u3a
learn, laugh, live
CHELMSFORD

NEWSLETTER

May 2026

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
Thursday14th May 2026 Martin Oakin - The Story Of The Beatles part 1
Thursday 11th June 2026 Andy Stuart – Tall Tales Or Real History
Thursday 9th July 2026 Julian Whybra - A Lost English County – Winchcombeshire

View from the Chair

Our April social was a great success, over ninety members attended, the quizzes were quite challenging, making us all have to think about parts of the UK. The cakes were fantastic and we hope to have the same again at our next social event in August.

On May the 14th Chelmsford u3a will be guests of City Sounds radio. Lesley Wood and I will be on their show from 8-00 to 9-00pm if you want to listen to it. Huge thanks to Mike Harmer for arranging this opportunity for us to showcase our u3a.

The Choir group had its first meeting in April at Christchurch and there was good participation. There are still spaces available if you are interested.

In June/July a new ukulele group will be starting, we presently have eight people interested. Please contact me if you would like to play the ukulele at (alan.caddy@btinternet.com).

If you have any thoughts about groups that we could establish or if you would like to run a new group, please contact our Group's Coordinator Lesley Wood. We are constantly looking forward to improving if you have any suggestions or ideas about games or types of

quizzes, or any other things we can add to our social events, they would be most welcome. Please contact Ann Goddard with your suggestions.

At our Committee today we had a member observer. There are still opportunities to become an observer should you be interested. We would welcome any member who wants to find out how your committee works to join us as an observer. Anyone who is interested please contact me or any Committee member. Our next Committee meeting is on Wednesday 27th May, at 10-00 am in room 2 at Christchurch.

It is with great sadness we announce the passing of Paul Levy; he was an active member of Chelmsford u3a. A participant of the discussion group, an intelligent and humorous member who will be sadly missed.

Significant events from April 1926

April 8th, 1926, The German subsidiary of the Ford Motor Company assembles its first vehicle, a Model T.
April 21st, 1926, Elizabeth II is born to the Duchess of York and the Duke of York in Mayfair London.
April 25th, 1926, Reza Khan is crowned Shah of Iran, a position he would hold for fifteen years until his forced abdication amidst the 1941 Anglo-Soviet Invasion of Iran.

Alan Caddy

See pages 21 and 22 for a list of the Chelmsford u3a Interest Groups and pages 23 and 24 for the Chelmsford u3a May 2026 Calendar.

New French Conversation Group – Beginners Welcome!

Have you ever wished you could speak a little more French with confidence? Perhaps you learned some vocabulary years ago, or you can understand more than you feel able to say. If so, a new **French Conversation Group** is starting at Chelmsford u3a, and it might be just what you're looking for.

This group is designed especially for **beginners and "rusty returners"**— people who have a basic grasp of the language but would love the chance to practise speaking in a relaxed, friendly setting. You don't need to be fluent, and there's no pressure to get everything right. The aim is simply to build confidence, enjoy the language, and have fun learning together.

Sessions will focus on:

- Simple everyday conversation
- Building useful vocabulary
- Speaking without fear of making mistakes
- Encouraging one another as we improve

If you can say a little already and want to say more, you'll fit right in.
Anyone interested in joining the group or finding out more is warmly invited to get in touch with me.

Lesley Wood Lesleywood54@yahoo,com
Groups Coordinator

Chelmsford u3a Choir

Our new choir met for the first time on Wednesday 15 April. The group is led by Deborah Aloba, who recently joined u3a and brings extensive experience as a professional singer and singing teacher, with a degree in music and a master's in vocal pedagogy.
The session began with a warm-up and vocal exercises, focusing on posture, breathing, pitch, resonance and vocal registers.

Prior to the first meeting, Deborah had shared a selection of pieces for members to practise, including the Celtic song "Oh Waly, Waly", The Beatles' "Let It Be", "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and Frank Sinatra's "Fly Me to the Moon".

As there is currently no piano accompanist, the group sang unaccompanied. With a small number of men in attendance, Deborah arranged the music as two parts, with members split into two groups. Several singers also took short solo lines.

Deborah's approach is to start with accessible material to build confidence, then move on to more challenging pieces over time. She will share sheet music and YouTube links so that members can learn their part between sessions, as well as during rehearsals. Everyone is welcome, whatever their level of experience.

Looking ahead, the choir may explore lighter classical repertoire (such as Gilbert & Sullivan), opera or musical theatre, alongside more modern music. The aim is to sing for enjoyment, with the option of performing informally for Chelmsford u3a members at a social event.

Most importantly, it is about having fun and enjoying singing together.

New members are warmly invited to join. The choir meets twice a month on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday afternoons in the Farthing Hall at Christ Church, New London Road. A small contribution towards hall hire is collected at each meeting. To find out more, please get in touch using the contact details below. **Next sessions:** Wednesday 6th May and Wednesday 20th May starting at 2.00 pm.

Lesley Wood Lesleywood54@yahoo.com
Groups Coordinator

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.

The Group **usually** meets up on 4th 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 2026

18th May	Visit - Stephens House & Gardens. This visit is now full.
22nd Jun	Annual walk in the City - Money Tour: coffee shops, Bank, Royal Exchange with City of London Guides. **A flyer is on page 20 this Newsletter and on the website**
27th Jul	Visit - Thames Barrier & Greenwich. A flyer will be in the June Newsletter.
24th Aug	Talk - The building of St. Pauls - speaker Alison Woollard
28th Sep	Visit – The Roman Baths & St. Magnus the Martyr church
26th Oct	Talk - London's Underground part II - speaker Tony Tuckwell
23rd Nov	Talk
14th Dec	Film - Passport to Pimlico and refreshments

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

Sunday Lunch Group 1
Leader: John Tritton

Lunch at 'The Old Windmill', South Hanningfield on 1st March

Wonder of Words
Leader: Lindsay Whitehouse

Various competing commitments on our meeting date prevented a number of members from attending. The formal meeting was therefore cancelled. However, some of the group members met up anyway for an informal catchup. Those present enjoyed lots of humour. They played a few different word games. They also thought up a variation to the plot for our audio presentation, and did some editing of the existing scene one.

