

SEPTEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

Well, here we are in September and I am sure we are all hoping for a beautiful Indian Summer - we have to have some sunshine soon surely! However on a positive note, my grass has never looked so green over the summer!

Since the late Queen's Jubilee celebrations in 2022, and her sad death and funeral in 2023 and then the King's Coronation and his first Trooping of the Colour, we have been treated to pageantry which only we do in such style. Tying in so well with this, is our next Study Day planned for Wednesday 18th October.

Titled **Royal Occasions and Ceremonies**, we have some excellent speakers lined up along with a two course meal at Saxon Hall. Tickets are on sale at £27.50 per person and you can buy them at the September Members Meeting or by emailing Maureen Huntly on maureenhuntly@btinternet.com More details can be found later in this Newsletter.



Thanks!

We finally managed to meet with Sheila Farrant who ended her term as a Committee Member and our Newsletter Editor back in May.

Jane, our Secretary, presented her with a lovely bouquet of flowers in appreciation of her contribution to Rayleigh u3a on our behalf.

Note to Members not on Email

Due to the cost of postage, we should be very grateful if you could pick up your newsletter at the monthly meeting, or ask another member to collect it on your behalf. They are published in February, April, June, September & November. Many thanks for your help with this!

Updated Policies

Please note that the Committee have recently reviewed our Data Protection Policy and Safeguarding Policy & Procedure. The new versions, plus our other Policies and Procedures can be found on our website on the Information page.

FUTURE MONTHLY SPEAKERS

6th September 2023

Andrew Babicz has been a professional horticulturist for over 50 years. He started as an apprentice gardener at Inverewe Gardens with the National Trust for Scotland and went on to work at R.H.S. Wisley, Kew and Hampton Court Palace.



He has also worked for the Parks Department in London Boroughs, written a number of publications and is currently the Secretary and a judge with the London Gardens Society. We are sure his illustrated talk will be of interest to all our members who are interested in gardening.

4th October 2023

The London Underground is the worlds oldest and largest system carrying over 12 million passengers a year. Growing from a short steam-powered line it now extends to over 400 miles, of which about 190 miles are underground, carrying over 12 million passengers a year.

Tony Earle, a retired Scientist from Kodak Research Labs, looks at the history and building of the railway from its early beginnings to the modern day with personal recollections of travelling on the 'Tube' from the early 50's. The talk is well illustrated with a light- hearted quiz at the end.

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 November Newsletter is 15th October.

NOTICES

Sadly we have been informed of the deaths of four of our members. We have sent condolences from Rayleigh u3a to their families.

Martin Gibbons - passed away in June
Betty Pudsey - we were informed in June
Maureen Wray - passed away in August
Rita Came—passed away in August

NEW MEMBERS MEETING

All our new members to Rayleigh u3a who joined in 2023 belong to our New Members Group and we held our first meeting on Friday 14th July at the Cloister Hall, Holy Trinity Church.

Thirty-five new members joined Amanda & Ray Lowe, Paul & Jane Reeve and Debbie Bamber and we started with refreshments and a welcome from Ray our Chairman.



We explained what Rayleigh u3a is about, and the Membership Secretary spoke about her role and gave information about the Trust. Paul and Amanda spoke about their roles as Groups Co-ordinator and Group Leaders and we had a fun quiz and more refreshments!

It was a very successful afternoon with lots of chatter and laughter as members met other new members and hopefully formed friendships as well as an understanding of how Rayleigh u3a works. We will be meeting three times a year going forward, with new members added as they join. We will be inviting some existing Group Leaders along in the future and other Committee members will also be attending to explain their roles.

CAN YOU HELP?

One of our most important Volunteer roles is that of our Welcomers - who greet and help our members at our Monthly Members meetings. Wearing a red sash to make them noticeable, they are often the first people our prospective new members come in contact with when they come to their first meeting.

We need to strengthen our Team, as recently they have been very busy at meetings and would welcome any offers of help from existing members. We would give you the information you need to know and pair you up with an existing Welcomer until you felt confident to 'go it alone'!

