

April 2025

General Meetings are held on the **second Thursday** of the month at 2.00pm  
at Christ Church, 164 New London Road, Chelmsford CM2 0AW

## General Meeting Speakers

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025 – Easter Social - No speaker. Food, Tea/Coffee Table Quiz and Raffle**

**Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025 - VE Day 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 'Street Party' – with very special guest of honour, the national hero Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill (as portrayed by Tony Harris).**



We would like to project a slideshow featuring photos and memorabilia from WW2. This is in preference to a physical display with inherent risk. If any members have ID cards, ration cards, coupons, medals, original photographs, or similar that they would like to see included in the slideshow, please scan or take photographs and email them to Eddie Wood [ejwood34@gmail.com](mailto:ejwood34@gmail.com).

There will be food and drink including VE Day fruit cake (from a ministry of food leaflet). Feel free to come dressed in 1940s apparel.

**This is a ticketed event and tickets can be booked via the website:**

<https://chelmsford.u3asite.uk/ve-day-that-man-tony-harris-is-back-this-time-as-winston-churchill/>

We are looking for some volunteers to help with setting up on the day. If you could help please email Eddie Wood [ejwood34@gmail.com](mailto:ejwood34@gmail.com).

## Come Sing With Us



The Chelmsford u3a Singing Group is now up and running. We have decided to meet every Saturday morning 10 to 11.30 in room 2 at Christ Church, New London Road, CM2 0AW. There will be a small charge of £2-£3 to cover the cost of the room.

**NO AUDITIONS** - The only requirement is that you enjoy singing.  
Please contact Julie [julnic138@gmail.com](mailto:julnic138@gmail.com) 07759108498 or just come along.  
Julie.

## Vacancies The Wonder of Words Group



This new group is now up and running, and is one that is greatly enjoyed by our members. We now have a small number of vacancies for additional members.

Please go to the website to read in more detail a description of what we do. If you are interested in attending, please click on the email link from the website, as the group leader I will get back to you within a day or so with more information.

[https://chelmsford.u3asite.uk/u3a\\_groups/the-wonder-of-words/](https://chelmsford.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/the-wonder-of-words/)

Lindsay Whitehouse Group Leader

## View from the Chair



Spring is definitely in the air and it is great to know that our u3a is still expanding with over twenty-three new members having joined us in the last month alone. This doesn't mean we can rest on our laurels - quite the opposite in fact! It means we must seek to provide more learning opportunities and social interaction for our members.

Our new membership year started in March and Wendy Hubbard has been busily working her way through the bank transactions and cheques that have been pouring in. However, at the time of writing, there are still 140 members that haven't renewed their subscription. We trust that it is just because it has slipped your mind as opposed to a conscience decision to leave Chelmsford u3a. Either way please let us know if there is anything we can do to improve your u3a experience.

Renew your membership!

There has been a flurry of activity on the committee as we get to grips with our priorities for the year. Eddie Wood has been busy planning our April/Easter Social meeting and our special VE Day commemorative event in May. I personally am really looking forward to that one and we hope you will dress up and share your personal/family memories and stories with us.

Alan Caddy has been investigating a suite of meeting rooms available for hire at Beaulieu Community Centre and has been building third party relationships with Chelmsford Garden Community (which has nothing to do with gardening 😊) and similar organisations in the Chelmsford area. We are to have a stall at the Falcons Bowling Club on the evening of 24<sup>th</sup> April and require volunteers to help promote our u3a to anyone who might show the slightest interest. Contact Alan if you would like to help.



Brian Littlechild and I have been doing some analysis of our membership and trying to find out what interests and hobbies are most popular, with a view to facilitating the start up of more groups. In the meantime two new luncheon groups have been formed, and at long last we are to have a new singing group. I'm sure it would be relatively simple to start a Quiz



Group. You may get an email from us in the coming weeks but don't wait to be asked, let us know if you feel your particular interests aren't covered in our current group offer.

Andy Moir, although not a committee member, has also been busy sprucing up our website and making sure it reflects our current group offer. Andy has added a very useful link to the Third Age Trust's online learning events which are open to all u3a members. You will see a new link on the Home Page of 'National u3a Events'. You can scroll through the pages to see listed events for the next 6 weeks or so and you can book yourself a place on an event by clicking the title link.

Of course there have been a few disappointments along the way, the most notable of which is that John Heathcote and Berry Cornell have decided to step down from running the Live Arts Group. I'm sure you'll agree that they have done a sterling job over many years, surviving the slump due to the Covid pandemic and subsequent lock-downs, There is no doubt about it, they got us excellent seats at much reduced prices particularly in London, but also at theatres in the provinces. They even arranged coaches to take us there and bring us back. It is so nice not to have to drive to our destination and find somewhere to park. My aim is to try and restart a similar interest group but it won't arrange itself and will probably take a small group of people to administer. If you are interested please let me know.



Wider news comes from the Third Age Trust as it starts its new governance structure on 1<sup>st</sup> April. The new Board of Trustees consists of six members compared to the previous eighteen. The u3a Council currently consists of twenty-one members who represent the views of the member u3as and are responsible for identifying u3a-wide problems and priorities which will be reflected in the Trust's annual budget and forward strategy. The East of England's representative is Ian Matthews who is keen to hear from the u3a's in his area as to their problems and concerns. The new Council will meet for the first time on 8<sup>th</sup> April.