The development of the script involves sex, crime and who knows what, perhaps some rock and roll, all within a u3a setting! We will find out more at the next meeting.

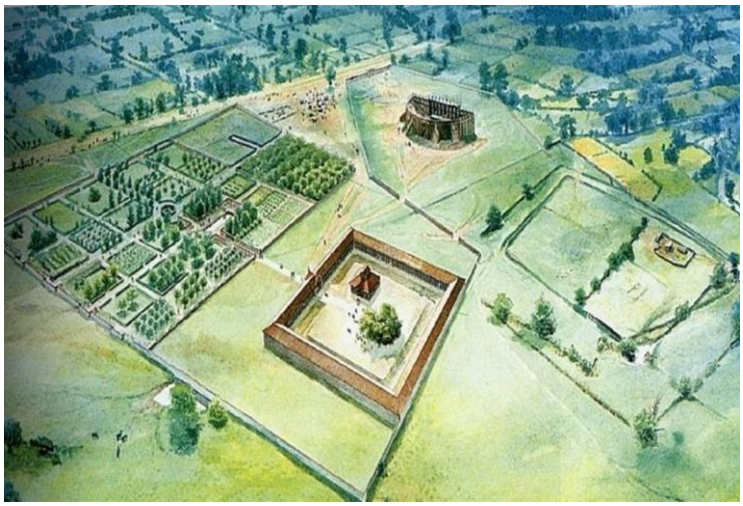
We continue to enjoy our meetings with chat, some jokes, writing, using our imagination and righting the wrongs of the world!

If you would like to give it a try please click on the contact button on the website and I will get back to you with more information.

Lindsay Whitehouse Group Leader

Local History Group
Leader: Jane Humphreys 01245 259590

The sun shone and the skylarks were singing their hearts out on 7th April as we explored the mysterious lumps and bumps of Gosbecks Archaeological Park in the company of Richard Bale.



I had no idea that this was the location of the pre-roman settlement which came to be known as Camulodunum. I had always thought that was the name given to the town we know today as Colchester, but certainly once the emperor Claudius had been to visit roman Colchester was named Colonia Claudia Vitricensis and was essentially a retirement complex for old soldiers. Today Gosbecks is a 64 hectare public park bought by Colchester Council in the 1990s. Its neighbour to the west is Colchester Zoo and the land currently let out by the Zoo for farming almost certainly covers much more of Camulodunum than is at Gosbecks.

Much of the interpretation of the site at Gosbecks is down to aerial observations, first by the RAF in the 1930s, then by flights at 300 metres in the 1950s, and subsequently recording crop marks during hot summers. There has been little excavation. We now think that Camulodunum covered 24 square miles between the Colne and Roman Rivers with isolated huts and farmsteads enclosed within a big ditch and rampart to defend against chariots. This was the place Claudius visited at the invitation of the one son of Cunobelin (aka Cymbeline, king of the Catuvellauni) who was pro-roman. Claudius wanted to collect gold tribute from the Britons to pay off the Praetorian Guard who had made him emperor after the revolt against Caligula.

Today we can see an area marked out for a large Romano-Celtic temple enclosure although the site identified as the temple is very small and in the wrong place. There is a second temple located more centrally. Richard said it was very likely that this was originally a Druid site which the romans took over.

There is more to see at the theatre. Five roman theatres have been found in Britain, two of them at Colchester. The Gosbecks theatre is the largest and could seat 4000 people which gives a good indication of the size of the local population. The back wall was 3 metres high built of Kentish ragstone and enclosed rows of turf seating leading down to the orchestra. From all the nails found, this must have been made with a wooden floor, believed to be unique. The stage was probably not used for plays – there is no evidence of the usual backstage areas. Richard's theory is that this theatre was the gathering place to hear the eulogies for funerals (the body would be cremated elsewhere, outside the town). A bronze statue of Mercury was found by a farmer nearby in the 1940s, and Mercury was the god of soldiers. The edict of Constantine in 313AD halted the persecution of Christians, and soon afterwards structures such as this theatre relating to non-Christian funerals were dismantled.

In spring sunshine and with an expert guide this was a fascinating place to visit – it might have been different in wind-driven rain.

We are back at Boreham for our May meeting. The next 3 items in our 2026 programme are:

5th May	A tale of fire, water and waste – Chelmsford City centre	Yvonne Lawrence
2nd June	WALK: the good, the bad and the ugly – Chelmsford buildings	Alan Pamphilon
7th July	The London shipwreck: her final voyage	Jools McCusker Maxwell

Visitors are welcome to meetings, held at Boreham Village Hall starting at 2.15pm, for £3.

Jane Humphreys

Essex Branch of the Historical Association
The Aftermath of the Roman Departure from Britain.
By Professor Andrew Breeze, University of Navarre, Spain.
2.30pm Saturday 16th April at Trinity Methodist Church, Chelmsford CM1 2XB.
Visitors and prospective members warmly welcomed – £5. Booking not required

IT Group

Leader: Lyn Parsons

It was nice to see some new faces at the April meeting.

Our next IT Group session will take place on Wednesday 13th May, from 10.00 to 11.30, at Christ Church, New London Road, Chelmsford. We meet on the second Wednesday of each month, with a three-month summer break.

There is no charge for attending. Chelmsford u3a covers the room hire so that this group can continue supporting members in the ever-changing world of technology.

What the group offers:

We're fortunate to have a dedicated team of friendly helpers who are on hand to support members in getting more confident with their devices. This is a drop-in group, and most people come for a couple of sessions to sort out the issues they are facing.