Please contact Debbie Bamber - our Membership Secretary or Amanda Lowe - our New Members Group Leader for more information or to volunteer your services. Many thanks!

debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk
amandalowe328@btinternet.com

PAST EVENTS

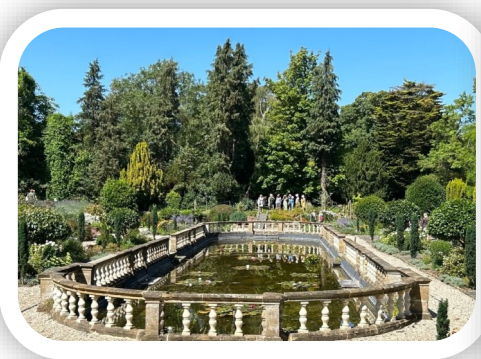
On 27th June, we held an Educational Event at Saxon Hall with a guest speaker - Tony Harris - who gave talks on Jack the Ripper, Sherlock Homes and Secret London.

It was a very enjoyable day and we learnt a lot of Victorian history and interesting facts about London, presented in an entertaining format by Tony who certainly knows how to engage his audience.



Rayleigh u3a Trip to The Gardens of Easton Lodge

A group of 40 u3a members enjoyed a coach trip in August to the historic Grade II listed gardens of Easton Lodge, near Dunmow. Welcomed by the garden manager we were then split into smaller groups for a guided tour of around 70 minutes during which we learned about the history of the gardens. Refreshments were included and many members also brought picnics to enjoy in the shade. There was then the opportunity to wander around the garden at leisure.



The gardens have a fascinating history linked closely with the story of Frances 'Daisy' Maynard who was later the Countess of Warwick. The story of Daisy and the gardens will be the subject of our monthly meeting in September 2024 so I will not give too much away here – suffice to say that Daisy was quite a character!

The gardens are maintained by very enthusiastic volunteers and are open on Thursdays and once a month on Sundays in the summer.

NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS

GARDENING GROUP VISITS PEACOCKS

We enjoyed a marvelous guided tour of the 10 acre garden Peacocks with the owner Phil Torr who has gradually expanded his garden over the last quarter century. Our first view was of the impressive house set amidst lawns, which dates back to the early 1700s with a Regency front. We saw a variety of different species of trees, then a walk round the side of the house revealed a lake with a temple at the far end, an Edwardian summerhouse, and then a grotto on a spring, first built in the 1930's which Phil had refurbished to create a cliff waterfall. A small opening in a hedge behind the waterfall and nearby a refurbished small summerhouse revealed the first of a series of three garden rooms built over a former swimming pool and tennis courts.

The walled garden featured a pergola, pond and flourishing borders boasting slug-free hostas (we were told of a garlic mix which solved this problem) and climbing roses and clematis. An Indian door, set into the brick wall of the garden, which then opened to another enclosed space, completed in 2017 with influences from medieval and Arab paradise gardens. There was a cross-shaped water feature with a central fountain, with planting including a cordon of hornbeams, several medlars and chamomile insets.



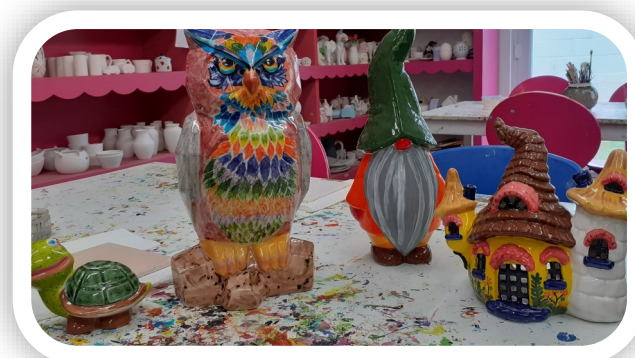
The garden then led on to a small knot garden before opening to a large apple orchard and meadow. The meadow was covered in wildflowers, thanks to Phil's careful preparation of the soil over the last decade to ensure it's suitably under-nourished soil for annual wildflowers. The meadow is also home to two bug hotels. The visit concluded with tea and cakes by the house. The garden deservedly won the Daily Mail National Garden Competition in 2021.

Article by Val Whitehouse and Photo by Jim Whitehouse

CERAMICS GROUP

We meet on the 1st Monday of the month. This is some of the work of the group.

We would love to welcome more members! If you are interested, please contact Paul Reeve - Group Coordinator.