Lesley Wood



### **Spanish Conversation Group**

Leader: David Gout

Ten people including one prospective new member attended today and participated in a lively meeting.

Three of our members had spent time abroad since our last meeting.

One described her trip to Zurich, which included a visit to the Lindt chocolate factory. The thought of this made everybody else very jealous!

Another had made her first trip in a helicopter flying from Malaga airport to Ceuta (a Spanish enclave in North Africa). She showed us some pictures of the Spanish coastline taken from the helicopter, which were spectacular.

A third had visited Rome. As well as battling the crowds around the Trevi Fountains and in St Peter's Square, she and her husband took in the Six Nations rugby match between Italy and France. Lots of tries, but not many for Italy who lost rather heavily!

We also learnt that a Spanish conversation group (nothing to do with ours) has started in the art unit in the Meadows. It takes place every Saturday between eleven and half past twelve and costs nothing to attend. The principal aim of the group is to give Spanish speakers in Chelmsford a chance to converse in their mother tongue, although in the session that one of our members attended recently, there were also beginners present. It certainly sounds worth a look for anybody with a couple of hours to spare on a Saturday morning and wants to practise their conversational skills.

If you can hold a basic conversation in Spanish and would like to come to our meetings, please click the link to our website. Whatever your ability, participating in our meetings will give you the confidence to speak and understand Spanish. The next meeting for the group will be on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2025 at 10:30am at Chelmsford Library in Meeting Room 4 on the first floor.

David Gout

### London - The City & its People Group

Leader: Berry Cornell

**If you would like to join the London Group** please contact the membership secretary Chris Rycroft for further information: Tel no. 01245 473047 email: [c.rycroft123@btinternet.com](mailto:c.rycroft123@btinternet.com).

The Group **usually** meets up on 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month at 2pm but **dates in bold** are exceptions due to Bank holidays, Christmas and availability. Meetings are held at Christ Church, New London Road, Chelmsford.



### Programme for the beginning of 2025

- 28<sup>th</sup> Apr Talk: London: The National Parks speaker Kathy Lancaster
- 19<sup>th</sup> May** Talk: London Livery Companies speaker David Williams
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Jun Annual London Walk – Bishopsgate architecture and much more (flyer in May newsletter)
- 28<sup>th</sup> July Visit to Highgate Cemetery (flyer in June newsletter)
- 18<sup>th</sup> Aug** The Aristocracy moving West & the London Squares in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century – Speaker Tony Tuckwell
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept Visit to Kew Gardens (flyer in August newsletter)

**Committee:** Berry Cornell Convenor 01277 355823, Susie Fowkes, Chris Rycroft, David Marsh, Dave Sayers, Bob Smith Deputy Convenor.

### Lunch Club 3

Leaders: Laraine Linard and Barbara Childs

Out in the countryside in a little hamlet called Little Green there is a pub called The Compasses. On our way there we were a little concerned as we kept seeing a lot of “road ahead closed” signs. We thought we would have to find an alternative route but going by the absence of any workmen or plant machinery we decided to try our luck and carried on following John T’s directions. It took a little while to get there but through some lovely countryside we



eventually reached our destination. In fact, we arrived before opening time and sat outside in the lovely sunshine exchanging a few words with some of the locals who had also come for lunch.

Once inside we ordered our drinks and were then shown to our tables. As there were eighteen of us this time we had been requested to pre-order our food. There was some confusion at first because they could not find our booking but fortunately for us, John Tritton (our host on this occasion) came to the rescue and managed to sort things out and very shortly the food started to arrive. Although we got off to a rocky start, we all thoroughly enjoyed our meals and would certainly be visiting again.

## **Bookworms**

Leader: Jane Hickman

Review of A Marriage Portrait by Maggie O'Farrell

It is set in the 1500s in Italy when each area of Italy was still ruled by a Duke and his family. It centres on the Duke of Florence's youngest daughter, Lucrezia. Following the death of Lucrezia's older sister, who was due to marry the Duke of Ferrara, it was agreed that Lucrezia will become his bride despite being only 15 years of age.

After the marriage, Lucrezia has a premonition during dinner one evening that the Duke is going to kill her. After Lucrezia dies and is buried the Duke subsequently grieves her and then goes on to have two further marriages but none of his marriages bears any children. However, there is a twist over her death - was it actually Lucrezia who was killed or did she survive?

On this occasion this book was one suggested by the local library. However, normally the group members decide on books to be read and we currently have a list which includes our next book – Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus.

We welcome new members to come and join our small friendly group. We meet on the first Thursday of the month at 2.30pm at The Black Bull pub in Rainsford Road, Chelmsford.



## **IT Group**

Leader: Lyn Parsons

If you need any support with your devices: laptop, iPhone, android phone, iPad, android tablet please join us, our knowledgeable members will help you.

There is no joining fee or attendance fee. If you would like tea/coffee we ask for a 50p donation.