See our page on the Chelmsford u3a website https://chelmsford.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/information-technology-it/ to see a list of the topics our helpers have recently assisted with. If any of these sound familiar, or if you have a different question do come along and make use of this valuable resource.

Short Walks Group
Leader: Robert Lloyd

In April John Heathcote led a bluebell walk near Borham

Photo by Sheila Williamson Photo by Richard Hawkins

Our next walk is on May 15th and will be at Hanningfield Reservoir led by Roger and Ruth Spall.

Book Group
Leader: Andy Moir

At the start of our April meeting we held a minutes silence to remember Paul Levy who was for many years a valued member of our group. We will all miss his interesting and perceptive comments about the books we have read and of course we will miss his jokes.

Our April book was Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen, the book was chosen because it is the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth. The novel was the first one that she published and follows the Dashwood sisters, prudent Elinor and romantic, emotional Marianne, who following their father's death have to move with their mother and younger sister from a wealthy lifestyle in a large mansion to a humble cottage in Devonshire. The novel follows the sisters as they endure heartbreak before learning to balance emotion and reason, with Elinor marrying Edward Ferrars and Marianne marrying Colonel Brandon.

We all agreed that whilst we eventually became involved in the story and enjoyed the novel it was not as easy to read and well written as her later novels.

Our books for the next three meeting are:

Mon May 18th	Three Days in June by Anne Tyler.
Mon Jun 15th	We Begin At The End by Chris Whitaker
Mon Jul 17th	The Predicament by William Boyd

Lunch Club – Group 4
Leader: Valerie Norfolk

This month we enjoyed a visit to Giggling Squid Thai restaurant in Chelmsford. The lunch time menu was very good with plenty of choice and included their new tapas plates each of which had two side dishes, rice and a small main dish.

The staff were attentive, friendly and careful to check regarding allergies, and as all the food is cooked freshly, likes and dislikes were easily catered for.

Our table was at the far end of the restaurant away from other customers and so it was not noisy and felt private. Members feedback was that they enjoyed the food at the Giggling Squid and several said they would like to return.

Helen Jones

Church Visiting Group
Group Leader: Brian Greatrex, Administrator: Michael Gray

April 1st St Andrew Fingringhoe and St Lawrence Rowhedge

On a hill above the confluence of the Roman River and the Colne stands the impressive and unusual St Andrew's Church, Fingringhoe. The sturdy tower has a striped appearance with its contrasting seams of flint and stone. This is one of the specific features in this church.

We entered the church through the south porch with its incredible oak door which dates from the fourteenth century, with carving and locks from that time too. The walls have many remnants of painting which would have covered the building with biblical scenes and decoration.

After we had been served coffee and delicious home-made cakes by Sue Goodwin and Jill Bellinger, Lyn Rodley, an architectural historian, told us about the history of the church. It dates back to the Norman period with the outline of Norman window arches in the north wall. There are Roman tiles in the walls, two mediaeval statues of Mary and the Trinity and a great hollowed out chest to be studied. The church had improvements made in the fifteenth century but mercifully it escaped any Victorian 'help' and retains its mediaeval completeness.

In total contrast to St Andrew's Church is the octagonal church of St Lawrence in Rowhedge . Church warden, David Russell, told us that it was built in 1837 in white brick and replaced the much earlier church, now demolished. The building is set right in the middle of the village and serves Rowhedge in significant

ways making use of the flexibility of the space. It is light and airy, has moveable furniture and can be adapted in many ways for all sorts of events. The programme of activities planned for the year shows how valuable this church is to the people or Rowhedge and how these enjoyable events help to ensure the upkeep of their church.

Many thanks to Prue Jones for this report.

Next month's visit, on May 6th, takes us to the north of the county, to see St Peter and St Paul Foxearth and St Gregory and St George Pentlow.

Travel Group
Group Leader: Anne Brereton

Our two holidays booked for this year. Wales in May and Sicily in October are both going ahead.

Unfortunately the Scottish trip for September has not been viable and will be deferred to 2027. A Scottish holiday has been requested so many times by travel group members but when we did finally manage to source a holiday in Scotland no members have booked. Perhaps it's the timing/ price /or just not what they wanted. It would be helpful if I could have some feedback before offering it again next year.

Do enjoy the holidays this year and we will see what happens for next year.
Anne

Bus Pass Group
Leader Maurice Austin

On Friday 10 April, we went to Saffron Walden, a favourite venue with our regulars. Unfortunately, several of these had succumbed to one of the nasty bugs that were floating around and stayed away in an attempt to protect the group. Although we were grateful for this consideration, it was already too late for several of us!

Fourteen apparently healthy group members gathered at Chelmsford Bus Station in good spirit; the weather was dry, temperatures equitable and the forecast for good for much of the day with the possibility of showers during the afternoon. There was a fair crowd of other passengers waiting for the X10 but not enough to make us worried about getting a seat.

It was lovely to be able to welcome a new member So and Rita, a returnee from winter Gambia, as well as other lovely friends.

A nice new single deck Chinese electric bus arrived and departed slightly early. The driver was smart, pleasant and very careful with his steed. The ride was impressively smooth and quiet. The bus was about two-thirds full. We went via Broomfield Hospital, Great Waltham, and Barnston picking up and dropping off a few other passengers. Views were spectacular and the lighting conditions were such that we had "long views" of the impressive countryside, and the relative lack of humidity meant the windows did not steam up! A significant bonus!

The original plan was to change buses in Great Dunmow. There was a two-minute allowance, quite tight as it can sometimes take us a few minutes to disembark! Our timekeeping had slipped a little, we were going to arrive in Dunmow a moment or two late! So, the decision was made to stay on the bus and travel through to Stansted Airport.