Rayleigh u3a Members visit Layer Marney Tower

We organised a coach trip to the Grade 1 listed Layer Marney Tower on a beautiful sunny day. A guided tour by the owners, Sheila and Nick Carrington, meant we were privy to hearing not only about the history of the building but also saw some of their private rooms and how the family have made it their home.

Constructed in the first half of the reign of Henry VIII it is the tallest Tudor gatehouse in Britain built from a combination of brick and terracotta. It is the creation of Henry 1st Lord Marney who died 24th May 1523 – exactly 500 years ago to the day that we visited. Not only this but it was also Sheila Carrington's birthday! The Carrington family bought the tower in 1959 and it has been occupied by the family ever since. It first opened to the public in the 1960's and Nick and Sheila took over from his parents in 1989.



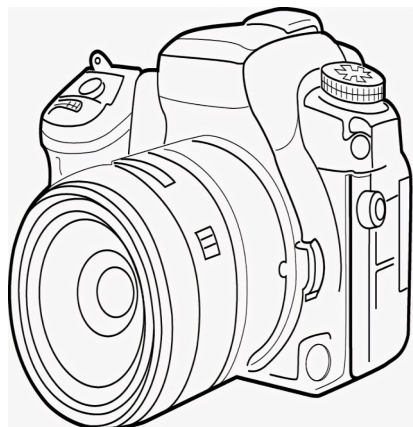
Henry Marney was Henry VIII's Lord Privy Seal, and the building was his statement house built to show his wealth and power reflecting his relationship with the king. Henry Marney is buried in the Parish Church of St. Mary the Virgin in the grounds.



We climbed to the top of the 80 feet tall tower which has magnificent views down to the river Blackwater estuary. There were many exhibitions and a marvellous collection of Crowns and Crests that were once above the stalls of Garter Knights in St. George's Chapel,

Windsor. The Garter Knights, who were represented by these crowns and crests all died during the reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

Article by Val Whitehouse with photos by Jim Whitehouse



The Digital Photography group have a few vacancies!

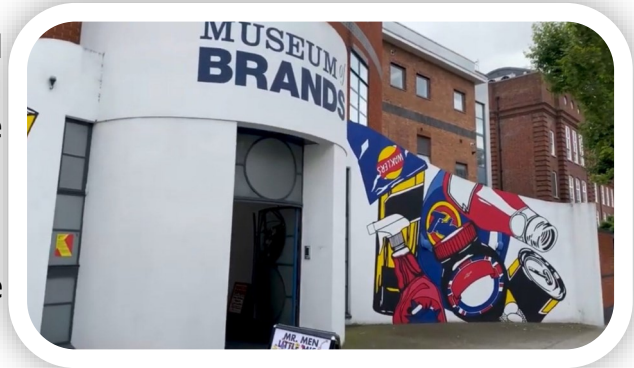
If you are really interested in photography, please contact
Group Leaders Amanda or Jim on email addresses below:

amandalowe328@btinternet.com
jimwhitehouse@hotmail.com

Serendipity 1 trip to Museum of Brands, London.

On 6th June a group from Serendipity 1 travelled to this small but fascinating museum in Notting Hill. It was a very easy journey; one train, one tube, short walk.

We all felt a little sit down for a coffee on arrival was a good plan and an opportunity to peruse the menu for lunch... and for a sweet treat!



The museum didn't seem large from outside but houses an enormous collection from the Victorian era onwards, which shows how society has moved from being quite Spartan and practical, to the mass consumerism of our largely disposable culture today. Though with more awareness of climate change we are challenged to rethink this attitude...



The museum demonstrates 150 years plus of branding, packaging and advertising. It shows how societal change, travel, culture and lifestyle influence our consumer choices. As we walked through the Time Tunnel we constantly heard ourselves and others say, with joy and a little tearful nostalgia, "I had one of those," and "I remember my Granny used one just like that".

Time ran away with us and with many more exhibits to see we left the Beatles and The Stones and retraced our steps back to the Café for a light lunch and coincidentally, got chatting to another u3a group, up from Tunbridge Wells.



Afterwards we returned to the museum exhibits, before heading home and missing the rush hour.



Article by Juli Fowles.

Serendipity 6 & Visiting Interesting Places in Essex Groups Visit Stow Maries

Members from both Groups enjoyed an interesting tour of this unique place with a history covering over 100 years. Stow Maries is the largest known surviving group of R.F.C. buildings on a WWI aerodrome. The guides told us about how the land was requisitioned from three farmers during W.W.I and originally opened in 1916 as the home to B Flight of No. 37 (HD) Squadron, Royal Flying Corps.