**The next meeting of the IT Group will be on Wednesday 9th April 10.00 at Christ Church New London Road Chelmsford.**

## Church Visiting Group

Group Leader: Brian Greatrex Administrator: Michael Gray

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March FEERING All Saints KELVEDON St Mary

Bright and early on Ash Wednesday morning, twenty-seven members travelled along the A12 to Feering and neighbouring Kelvedon. They were rewarded with warm spring sunshine, and two enthusiastic and knowledgeable guides to the churches.



At Feering, Simon Garwood, the priest in charge of both parishes was our guide. He is clearly very fond of his Grade I listed building – according to Pevsner it has its origins in the thirteenth century; what survives is mostly fourteenth.

Among many other treasures [“there’s always something interesting to see...”] he pointed out the seventeenth century carvings, inserted into the pulpit, the fragments from local priories and abbeys inset into the small altar in the Lady

Chapel, and the work of Victorian “restorer” George Gilbert Scott, including the pews which replaced the traditional box pews, the medieval floor tiles, discovered when the fake north door was being converted into an actual door, the parish chest, the eighteenth century bassoon, the [1953] Coronation chair, and the splendidly renovated organ, with its thousand pipes.

We then drove to Kelvedon where, after a welcome coffee, we heard local historian Simon Prideaux give us an overview of the history of the village, God’s Hill in Saxon, apparently, and its manors.



The oldest part of St Mary’s is the west corner - Roman bricks suggest earlier buildings. The arcades, with their massive columns, are thirteenth century. The steeple and the clerestory fifteenth. He pointed out the unusual double doorway, the medieval window glass, the pair of Abdy tombs, the gargoyles, the

“weeping” chancel, the squints, and Felix the tortoise, immortalized in stained glass. Felix is still a resident of the village at the age of 100.

Our next meeting, on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, takes us to two churches in the north of the county, both dedicated to St Mary, at Debden and Widdington.

And for the rest of the 2025 season ...

May	Rainham St Helen & St Giles	Wennington St Mary & St Peter
June	St Margaret Wicken Bonhunt	St Mary & St Clement Clavering
July	Canewdon St Nicholas	Paglesham St Peter
August	St Edmundsbury	St James Cathedral
September [by train]	London: St Botolph Bishopsgate, Dutch Church Austin Friars	
October	Lamarsh Holy Innocents	Alphamstone St Barnabas
November [by train]	Romford St Edward,	St Alban, Protomartyr

### Book Group

Leader: Andy Moir

Our March book was Middle England by Jonathan Coe. The novel begins with the election of the coalition government in 2010 and ends in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum. Coe tries to illustrate what happened and why it happened through looking at the lives of three generations of loosely connected people during those turbulent years.

With one exception the group felt that the Coe failed in his objectives. We felt that the novel was too long, had too many different storylines and did not really have a ‘plot’: it merely followed the outlines of recent British history,

### Our books for the next meeting are:

Mon Apr 21 <sup>st</sup>	No meeting – Easter Monday
Mon May 19 <sup>th</sup>	The Figurine by Victoria Hislop
Mon Jun 16 <sup>th</sup>	American Dirt by Jeanine Cummins

### Local History Group

Leader: Jane Humphreys 01245 259590

On 4<sup>th</sup> March we welcomed Peter Brierley to talk about his many years of working with Greenwoods and Orchard House in Stock. We first met Peter last summer when he led us on a walk around the village of Stock and showed us the site of Orchard House (now retirement apartments). Greenwoods survives on the main road but its use today as a hotel and spa is a far cry from its life as an outpost of the West Ham Central Mission, and perhaps closer to its original purpose as the home of the squire in Georgian times.

The West Ham Central Mission opened Greenwoods in 1948 (the same time that Peter arrived in Stock from Yorkshire). The aim was to be a place in the country to expand on their homes in Plaistow for elderly ladies, elderly couples, and children. Bill and Gladys Body managed the home for a mix of elderly residents, teenagers, and unmarried mothers. Peter was a Sunday School teacher and helped the local Congregational Church organise a summer outing to Walton on three buses for children including some from Greenwoods. This led him to start volunteering directly with Greenwoods as they were often short of men to be on duty overnight.

The Mission in Plaistow identified teenage boys as a priority, but there was clearly a potential problem with them mixing with the young unmarried mothers at Greenwoods. One property in the Greenwoods estate was Orchard Cottage, occupied by Fred Beadles, the local Scout leader. Fred was authorised to take in 6 or 7 boys from West Ham with Local Authority funding of £2 a week. These neglected and rejected boys were encouraged to join groups such as Scouts and Boys Brigade, but they needed uniforms and other help, so the real cost was around £4 a week. Unexpectedly one day four City gentlemen arrived from the Carnegie Trust and gave £17,500 for the building of a home for 20 boys. Orchard House was opened in 1954. Some of the boys went to Moulsham School in Chelmsford, and Peter met them on the bus which brought about an introduction to Fred Beadles. He volunteered to run a woodwork group each Thursday evening using donated timber. He also started reading sessions twice a week. All the boys did work experience and when they became adults they left with a suitcase of new clothes and a promise that they could return – but in 23 years no boy ever had to return. Peter is still in touch with 3 of the boys, one of whom is now 85.

Peter said that Greenwoods and Orchard House closed because they were largely stymied by changes in regulations, and West Ham Central Mission sold the properties in 1999. The church and charitable work of WHCM continue but in different forms from the 1950s.