At Dunmow, we had regained our schedule but there was no sign of the connecting bus, except there was one on the opposite side of the road. But there were passengers waiting at “our stop”, we could possibly make the connection. But we stayed on!

On arrival at the airport bus station, we found the stop for service 316 and confirmed we had almost a quarter of an hour to wait. On receiving this news, most of the party disappeared into the “offices” and returned a few minutes later looking much happier. It seems that if we had kept to our original plan and changed at Dunmow, the three-quarters of an hour trip could have caused discomfort for some of us!

Anyway, on arrival at Saffron Walden, we made our usual beeline for coffee shops and restaurants and then the party broke up to visit this lovely market town with the beautiful church and Fry’s Gallery being favourite venues.

We tended to drift back home at our own speed but from reports I had later, everyone eventually got home safely and without incident.

Well, almost! I did receive reports that one of our party had an incident in a public toilet in Saffron Walden! The toilet door could not be unlocked! Bad enough, but there was no-one within earshot to assist. What to do. Phone a friend! But no-one answered and the WhatsUp group wasn’t activated. In the end, and it must have seemed like an eternity, our member phoned the fire brigade and was rescued by a crew of handsome, strong, young men in uniform! What a palaver to get attention! And, no, I don’t know who it was!

Is this a first for Chelmsford u3a?

On Friday 8th May, I have made arrangements with the National Trust for us to go to Coggeshall where we will have a private opening of Grange Barn where drinks and coffees will be available. Paycockes House will also be open, and you will be able to pre-book guided tours in the morning. There is an admission fee for these properties, unless you are already a member of the NT. For those not wanting to explore these lovely buildings, Coggeshall has a host of other period properties to explore, including a marvelous church, St Peter Ad Vincula. And the Coggeshall Museum will open especially for us in the afternoon.

Those travelling by bus will catch the 0930 First 170 to Braintree from STAND 5, where we change to an X20 towards Colchester. We are due at Coggeshall at 10.43 where we will take the short walk to Grange Barn, or a very short walk to Paycocks.

On the assumption the group will spend some time at The Museum, we will catch the 16.37 bus back from Coggeshall, changing at Braintree for an arrival in Chelmsford at17.54. For those wishing to get back earlier, buses run at least every hour and I will be pleased to give you some alternative times.

I look forward to seeing you.

On Friday 12 June, we will take the new 10.00 First 375 via Malden and Colchester Zoo to Colchester where we can either look at the Castle or take a bus on to Mersea, subject to the tides. Details will be provided next month.

Cycling for Fun Group
Leader: Tony Cox

Our ride on April 10th was from Central Park Café as usual but to a new venue for us - The Hanging Gardens Garden Centre, just off the A414. Our ride there kept well away from that busy road as we did a loop out into the countryside. The shorter ride was 6 miles in each direction whilst the longer route was 12 miles each way. We welcomed four new riders, Jean, Alison, Chris and Ernie. The weather was perfect and it was a lovely Spring day. We had a bit of an adventure crossing the main road on the way back but we took great care to keep everyone safe and crossed the road at a break in the traffic.

Our second ride was on 28th April to The Bakehouse at Cooksmill Green, one of our favourite cafés with a splendid variety of cakes and food. The shorter course was 7 miles out and 6 miles back and the longer route was 13 miles each way. It had rained overnight and there was still a bit of drizzle around at 9am but that had cleared away by our 10am start. And a bit later the sun came out and it actually got warm. Excellent. We welcomed Gill on our first ride with us - she clearly enjoyed joining us and was heard taking advice on where to buy a newer bike. We also gave a warm welcome back to Carol and Peter. Good to see them again.

I have been a bit remiss by not previously giving credit to the experienced riders who form our Support Team assisting the other riders. We are grateful to Mark, Ian and Jeff who helped me this month and also to Roger and Eleanor who are regular supporters. Without their help we could not safely run the Group. We all get a great deal of pleasure from seeing people enjoying their cycling and our countryside.
Tony 07758817559

Art Appreciation Group
Leader: Brenda Kelly

The Courtauld Gallery in London was our venue this month. We travelled up to see the exhibition 'Seurat and the Sea'. Georges Seurat (1859-1891) painted approximately 45 paintings before his death at the early age of 31 and half of these works depict the Channel coast and sea and were completed on his summer trips between 1885 and 1890. There were 26 paintings on show at the Courtauld and is the first exhibition to be devoted entirely to these images. It has proved extremely popular. We also had the opportunity to see other well-known works in the main galleries from artists such as Monet, Manet and Cézanne.

An unexpected surprise was provided by one of our members who took us all to have lunch at the nearby Middle Temple Hall afterwards. This is a beautiful Hall decorated with shields, sculpture and carved wooden ceiling - fantastic to see. Needless to say, in such surroundings, we certainly all enjoyed our lunches.

On Tuesday 26th May, Jef Page will be giving us a talk on 'The Pre-Raphaelites/William Morris' at Christ Church. I would also mention here the forthcoming film at Chelmsford Studio Theatre on Tuesday 19th May on the Mexican artist Frida Khalo at 8 p.m.

u3a Theatre Trip: Arcadia (Sir Tom Stoppard)

- **Date:** Wednesday 9 September 2026
- **Venue:** Duke of York's Theatre, London (newly renovated in-the-round for this production)
- **Performance:** Matinee, 1.30pm
- **Cost:** £78 per person (includes coach travel)

A dazzling collision of science and romance, *Arcadia* explores the beauty of curiosity, the ache of lost knowledge, and the timeless thrill of discovery. Set in an English country house across two centuries, it follows teenage prodigy Thomasina Coverly as she races ahead of her time, and modern researcher Hannah Jarvis as she unpicks a Byron-era mystery.

"Stoppard's masterpiece makes a dazzling return to the stage" (The Telegraph)
To book: Please contact Lesley Wood on lesleywood54@yahoo.com straightaway. Places are limited.

