall
Shiela Billins - **'Student Nurse Training in the 60's at The London Hospital'**

Tuesday 28th October at Holy Trinity Hall
Bill Fulton, Chairman of the Essex Association of the Western Front Association –
'The Human Face of the Great War'

Tuesday 11th November at Holy Trinity Hall
Roger Smith - **'History of Stowe Maries Aerodrome and its Future'**

Friday 21st November at WI Hall
Chris Tyas, RSPB - **'Wallasea Island Wild Coast Project'**

Friday 28th November at Holy Trinity Hall
Tom Doig **'Old Photographs – Identification and Dating'**

All Talks Begin at 2pm – 4pm
Tickets on Sale at the September Meeting at £2 each to cover the cost of hall hire and refreshments

Details of Committee members are available on the website.

Please note that contributions for the November Newsletter should be with the Editors by the 10th of October.

Please send articles for inclusion to:
Liz and Roger Baker – rogerbaker99@hotmail.co.uk
Irene and John Tyson – jatyson1@aol.com

Social Events

Just to remind you of events coming up.

First of all the Barn Dance on Saturday 4th October. This is sure to be an enjoyable evening as the band is The Famous Potatoes who are very well known. Tickets are going well, but are still available at £16, which includes a supper of a jacket potato with a choice of filling. The event will be held at The Hullbridge Community Centre. I have to give numbers to the caterers before our October meeting, so make sure you buy your ticket at the September meeting or before.

On Saturday 1st November our ever popular Quiz Night will be held at Trinity Hall, Rayleigh. Our Quiz Master will once again be Mr. David Lutterloch who always provides us with an entertaining evening. Tickets are £4 each and will be on sale at the September meeting. Teams should be no more than 8 persons.

I am very reluctant to mention Christmas at this time of year, but plans are ongoing for our annual Christmas Lunch which will be held this year at The Rayleigh Club on Thursday December 4th. There are still a few things to be decided but I am hoping to have the tickets available for the September meeting. The cost will be similar to previous years (£25/£26) so I do ask you to bring your cheque books to pay as tickets at this amount can result in large amounts of cash which is a responsibility for me.

Thank you for your co-operation.

The Social Committee is always happy to consider any suggestions from members re social events. We have a very large membership and it's not easy to please everyone, but we welcome any new ideas.

Jane Godfrey - Social Events Secretary

The Committee is aware that a number of members who have been receiving a hard printed copy of the Newsletter now have the ability to download a copy from the Rayleigh U3A web-site. In the interest of saving our U3A printing and mailing costs which are an increasing burden, we do ask members who have been receiving a hard printed copy but who do now have access either directly or through a friend to the Internet to advise our Membership Secretary, Gwen Greenwood, that they will in future be satisfied to access the Newsletter themselves and no longer require a printed copy.

Your cooperation in this regard will be appreciated by the Committee.