Local History start the summer programme with a talk at Boreham Village Hall at 2.15pm on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April by Andrew Wiltshire. ‘The Last Hussar’ covers the extraordinary life of his father who was orphaned aged 6 and placed in a Workhouse. He saw Queen Victoria's funeral in 1901, joined a cavalry regiment and fought in Africa in WWI, was an Air Raid Warden in WWII, and took his first flight aged 98 to meet Princess Anne on the Cold War battle front of the East German border

Our next three meetings are

1 <sup>st</sup> April	The Last Hussar	Andrew Wiltshire
13 <sup>th</sup> May	WALK: Forgotten History of Chelmsford	Alan Pamphilon
3 <sup>rd</sup> June	WALK: Great Bardfield	Dr Janet Dyson

Visitors are welcome to meetings, held at Boreham Village Hall, for £3. For details of the walks please contact Nick Bailey [nickbailey01245@outlook.com](mailto:nickbailey01245@outlook.com)

Jane Humphreys



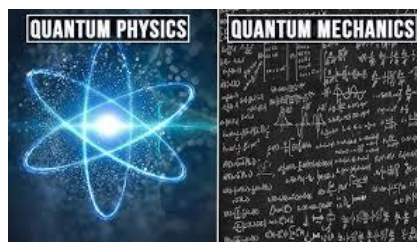
**The Alfred the Great and Late Anglo-Saxon England**  
**By Dr Eric Boston. C.A.T.S. College, Cambridge**  
 2.30pm Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2025  
 At Trinity Methodist Church, Chelmsford  
 All Welcome £5 for non-members

## Science Group

Leader: Chris Bellamy

### Science Group Talk Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> April

Quantum Physics by David Hall (a Science Group member)



### Report for Chelmsford Science Group Meeting Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025

The History of Mangapps Railway and Museum Burnham -on-Crouch by John Jolly the owner

John gave us a detailed account of the story of the development of Mangapps Railway Museum from how it started to the present. He had no notes or pictures and he kept us alert for well over an hour and the time went very quickly – that's how good his talk was!

His story began with his grandparents who lived and worked in Darlington at the time of the centenary (1925) of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. His grand mother attended the celebrations and this event was handed down to John in their family history. John's grandfather was killed in an accident and his grandmother returned to Essex with three children. John in his teens travelled by train daily to Colchester from Fambridge to go to college and this experience led to a deep interest in railways. He became a train spotter! At the time steam was being phased out, being replaced by diesel locomotives. His first piece of memorabilia was from a steam locomotive which was waiting to be scrapped.

He then farmed in South Fambridge and in 1972 he sold the farm and purchased a farm in Suffolk where the farm house was only 50 yards from the East Suffolk Railway line. This stirred up the interest in railways and he had heard the signal box at Halesworth was to close. Eventually and after a long story he managed to own it! A similar story for a timber building sitting on a disused platform. Meanwhile his son James had a growing interest in Railways and the collection grew.

In the late 1980s the family moved back to Essex buying Mangapps Farm, and by this time he had collected a lot of railway memorabilia. There were buildings on the farm where he could store stuff. In 1989 he had an open day brought about by the centenary of the Southend-on-Sea railway. The collection has grown ever since acquiring more locomotives and adding a mile of railway track. He made contact with the Railway Inspectorate before laying the track and had to obey all the instructions given to him! It passed so the line could carry passengers which was in the early 1990s. They had a lot of luck in acquiring rolling stock and interesting items.

His son also caught the railway bug and is a director of a railway construction company.

I visited Mangapps many years ago and John said it has grown considerably ever since the first open day in 1989.

The talk finished with questions and Chris thanked John for his excellent talk. This report is very much abridged version of his talk. Chris will be arranging a visit to Mangapps Railway and Museum for Thursday 19th June 2025 between 11:30am and 5pm

Paul Chaplin

Science Group talks are held in the Catholic Church Hall in Melbourne Avenue, Chelmsford CM1 2DU. Doors open at 1.30pm and the talks start at 2.15pm. Tea/Coffee before the talk. **Non-members of the Science group are welcome. £2 for non-members.**

### Chelmsford Science and Engineering Society

**16<sup>th</sup> Apr Eye Diseases And Their Possible Prevention by Dr Mapa Prabhath Piyasena, Deputy Director of The Vision and Eye Research Institute(VERI) at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge.**

We can easily take sight for granted but there are many reasons that vision can diminish or even be lost entirely. In this talk we will hear about the conditions that can affect our eyes, their causes, and how they can be prevented or treated.



For more details see the CES website at <https://ces.org.uk/>

### Art Appreciation Group

Leader: Brenda Kelly

This month we enjoyed a Zoom talk by Lydia Goodson on 'The Art of Courtship and Marriage in Renaissance Italy'. It seems that in Renaissance Italy in the 14th/15th Century marriage was rarely entered into for love but for securing the future of the family. In the 14th Century the country had been decimated by the Black Death - indeed Florence had lost two-thirds of its population - and a dire economic situation haunted Italian society. The emphasis was on the importance of rebuilding the population by marrying and producing children.