Birding Group
Leader Alan Alexander 01245 248030 Mobile 07712 818499

On Friday 24th April nine members of the Birding Group met at the Wat Tyler Country Park. I could not attend this meeting due to recent minor surgery, so I am grateful to Ann Goddard for this report. It was a beautiful day.

Nightingale

They saw: Carron Crow, Wren, Magpie, Wood Pigeon, Long Tailed tit, Collared Dove, Robin, Cuckoo, Oystercatcher, Mallard, Black Headed Gull, Coot, Moorhen, Great Crested Grebe, Canada Goose, Excitingly...Whimbrel, Oystercatcher, Pied Wagtail, Little Egret in full breeding plumage, another highlight was a Buzzard being harassed by a Crow, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Blue tit. We heard Cetti's Warbler, Woodpecker drumming, Nightingale, Whitethroat and Blackcap.

Disappointingly two of the RSPB hides were locked, and the office was closed. The other one had no seating. There was supposed to be another one which didn't exist at all. The group agreed that this would dissuade them from wanting to go again.

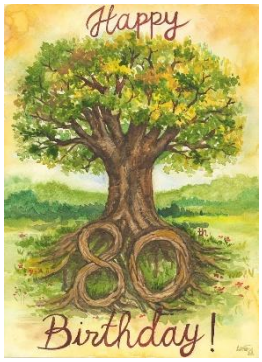
Our next meeting is due to be on **22nd May at Fingringhoe Wick CO5 7DN**. I will email members with full details soon.

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 10 am 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.

Science Group
Leader: Chris Bellamy chrisallenbellamy@btinternet.com
Deputy: Paul Chaplin paulchaplin@talktalk.net

Science Group Meeting 2,15pm Thursday 21st May
'The 80th Anniversary of the National Survey of Health & Development (NSHD)'
By Jenny Moir



The NSHD was launched in 1946 when the mothers' of all baby born in the first week of March were asked to participate in a study. Jenny was born on March 5th and has been a member of the study for the last 80 years. Jenny will explain why the study was started, what it is like being a member of the study, what some of the study finding are and why after all this time the study is still providing valuable information.

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.**

Medical Detection Dogs - 16th April 2026.

Medical Detection Dogs

Patron: HM The Queen

We welcomed Dr. Paul Williams from the Medical Detection Dogs/Medical Alert Assistance Dogs charity to a well-attended meeting of 38 members.

He began by telling us some amazing statistics about dogs' super-developed sense of smell, which has been harnessed for the benefit of our own species. Whereas a human nose has approximately 5 million scent receptors, a dog has around 300 million such receptors, i.e. a factor of 60. In practice, this means that a dog's sniff can detect a teaspoonful of sugar dissolved in a volume of water equivalent to two Olympic sized swimming pools, i.e. 1 - 2 parts per trillion.

Diseased cells become damaged and so produce by-products, or volatiles, which are released into the blood stream. These volatiles in the blood are also excreted from the body in urine, breath, sweat and/or faeces. Each type of disease/condition has its own unique 'signature' odour. The dogs are trained to recognise these individual smells from excreted samples. Each nostril inhales different odours.

The history of Medical detection Dogs began in 2003 when Gillian's dalmatian paid particular attention to a mole on the lady's arm. She sought the necessary medical attention, having established in her mind that her dog's extra-sensory ability had warned her of a problem. Gillian was a friend of Dr. Claire Guest, who became co-founder of the Charity in 2008, and who remains its CEO and Chief Scientific Officer. Her own dog, Daisy, detected Dr. Guest's own deep breast cancer around 2015.

Nevertheless, the rigour of scientific proof took some years to establish 'Proof of Concept', that reliable medical detection by dogs was a possibility. In 2004, the Biomedical Journal published a study on detection of Bladder Cancer. For the first time, with 6 dogs in the trial, it was shown scientifically that dogs can detect cancer. The success rate was just 56%, but now a success rate of at least 75% is required.

The Charity had very little money initially, but Gillian's substantial legacy of £800,000 meant that the Charity could move from a draughty, old house to its current location near Milton Keynes. Extensions were built and opened by Camilla, then Duchess of Cornwall, in 2019. She is the Patron of the charity.

The dogs themselves are sourced mainly from breeders, and need to be of a suitable temperament. The puppies are 'socialised' by volunteers and training takes a further 18 months to 2 years. They live as pets in households, from which they are delivered to their handlers for training at specified times. The dogs 'work' several times a day, up to one hour in total. The cost of training one dog is £29,000. It takes 4 - 6 months to train a dog to identify a specific odour. Additionally, the dog has to learn to disregard the multitude of unrelated odours present in the sample.

The charity has two main areas of work,. the training of Bio-Detection dogs and of Medical Alert Assistance dogs.
Its vision is:

- To save and enhance lives using its specially trained dogs' extraordinary sense of smell;
- To train dogs to detect the odour of human disease;
- To work in collaboration with international clinicians, universities and NHS Trusts on evidence-based research.

Any scientific trial has to be preceded by establishing 'Proof of Concept', that it is credible. This was not positively established scientifically until 2019.
The next stages are to confirm collaborators in the trial, and to obtain ethical approval before the trial itself can begin. Samples are then collected from consenting participants, for trial and for control, until in due course the results are published.
Notable research has been conducted into neurological diseases, especially Parkinson's and POTS syndrome (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome), bacterial infections, especially UTI's, and Malaria, as well as cancers.

Medical Alert Assistance dogs are trained to detect an imminent attack of epilepsy or hypoglycemia, for example, up to 20 minutes beforehand, allowing its owner to take medication or to seek a safe location, before the attack occurs. Each dog gives its own individual alert sign.This is life-saving and life-changing for the owner, providing confidence, independence, freedom, hope for the future, and also reducing hospital admissions. As of last year, the charity has provided Medical Alert dogs for those with 15 different conditions.