The aerodrome saw the birth of the Air Defence of Great Britain in response to the first raids by Zeppelins and Gotha bombers on London and the South East. It played a key role in the Battle of Britain, and it was at Stow Maries that the No. 37 Squadron transitioned from the Royal Flying Corps to the Royal Air Force on 1st April 1918. It continued in its dedicated role until May 1919 when the R.A.F. closed its doors forever.

The site reverted back to Flambird's Farm and the existing buildings were repurposed or converted to residential and agricultural use. The airfield was turned over to pasture. It was only when a private concern had the site designated a conservation area in 2009 that the surviving 24 buildings were listed Grade II* in 2012 because of the site's importance. It was included in the Historic England (Buildings) *At-Risk Register* in the same year.

A campaign led by Essex County Council in 2012 led to the acquisition of the site for the nation when it was put up for sale and it came under the management of Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome Ltd., a charitable organisation.

A great amount of work has been undertaken since that time and is supported by an army of volunteers. Work continues to conserve more buildings on the site. In addition to the buildings are hangars, aircraft, interesting museums and a shop, and the Mess provided us with an enjoyable lunch after the tour.

Article by Val Whitehouse and photos by Jim Whitehouse.



Interested in Visiting Gardens in Essex?

We have formed the new Gardening Group 2, which will meet on the 3rd Thursday of the month. We are able to visit lovely gardens not normally open to the public in addition to other local gardens. We will also visit garden centres and meet up for lunch.



If you are interested in joining please contact:
Val Whitehouse or Sally Hender:
val_whitehouse@yahoo.co.uk or sallyhender95@gmail.com

Visit Interesting Places in Essex Group visit East Hanningfield Church

Members of the Visiting Interesting Places Group visited All Saints Church in East Hanningfield and listened to a very interesting talk about the history of the church by Church Warden Gil Gordon.



In the 7th century a local Saxon chief was converted to Christianity and built a church near to where he lived at East Hanningfield Hall. A replacement church was built in the 13th century but unfortunately a fire in 1883 destroyed the church.

The current church was built in the centre of the village in 1884 in Early English style with some chequer work, a timber belfry and a broach spire which is octagonal in shape and sits on a square tower. The molten metal from the original bells was salvaged by local school children to make the three new bells which were cast by Meirs & Stainbank London Bell Foundry. Just 18 months after the fire the new church was consecrated by the Bishop of Albans in 1885 so, although the church looks as if it has been there for many centuries, it is not very old.

All Saint's Church was granted Grade II listing on 12th June 2012 for its architectural interest, intactness and its interior. After a look around the church and its grounds members walked up the Tye to have lunch at Vita Bella, which was originally the Three Horseshoes Inn and is also a Grade II listed building.



The Encounter

From Sheila Loveridge of the Creative Writing Group

Janey woke up and looked at the clock, 5am. Janey knew it was pointless trying to go back to sleep so she got up and made herself a coffee. Every day was the same, no matter how late she went to bed she would awaken at the crack of dawn and have the long hours spread ahead of her. She wished she could stay in bed all morning like many of her friends did.

Janey looked around her kitchen, it was spotless as was the rest of the house. She would go through her usual routine of hoovering and polishing things that did not need cleaning or polishing but she would still be finished by 8am and then what. Since her husband had died Janey just did not know what to do with herself. She still visited friends and family and went on day trips but there were too many hours spent on her own. Her daily routine included going for a long walk, that passed a couple of hours and the fellow walkers she met always smiled and said hello.

Janey pulled herself together and set off to the local park. The sky was cloudy with the threat of rain but she didn't mind that. As she walked through a copse of trees a small dog came running up to her and bounced around her with its tail wagging. She crouched down to pet the dog and they were still like that when an elderly woman came rushing round the corner "sorry, sorry, he's only young and didn't come back when I called him, I hope he's not bothering you".

Janey smiled and said "no, he's a real sweetheart, cheered me up no end". Yes, he does that he's such a happy chap. My name is Sarah and this little rascal is Sam. I help out at the dog rescue centre and you'll often find me here walking an assortment of the waifs and strays that come in. This one is a bit special though, even though he's a little rascal. Janey laughed and said "I can see that, how come he hasn't found a home yet". Well, if you have a few minutes, why don't we sit on the bench over there and I'll tell you.