Some sections of the community had gained in wealth: banking, trade, and mercenary soldiers and they wanted to cement their positions in society by marrying well. They sought young brides (preferably age 16) as this gave them a longer child-bearing time. The men wanted to show off their wealth by spending lots of money on an arranged marriage - What's Love Got to Do with It? A marriage broker was employed and there began an exchange of many gifts. We saw this picture by Filippo Lippi 'Portrait of a Woman with a Man at a Casement'.

Lydia showed us pictures of many of the increasingly elaborate gifts that were exchanged: Maiolica inkstands and dishes, coral beads, girdles with silver clasps, jug and ewer with family crest, mirror frames, garlands made of peacock feathers, wooden box decorated with the inscription 'Virtue makes a Woman Beautiful', decorated trunks filled with gifts, brooches. A lot of money was spent. There was a feast in the streets when the marriage took place. If it became too expensive, the family could pay into an insurance fund for years until the marriage took place. Lydia told of Marco - a prosperous silk merchant age 25 - who kept a diary with an account of his spending on his marriage to Caterina (age 16).

We saw pictures of women sitting looking out of windows (what were they thinking?)- after marriage apart from bearing children there was not much else for them to do. Indeed some fell from high windows - accident or not?

It was very interesting to see all these beautiful artefacts and gifts that you received on marriage - nevertheless I think the average woman would prefer to live in the 21st Century.

Next month we shall be going to the National Gallery for the exhibition 'Siena: The rise of Paintings 1300-1350', but in May we shall be coming up to the 19th Century with a talk on 'Aubrey Beardsley'.

### **Garden Group**

Group Leader: Chris Bellamy



Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson presented a very interesting & informative illustrated talk on 'Warley Place' - 'Past & Present' on Thursday afternoon 27-3-2025 at Boreham Village Hall.

Warley Place is the former home of Ellen Willmott, the horticulturist, who developed the garden in the nineteenth century and introduced a vast assortment of new plants from all over the world. Some are still found on the reserve. She made a name for herself in horticulture, and helped to finance expeditions to acquire new plants. Her garden was visited by royalty, and became famous throughout Britain and beyond. It is now a nature reserve managed by Essex Wildlife Trust.

On Thursday 24 April 2025 we will be visiting Heyrons, High Easter, CM1 4QN, at 2pm, a garden of six parts within and around a C16 restored farmyard, for our usual tour and afternoon tea. Visit and coffee/ tea cake, £10. Please email [chrisallenbellamy@btinternet.com](mailto:chrisallenbellamy@btinternet.com) by Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> April if you are planning to attend.



Chelmsford u3a Member Alison Woollard will be presenting a talk about Humphrey Repton, the Great Designer and Landscaper, at Hylands House at 3 p.m. Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April, see 'Friends of Hylands House' website for details.

Free bags of compost - please email Nigel Seager at [nigel@hylandsconstruction.co.uk](mailto:nigel@hylandsconstruction.co.uk) to arrange collection.

### **Birding Group**

Leader Alan Alexander 01245 248030 Mobile 07712 818499

On 28<sup>th</sup> February fifteen members of the Birding Group met at Wallasea Island RSPB reserve. This is a record, to my knowledge we've never had so many Twitchers in one place at the same time. It was a beautiful sunny day, again, a first, usually at Wallasea Island the wind and rain are horizontal.

We set off along the seawall and looking out over the estuary we saw Mallard, Shelduck, Redshank, Cormorant, Oyster Catcher and Black Headed Gull. Looking inland over the lakes we saw Swan, Widgeon, Kestrel, Coot, Moorhen, Corn Bunting and Reed Bunting. Further out across the estuary we saw Curlew,

Golden Plover, Brent and Canada Geese and Grey Plover. All the time behind us we heard, then saw Skylark and Pheasant.



Walking on we saw Teal, Avocet, Common Gull and Starling. One of our members also saw a seal in the distance. We were treated to a flypast of Brent Geese. We turned inland to make our loop back to the carpark and saw Crow, Little Egret. After some distance I realized I had led the group astray and somehow missed our turn, so we retraced our steps only to find the path I should have taken was closed to the public, even to us.

Walking back, we saw Shoveler, a flock of Gold Finch, Pied Wagtail, Red Knot and two of our number spotted a Merlin. All in all, despite the detour, a good day's birding was had.

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On 28<sup>th</sup> March thirteen members of the Birding Group met at Essex Wildlife Trusts headquarters and reserve at Abbots Hall Farm.

This was always going to be a bit of a different meeting because for some time now this reserve has been closed to the public while an improvement scheme has been implemented. Thanks to the efforts of one of our members, Derek Holroyd, we were given special access and a guided tour of the grounds by one of the rangers.

We spent a fascinating couple of hours in the company of Neil who told us the history of the site. Going back to and including a Woodhenge on the highest part of the farm, which lines up exactly with Mill Mound, near Paynes Farm on the opposite side of a valley.

This, as stated already, was not going to be our usual walk, I had no time to list the birds we saw but we were enthralled to listen to the work that has been done to enhance the landscape for the benefit of wildlife. This included, rewilding areas, planting hundreds of trees to create a new woodland, breaking open the seawall to allow saltmarsh to develop naturally and planting wildflowers to encourage butterflies. The list and work go on.

However, birds we did see. These included Skylark, Kestrel, Buzzard and the best view I have ever had of a Marsh Harrier. As we walked towards a hedgerow it took off in front of us then continued to fly casually across the field we were in, giving us a beautiful display of its markings.