Dr. Claire Guest (CEO) has recognised that the provision of an increasing number of medical detection dogs in multiple locations is not sustainable. Her goal was always to inform scalable technology which, in turn, would inform the next generation of non-invasive diagnostic tools.

The latest pioneering research has resulted in the technological development of an Electronic nose (E-nose) to detect prostate cancer. Developed by a US-based quantum physicist, Dr. Andreas Mershin, it is being trialled in the UK for the first time using urine samples previously screened by MDD trained dogs. Dr.Mershin has spent almost a decade inspired by MDD 'to replicate the dogs' diagnostic accuracy using machine olfaction'. This is a major milestone. Phones already have eyes and ears. 'Machine olfactors are the next frontier in health technology and AI sensing'.

Further information is available on the MDD website: https://www.medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk./

Janet Stuart

We are sorry to report that Ron Freeman, a longstanding member of the Science Group, died on April 29th. Our condolences to Glenys and family.

Chelmsford Science and Engineering Society
explore · educate · expand
For details of their upcoming talks see the CES website at https://cses.org.uk/

Garden Group
Group Leader: Karen Smallwood

Garden Group: Hampton Court Palace Tulip Festival outing
Fifty Chelmsford u3a Garden Group/Coach Outings Group members enjoyed a coach trip to Hampton Court Palace on a sunny and warm St George's Day (Thursday 23 April 2026). We explored the many courtyards and rooms, several still much as they were built by Henry VIII's craftsmen, and admired highlights such as the stunning ornamental ceiling of the Chapel Royal.

We also watched play on the Real (Royal) Tennis courts, where Henry VIII once played and where Prince Edward is a current player.

Chapel Royal ceiling, Hampton Court Palace.
Photo: Rita Eden

The visit was timed to coincide with the annual Tulip Festival, which this year featured more than 100,000 tulips and other spring bulbs. Tulip beds and spring planting across the palace gardens and borders created a wonderful display of colour throughout the grounds. The Kitchen Garden, dating back to the time of William III, featured a mixed display planted in a Dutch flower-bed style.

In the Tiltyard, two willow sculptures of jousting knights on horseback were underplanted with tulips and wallflowers.

Tulip beds in the Kitchen Garden Photo: Lesley Wood

One of the jousting knights in the Tiltyard, underplanted with tulips and wallflowers Photo: Rita Eden

Other favourites were the Knot Garden where the tulips were paired with fritillaries; and the Pond Garden which was once a Tudor fish farm providing food for Henry VIII's table; this year it was planted with tulips, alliums, hyacinths and forget-me-nots.

In 1702, William III and Mary II undertook a grand redesign of the Privy (private) Garden, adorning it with magnificent bi-coloured tulips. This year, the gardeners echoed that tradition with modern bi-coloured tulips, known as 'Rembrandts', alongside vibrant perennials.

The Knot Garden Photo: Lesley Wood

Many thanks to Eddie Wood for organising such an enjoyable outing and to Lesley Wood for editing this report and adding the photos. This was my last trip as Group Leader after 12 years, and I wish our new leader, Karen Smallwood, every success and much enjoyment, together with all members, on future visits and talks.

Chris Bellamy

Hello everyone,

For those of you that are not aware, my name is Karen and I have taken over from Chris as leader of the garden group. I would like to offer my thanks to Chris for his fantastic work with this group over the last decade(and more!) and for the support he has given me.

I won't be making any changes to the date and time but will be considering moving the non-garden meetings to Christ Church as it is more central.

I have organised the visit for 28 May to Moynes Farm near Colchester. This is a traditional, large country garden and four acre woodland with walks. Vibrant planting, mature trees, shrubs and perennials. A formal courtyard area with box parterre maze, rose garden, wildlife pond and parkland. The price is £10

I will need to know if you want to attend so I can send them the numbers for our refreshments. so please email me back as soon as you can. More details and directions nearer the time. I look forward to meeting you all soon.

Karen Smallwood
Kasmallwood@sky.com

Reminder to Group Leaders
Please send copy for the June 2026 Newsletter to the editor, Andy Moir.
All copy must arrive no later than Friday 29th May 2026.

Keeping members in touch with the wider u3a Movement

Chelmsford u3a is part of the **East of England Region**. The region includes the six counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire. We are a very diverse region, from isolated rural villages to city metropolis, from agriculture to service industry, manufacturing to technology and the people are excitingly diverse too. At present there are 140 u3as within our Region, and with the success and growth of the movement we are welcoming more u3as all the time. You can read about the activities of some of these u3a's in the **East of England monthly news bulletin** which you can find here: https://eastofengland.u3asite.uk/publications/
From time to time the Region organises special on-line forums. The next one is scheduled for Wednesday 13 May, when Sheila Crawley, Vice Chair of the Third Age Trust, will be explaining all about the recruitment benefits of Outward facing Facebook. The session will run on Zoom from 10am to 11.30am. You can sign up by Contacting Ray at rayhardisty.east.u3a@gmail.com

Chelmsford u3a is also a member of the **Third Age Trust (National u3a)** and all our members can benefit from their Learn and Share activities - see details on the national u3a website under 'What we Do/learning activities'.

U3a members can also access a wide range of free on-line talks, workshops and courses. Most sessions are led by fellow members, sharing their expertise, with additional talks from notable speakers and organisations. There are a number of ways you can find out **What's on** – Our own u3a website features a national u3a events calendar, the East of England news bulletin features the current month's events. Alternatively, you can find them on this link: https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/educational-events where you can also sign-up to receive your own 'monthly events email'.

Lesley Wood
East of England Team member & Third Age Trust Volunteer

🌟 **Could YOU Be Part of the East of England Regional Team?** 🌟

Do you enjoy connecting with people, sharing ideas, and helping u3as thrive? The East of England Regional Team is looking for enthusiastic members to join us — and this could be the perfect opportunity for you.