Janey was only too pleased to sit and chat with Sarah who explained that Sam had only come to the centre a few days previously. His owner had gone into hospital and there was no one to look after him, the centre were hoping that he would go back home once his owner was out of hospital so he wasn't really looking for a home, more a temporary arrangement.

Even though they had just met, Janey felt a real connection with Sarah, the conversation flowed and Sarah's passion for the dogs at the centre was obvious, Janey felt the stirrings of excitement, this was something she could do, she could help out at the centre, she loved dogs and it would give her a purpose. When Sarah said we have a real shortage of foster placements for dogs in Sam's situation. Janey looked at Sam who had planted himself on her feet and was looking at her with his soulful brown eyes. Without thinking, she said I can look after him, how do I become a foster carer.

Sarah explained that she would need to come into the centre and fill out the forms and then a home visit would be arranged to check that her living arrangements were suitable

for a dog. Janey arranged to visit the centre later that day and left the park with a spring in her step that had been missing for many months.

Janey went back to her house and looked at it through a strangers eyes. Everything gleamed, there was not a speck of dust or item out of place. It didn't look lived in and when she thought about it, Janey had not been living since her husband died, she had been existing but now she felt that she had a purpose once more. Janey was both nervous and excited at the same time. When she arrived at the centre, Sarah was there to greet her and after introductions to the manager, volunteers and dogs, they sat down with coffee to discuss how the centre operated and the role of the volunteers.

All the time she was there Sam sat by her side and everyone commented on how he had attached himself to her. Janey decided that she didn't just want to be a foster carer, she wanted to volunteer in the centre itself. There was such a lovely feel about the place and Janey thought it would be a pleasure to be involved.

Six months later Janey was totally involved in the rescue centre, she had a new purpose in life and was there 4 days a week. Sarah had become a good friend and Janey felt that at last she was living again. Sam stayed with Janey for six months and when his owner was unable to return home his stay with her became permanent. Janey often thought back to that chance encounter with the little dog and how that encounter had changed her life.

UPCOMING EVENTS

(See Events Noticeboard at Main Meetings for more details)

Monday 18th September - Talk for All "Insights of a Provincial Auctioneer" Talk by Steve Lester at Cloister Hall, Holy Trinity Church, includes tea/coffee & biscuit. 1.30pm to 3pm.

Tickets: £3 per person on sale at June, July and September Monthly Meetings

Contact Juli Fowles: juli.fowles@gmail.com or 07944 310554

Wednesday 18th October - ROYAL OCCASIONS & CEREMONIES Study Day at Saxon Hall with tea/coffee & 2-course lunch (see following poster for more details) 11am to 3.15pm.

Tickets: £27.50 per person on sale at September Monthly Meeting

Contact: Maureen Huntly: maureenhuntly@btinternet.com

Tuesday 5th December - CHRISTMAS LUNCH at Saxon Hall

Tickets: will go on sale at the October Monthly Meeting.

Royal Occasions and Ceremonies

Rayleigh U3A Study Day at Saxon Hall

Wednesday 18th October 2023

Email: maureenhuntly@btinternet.com

In this special Coronation year of 2023 the speakers taking part in our Study Day are representative of volunteers who support royal events in many different ways making them such resplendent occasions.

Tony Appleton

Royal Town Crier, President of the Guild of International Millennium Town Criers and Toastmaster



Mrs Jennifer Tolhurst

His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Essex who is the first woman to be appointed to the office in the county since it was established in the 1500's.

She is His Majesty the King's personal representative in the county.



Patrick Wilkins

For 27 years Honorary Secretary to The Wandsmen of St Paul's Cathedral arranging and guiding his sidesmen at Royal Occasions including the Platinum Jubilee Service for HM Queen Elizabeth II last year. National President of the Craft Bakers Association. Past Master of the Worshipful Company of Bakers Livery Company



Keith Baldwin

As a soldier he was a member of the Royal Horse Guards, The Blues which is part of the Household Cavalry and spent some time with the mounted squadron on ceremonial duties in London. Keith then joined the police service retiring as a Superintendent.