Our next meeting is on 28<sup>th</sup> April Essex Wildlife Trust Fingringhoe.

**Fingringhoe Wick Nature Discovery Park, South Green Road Fingringhoe Colchester, Essex, CO5 7DN.** The website states Fingringhoe Wick was Essex Wildlife Trust's first nature reserve (1961), some years later it was where the Trust opened their first visitor centre. Sixty years on visitors are still coming to see this magical place. Set in a spectacular position overlooking the Colne Estuary the reserve offers a sense of real peace and quiet and a chance to escape from it all.

**New members are very welcome to join us, please** feel free to contact me on the numbers above, or by the U3A website email address. We meet at 10am on the fourth Friday of the month at the chosen venue and set off about ten minutes later.

The walking is not arduous, we usually spend more time standing or sitting in hides enjoying the spectacle of nature. There is no fee to join the group and **all abilities are more than welcome** whether an experienced birder or total novice. If members would like to be added to our growing WhatsApp Group, please let me know and give me your mobile number. As always, if any members have ideas or suggestions for visits, please let me know. I will send all members an email nearer the time, confirming the location and that we can go ahead.

### **Short Walks group**

Leader: Robert Lloyd



Short walks group lunching in the Six Bells after a walk in Boreham

### **Travel group**

Leader: Anne Brereton

Our holiday to Normandy is gradually creeping closer. You always know its near when you have to pay the balance. We have twenty-seven members going so it's a nice number.

Please check that your passports have enough months left . There needs to be at least three months after the start date not the finish date. I very nearly got caught out myself and had to get a new passport. I filled in my form and got a new passport photo done on the Monday. Sent off everything on the Tuesday. I got my new passport on the Friday and the old one returned on the Saturday. I'm sure that must be a record. I look forward to meeting you all on the Coach on the 25<sup>th</sup> May; 6am at the Station and 6.20am at Wood Street.

For more details of this holiday and the trip to Andalucia in October see:

[https://chelmsford.u3asite.uk/u3a\\_groups/the-travel-group/](https://chelmsford.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/the-travel-group/)

## The Wonder of Words Group

Leader: Lindsay Whitehouse

For our second meeting we looked in detail at writing from a different point of view (POV). Men were challenged to write as if they were a woman, and women charged with writing as a man. You could also write a story as an animal (readers of Jack London will know all about this). This is an exercise that literally forces us to “walk a mile in my shoes” in terms of writing and sharing thoughts. There are so many different points of view to explore, gender, age, sexuality, politics, no one was bored and the whole group wrote diligently for two hours, even deciding to forgo a tea break! Now that is dedication to the craft.

We also shared a single word that as individuals we use a lot, perhaps we over-use it. The challenge was to choose a word of the month from those submitted then write a poem, or rhyme, or an advertising jingle using this word.

There are some vacancies for new members to join the group, and there is a note on page 2 of the newsletter giving more information about this.

Lindsay Whitehouse Group Leader

## Cycling for Fun

Leader: Tony Cox



Following a briefing meeting of members at the end of January the group support team undertook a couple of trial rides in February and March to check out routes with the help of a couple of less experienced riders. This was invaluable and we learnt a lot.

The new group had its first ride on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> of March. Eleven riders met at the Central Park Cafe in Chelmsford for a coffee and a chat and a safety briefing. We split into two groups so we could ride safely without making it difficult (and frustrating) for other pathway and road users. We headed to Writtle and after crossing the Green we rode through the churchyard, were

greeted by Alan Mayo as we passed his house and on to Hylands Park where we stopped for a well-earned cuppa after 4.5 miles.

We returned to Central Park on a slightly different route and slightly faster as it was a bit downhill but still another 4.5 miles. Everyone seemed to enjoy the adventure and said they were up for the next ride on 11<sup>th</sup> April from Central Park to Beaulieu Square coffee shop.

Cycling is classed as a sporting activity and u3a requires a specific risk assessment. All new members of a sports group have to be advised of the potential risks of that activity. Our briefing session in January did this but



members of Chelmsford u3a that have applied to join the group since then have to receive such a briefing before they can ride. We have placed these nine members on the group waiting list and will arrange a briefing meeting for them in the near future.

My thanks go to all the people who rode today. It was a friendly and sociable experience.

Tony Cox

## **Family History Group**

Leader: Lesley Wood

**Did you know that approximately 50,000 men and women from the UK served in the American Civil War?**

**Could you be a descendant of an American Civil War veteran?**

On Friday 28<sup>th</sup> February we were pleased to welcome Gina Denham from Monuments for UK Veterans of the American Civil War Association.

Their research has so far uncovered the stories of 650 British men and women who served in the US, along with the history of the London Branch of American Civil War Veterans, formed in 1910.



Model of a memorial plaque

Former police detective Gina began researching her genealogy back in 1987. The family knew very little about one of her great grandfathers, George Denham, but Gina uncovered a remarkable story.