💬 **What does the role involve?**

You'll be part of a friendly, supportive team working across the region to:

- Help local u3as run confidently and smoothly
- Strengthen communication through newsletters, the website, social media, and events
- Support forums, meetings, and conferences (both online and in person)
- Encourage and develop geographical Networks
- Visit u3as (by invitation) to listen, share, and offer guidance
- Use your own skills and experience to make a real difference

You'll also have access to u3a training on topics like starting new u3as, handling disputes, and managing risk — all designed to help you feel confident in your role.

🌱 **Why join?**

Because it's rewarding, sociable, and genuinely impactful. You'll meet inspiring people, help shape the future of the u3a movement in our region, and be part of a team that values your ideas and contributions.

👋 **Interested?**

We'd love to chat. Whether you're curious, enthusiastic, or already brimming with ideas, get in touch and find out how you could play a part.

Lesley Wood
Regional Team Member
Lesleywood54@yahoo.com

Chelmsford u3a Committee

Position	Name
Chair	Alan Caddy
Vice Chair	John Burrow
Secretary	Sue Osbourn
Treasurer	Wendy Hubbard
Membership Secretary	Alan Mayo
Speaker Organiser/Deputy Treasurer	Eddie Wood 01245 601359
Newsletter Coordinator/Minutes Secretary	Lynn Regan
Groups Coordinator	Lesley Wood
Deputy Groups Coordinator & Printed Newsletter	Brian Littlechild
Social Media/Digital Champion	Karen Smallwood
Marketing/Advertising	Mike Harmer
Monthly Meetings Organiser/Support Groups coordinator	Ann Goddard
Committee Member	Ann Bell

LONDON – THE CITY & ITS PEOPLE GROUP
Annual Walk in the city: Money tour: coffee shops, Bank & Royal Exchange
Rich City – How was the money made?
22nd June 2026 meeting by platform 11 Liverpool St. to walk to Bank

Please do not pay before checking availability

How did London become a financial centre? We'll walk the streets and lanes around Bank junction and get to know the cast of characters who played their part: the Romans, an Elizabethan diplomat, Italian bankers, property developers, a Greek coffee vendor, Lord Mayors and military leaders, amongst others.

We'll catch the 9.56am from Chelmsford 10.02am Ingatestone and will meet by platform 11 at 10.30am to walk to Broad St. There is plenty of seating in front of the Bank around the statue of the Duke of Wellington where we will meet our guides. **If you have one, please remember your rail card and to check for any restrictions**. Lunch arrangements and time to return home are your choice.

Our number is restricted to 40 (20 people per guide) so please let me know as soon as possible if you are wanting to come, preferably by email to: *mayberrynotes@outlook.com*. If for some reason you cannot use email, tel. Berry on 01277 355823. *I will confirm your booking.*

Cost: £10 pp for the Guided tour (payable online or by cheque sent to Berry).

Bob's mobile 07790 133727 only on the day in case of emergency.

Please return tear off slip to Berry: mayberrynotes@outlook.com or address below

Annual walk in the City: Rich City how was the money made? £10 pp

Ch. U3A mem. No/s _____No. places required _____

Names/s _____ £ _____

Email address_____ Tel.. no._____

Please pay by BACs if possible payable to: The U3A Chelmsford A/C No 67361669
Sort code 08.92.99 Reference LGMT
Or by cheque payable to Chelmsford U3A and sent to:

Berry Cornell, 24 Park Drive, Ingatestone CM49DT For confirmation please include email address or telephone no.

Interest Groups (as of 03/05/2026)

Group Leaders may be contacted by phone or by email via the relevant group page in our website https://chelmsford.u3asite.uk/

Name of Group	Day of Month	Time	Group Leader	Phone
All Day Walks	2nd Monday		Berry Cornell	01277 355823
Art Appreciation	4th Tuesday	14.00	Brenda Kelly	01277 840621
Art Club	Mondays	11.15	Peter Anderton	07773 074105
Art for Pleasure	Tuesdays	9.30	Les Cooper	07976 292362
Birding	4th Friday	10.00	Alan Alexander	07712 818499
Book Group	3rd Monday	14.30	Andy Moir	01245 440007
Bookworms	1st Thursday	14.20	Marian Jenkins	07986 616748
Bridge (beginners)	Tuesdays	14.00	Alan Cardus	
Bus Pass Group	2nd Friday	varies	Maurice Austin	
Canasta/Card Games	1st & 3rd Monday	13.30	Julie Haggar	07511 629563
Choir Group	1st & 3rd Wednesday	14:00	Deborah Aloba	07940 384785
Church Visits	1st Wednesday	10.15	Brian Greatrex	01245 258833
Coach Outings	Various		Malcolm Lonsdale	
Cycling for Fun	2nd Fri, 4th Tues	varies	Tony Cox	
Discussion Group	2nd Tuesday	13.00	Brian Littlechild	
Family History	4th Friday	14.00	Lesley Wood	01245 601359
Fishing Group	Wednesdays		Alan Caddy	
French Conversation	2nd & 4th Wed	14.00	David Hall	01245 284409
Garden Group	4th Thursday	14.00	Chris Bellamy	01277 353481
IT group	2nd Wednesday	10.00	Lyn Parsons	
International Dining	3rd Monday	19.00	Jennie Cappin	01245 358629
Jazz and Blues	3rd Wednesday	10.30	Heinz Kassier	
Local History	1st Tuesday	14.15	Jane Humphreys	01245 259590
London City and its People	4th Monday	14.00	Berry Cornell	01277 355823
Lunch Club 1	Last Friday	12.30	John Heathcote	01245 380766
Lunch Club 2	4th Tuesday	12.30	Harry Glaser	01245 462760
Lunch Club 3	1st Thursday	12.30	Laraine Linard & Barbara Childs	07855 312752
Lunch Club 4	3rd Wednesday	12.30	Val Norfolk	07500 444518
Mah-Jong	1st & 3rd Tuesday	14.00	Chris Paget	01245 474811
Philosophy	Thurs 4-weekly	11.00	Julia McClure	07941 480240
Philosophy & Religion	1st Monday	10.00	Jim Mackay	
Philosophy & Religion 2	4th Wednesday	14.00	Jim Mackay	
Photos on Face Book	Online		Alan Mayo	07979 540053
Pickleball Monday	Monday weekly	13.45	Gillian Stimson	07856 203630