Gina discovered that George Denham went to America in 1856 and later enlisted in the Union Navy. Following a series of twists and turns, another man paid him to take his place in the Civil War. In 1863 George fought in the siege of Lookout Mountain, Chattanooga, the 'Battle Among the Clouds'. In 1865 George was to be found serving on the river monitor USS Chickasaw, based at the union port of Cairo, Ill. where the deadliest maritime disaster in US history took place - the explosion of the steamboat Sultana. These were just two of the events George was part of during the war. Later in 1865 George became ill, probably suffering from what we now call PTSD, and returned to London.

Gina and others have been inspired to set up Monuments for UK Veterans of the American Civil War Association. No memorial yet exists in the UK to commemorate the veterans' service and post-war struggles. Gina and her colleagues want to change that, and raise awareness of their stories. They are happy to share a spreadsheet of the veterans, widows and others involved in, or impacted by, the Civil War.

Find out more: [https://www.facebook.com/TheMonumentalProject/?locale=en\\_GB](https://www.facebook.com/TheMonumentalProject/?locale=en_GB)

<https://www.acwrt.org.uk/post/the-london-branch-of-american-civil-war-veterans-1910-1933>

New Members welcome: [https://chelmsford.u3asite.uk/u3a\\_groups/family-history/](https://chelmsford.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/family-history/)

**Article written by: Julie Priestley**

## Bus Pass Group

Leader: Maurice Austin

Once again, I had many messages from group members advising they would not be joining me on the March trip. What a range of excuses! Dental trips, other appointments, trips with the family, holidays, illicit meetings (I made that one up!) and more. No-one mentioned the likelihood of heavy rain and very low temperatures! David Marsh reminded me that all previous trips involving Colchester had been problematic but wished "Better luck with Colchester this year!" I had replied "Thanks David, weather, traffic, roadworks. What else can go wrong? Best wishes, Maurice." His pessimistic response was "The bus could breakdown! Again".

So, I nervously dragged myself down to the bus station with as many layers of clothing as possible to be met by a group of twelve cheerful u3a'ers, including some welcome new members.

Our first bus was due at 09.30; it was rather important it be no more than a few minutes late as we had a tightish connection to make in Braintree Bus Park. Our bus didn't turn up. One we thought might be "ours" did turn up and our spirits rose only for it to rush off back to the depot out of service! In due course, one did arrive and left about ten minutes late. The pleasant and careful driver took us to Braintree where we arrived still five minutes late. The good news was that there was a fair crowd waiting for the bus we awaited. But it turned out some of them had been waiting for ages. Now Braintree Bus Park must be the coldest place in Essex, apart from Braintree Freeport, and we got colder and colder as the electronic screens ticked down to the bus departure time, then disappeared.

It was obvious that we were to be unlucky again and after an abortive attempt to board an X20 going the wrong way (David was the only one allowed on as we had dithered so much that the bus had pulled away from the stand and was sitting in the middle of the through road). We were getting very cold so most of the party walked into Braintree to seek hot coffee and all-day breakfasts.

I was told later that many of the party explored Braintree, which have some interesting shops and a fine heritage relating to weaving by Courtauld's. Its fabric museum is particularly interesting.

I waited for the next X20 and was joined by Annie and Chloe on the trip to Colchester. It turned out that the previous X20 had, indeed broken down at Stansted Airport. So pessimistic David became prophet David. How did he know?



Colchester's attempt at a bus station. Maurice Austin

The three of us pottered around Colchester for a while but were soon seduced by the warmth and colour of the High Street Fenwick's department store. I have to say that it was beautifully set out and is a credit to the staff who look after it. We found the upstairs restaurant and enjoyed excellent meals and great views around Colchester. We were served mainly by a charming young lady from Georgia, USA who was very tactful when asked about President Trump and his entourage.

It was too cold to do much exploring, so we went through the maze of alleys to the so-called bus station where we caught the late running 71 back to Chelmsford. The bus was pleasantly full, the driver was very patient with some

slightly confused passengers and despite losing most of my party, I had a lovely time, and my inbox indicated that others did too.

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The next Bus Pass Group outing will be on **Friday 11 April**. As the weather is still likely to be a bit unsettled, we shall do a round-trip to Romford via Brentwood for the huge market.

We will meet at **Chelmsford Bus Station, stand 8 for the 10.05 First Essex 351** to Brentwood, changing there for the Tfl498 to Romford.

The planned return is from **Romford at 15.00** on the **Tfl498 to Brentwood where we change to the 15.49 First 351 for Chelmsford** which is due to arrive in Chelmsford Bus Station at 16.35. There are other buses back at least hourly on each main route.

I look forward to seeing you then.  
Maurice Austin

**Jean Stapleton**

It is my sad duty to inform you that Jean Stapleton, who had been a member of Chelmsford u3a for over 20 years, died peacefully on 21<sup>st</sup> March. Jean had belonged to several groups, including the Garden and Local History Groups, and had in fact been programme secretary of the latter for quite a number of years. Members of the Garden Group observed a one minute silence for Jean at their meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> March. Her funeral will be at 12.30 on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April at Bentley Crematorium, Ongar Road, Pilgrims Hatch, Brentwood.

Lesley Wood

**Reminder to Group Leaders**

**Please send copy for the May 2025 Newsletter to the editor, Andy Moir.  
All copy must arrive no later than Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025.**

### Chelmsford u3a Committee

Position	Name
Chair	Lesley Wood
Vice Chair	Alan Caddy
Secretary	Janet Parsons
Treasurer	Wendy Hubbard
Membership Secretary	Alan Mayo
Membership Assistant	Lynn Regan
Speaker Organiser/Deputy Treasurer	Eddie Wood 01245 601359
Newsletter Coordinator	Lynn Regan
Groups Coordinator	Lesley Wood
Assistant Groups Coordinator	Brian Littlechild
Recruitment & Public Relations	Alan Caddy
Marketing Communications	Peter Anderton
Committee Member	Ann Bell
Committee Member	Mike Harmer

#### Volunteers not on the Committee:

Web Manager	Andy Moir
Newsletter Editor	Andy Moir

You must be a member of Chelmsford u3a before you join an Interest Group. However, if you would like a taster session before you join contact the Group Leader either by phone or by email.

<b>Name of Group</b>	<b>Day of Month</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Group Leader</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>EMail</b>
All Day Walks	2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday		Berry Cornell	01277355823	Via website
Amateur Dramatics			Alan Caddy		Via website
Art Appreciation	4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	14.00	Brenda Kelly	01277840621	Via website
Art Club	Mondays Weekly	11.15 – 14.15	Peter Anderton	07773074105	Peter.anderton@s cion-uk.com
Art for Pleasure	Tuesdays Weekly	9.30	Les Cooper		Via website
Birding	4 <sup>th</sup> Friday	10.00	Alan Alexander	07712818499	Via website
Book Group	3 <sup>rd</sup> Monday	14.30	Andy Moir		Via website
Book Worms	1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday	14.30	Jane Hickman		Via website
Bridge (beginners)	Tuesdays	14.00	Alan Cardus		Via website
Buss Pass Group	2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday	varies	Maurice Austin		Via Website
Church Visits	1 <sup>st</sup> Wed	10.15	Brian Greatrex & Michael Gray	01245258833	Via website
Coach Outings	Various		Malcolm Lonsdale		Via website
Cycling for Fun	2 <sup>nd</sup> Fri a.m. and 4 <sup>th</sup> Tues a.m.		Tony Cox		Via website
Discussion Group	2 <sup>nd</sup> Tues	13.00- 15.00	Brian Littlechild		brian.littlechild@ blueyonder.co.uk
Family History	4 <sup>th</sup> Friday	14.00	Lesley Wood	01245601359	lesleywood54@ yahoo.com
Fishing Group	Wednesdays		Alan Caddy		Via Website
French Conversation	2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	14 -15.15	Marie Neale		Via Website
Garden Group	4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	14.00	Chris Bellamy Val Green	01277353481	Via website
Information Technology	2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday	10.00	Lyn Parsons		Via Website
International Dining	3 <sup>rd</sup> Monday	Evenings	Jennie Cappin	01245 358629	Via website
Jazz and Blues Group	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday	10.30- 12.30	Heinz Kassier		kassier2@gmail. com
Local History	1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday	14.15	Jane Humphreys	01245 259590	Via website

London the City & its people	4 <sup>th</sup> Monday	14.00	Berry Cornell	01277 355823	Chris Rycroft via website
Lunch Club 1	Last Friday of month	12.30	John Heathcote	01245 380766	Via website
Lunch Club 2	4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	12.30	Harry Glaser	01245 462760	Via website
Lunch Club 3	1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday	12.30	Laraine Linard Barbara Childs	01245 475444	Via website
Mah-Jong	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday	14.00	Chris Paget	01245 474811	chrispaget@lineone.net
Philosophy	Thursday 4-weekly	11.00	Julia McClure	07941 480240	Via Website
Philosophy & Religion	1 <sup>st</sup> Monday	10.00	Jim Mackay		Jim88mackay@aol.co.uk
Photographs on Face Book	Online		Alan Mayo	07979 540053	Via Website
Pickleball Monday	Monday Weekly	14.00	Alan Mayo	07979 540053	Via Website
Pickleball Tuesday	Tuesday Weekly	15.00	Jayne Hughes		Via Website
Poetry Appreciation	2nd Wed	14.00	Judith & Tony Boniface	01245 266316	Via Website
Science Group	3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday	13.45	Chris Bellamy	01277353481	Via website
Sewing, Knitting & Crochet	3rd Thursday		Jacqui Norfolk	07714 258517	<a href="mailto:jacqui.norfolk@outlook.com">jacqui.norfolk@outlook.com</a>
Short Walks	3 <sup>rd</sup> Friday	10.00	Robert Lloyd	01245466167	Via website
Singing	Saturday weekly	10.00	Julie Nickleson		Via website
Spanish Conversation	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday	10.30	David Gout		Via website
Summer evening walks	4 <sup>th</sup> Wed	Apr -Sep	Alan Mayo	07979 540053	Via website
Sunday Lunch	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday	13.00	Lesley Wood	01245601359	Via the website
Sunday Lunch 2	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday	13.00	Lesley Wood	01245601359	Via the website
Ten Pin Bowling	2nd & 4th Fridays	10.30	Roger & Ruth Spall	01245466486	Via website
Travel Group	See website		Anne Brereton		cu3atravelgroup@outlook.com
Walking Group	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Friday	10.00	Alan Mayo	07979 540053	Via website
The Wonder of Words	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday	14.00	Lindsay Whitehouse	01245 356363	Via website