Name of Group	Day of Month	Time	Group Leader	Phone
Pickleball Tuesday	Tuesday weekly	15.00	Jayne Hughes	01245 495151
Pickleball Thursday	Thursday weekly	12.00	Neil Carroll	07964 386056
Poetry Appreciation	2nd Wednesday 1st Wed from May	14.00	Judith Boniface	01245 266316
Quiz	4th Thursday	10.00	Laraine Linard	07855 312752
Rock & Pop Appreciation	2nd Wednesday	15.00	Bruce Knight	07963 592328
Science Group	3rd Thursday	13.45	Chris Bellamy	01277 353481
Sewing, Knitting & Crochet	3rd Thursday	11.00	Jacqui Norfolk	07714 258517
Short Walks	3rd Friday	10.00	Robert Lloyd	01245 466167
Spanish	3rd Wednesday	10.30	David Gout	01245 268923
Summer Evening Walks	4th Wednesday	16.30	Alan Mayo	07979 540053
Sunday Lunch 1	1st Sunday	varies	John Tritton	
Sunday Lunch 2	3rd Sunday	varies	Lesley Wood	01245 601359
Tai Chi	Tuesdays	14.00	Alan Caddy	
Ten Pin Bowling	2nd & 4th Fridays	10.30	Roger & Ruth Spall	01245 466486
Textiles (Fun with)	3rd Monday	11.15	Chris McFarland	01245 263112
Theatre Outings	As and when		Lesley Wood	01245 601359
The Wonder of Words	3rd Wednesday	14.00	Lindsay Whitehouse	01245 356363
Travel Group	See website		Anne Brereton	
Walking Group	1st & 3rd Fridays	10.00	Alan Mayo	07979 540053
WYBIG	As & when		Mark Foster	07531 726417

Contact Groups Coordinator: Lesley Wood lesleywood54@yahoo.com

Events in May 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
27 11:15 am: Art Club 1:45 pm: Pickleball Monday 2:00 pm: London: the City and its People Group	28 9:30 am: Art for Pleasure 10:00 am: Cycling for Fun 12:30 pm: Lunch Club 2 2:00 pm: Bridge (Beginners) 2:00 pm: Tai Chi 2:30 pm: Art Appreciation 3:00 pm: Pickleball Tuesday	29	30 12:00 pm: Pickleball Thursday	1 9:45 am: Walking Group	2	3 12:00 pm: Sunday lunch Group 1
4 10:00 am: Philosophy & Religion 11:15 am: Art Club 1:30 pm: Canasta/Card Games 1:45 pm: Pickleball Monday	5 9:30 am: Art for Pleasure 2:00 pm: Bridge (Beginners) 2:00 pm: Local History 2:00 pm: Mah-Jong 2:00 pm: Tai Chi 3:00 pm: Pickleball Tuesday	6 7:00 am: Fishing 10:30 am: Church Visits 2:00 pm: Poetry	7 10:30 am: Philosophy 2 12:00 pm: Lunch Club 3 12:00 pm: Pickleball Thursday 2:30 pm: Book Worms	8 Bus Pass Group 10:00 am: Cycling for Fun 10:30 am: Ten Pin Bowling	9	10
11 All day Walks 11:15 am: Art Club 1:45 pm: Pickleball Monday	12 9:30 am: Art for Pleasure 2:00 pm: Bridge (Beginners) 2:00 pm: Discussion Group 2:00 pm: Tai Chi 3:00 pm: Pickleball Tuesday	13 10:00 am: IT Group 2:00 pm: French Conversation 2:15 pm: Rock & Pop Appreciation	14 12:00 pm: Pickleball Thursday 2:00 pm: Monthly Meeting	15 9:45 am: Walking Group 10:00 am: Short Walks	16	17 12:00 pm: Sunday lunch Group 2

18 11:15 am: Art Club 1:30 pm: Canasta/Card Games 1:45 pm: Pickleball Monday 2:30 pm: Book Group 3:00 pm: Fun with Textiles 7:00 pm: International Dining	19 Mah-Jong 9:30 am: Art for Pleasure 2:00 pm: Bridge (Beginners) 2:00 pm: Tai Chi 3:00 pm: Pickleball Tuesday	20 10:30 am: Jazz and Blues Group 10:30 am: Spanish Conversation 12:30 pm: Lunch Club 4 2:00 pm: Wonder of Words	21 10:00 am: Sewing and Crochet 12:00 pm: Pickleball Thursday 2:15 pm: Science Group	22 10:00 am: Birding 10:30 am: Ten Pin Bowling 12:30 pm: Luncheon Group 1 2:00 pm: Family History	23	24
25 11:15 am: Art Club 1:45 pm: Pickleball Monday 2:00 pm: London: the City and its People Group	26 9:30 am: Art for Pleasure 10:00 am: Cycling for Fun 12:30 pm: Lunch Club 2 2:00 pm: Bridge (Beginners) 2:00 pm: Tai Chi 2:30 pm: Art Appreciation 3:00 pm: Pickleball Tuesday	27 2:00 pm: French Conversation 2:00 pm: Philosophy & Religion 2	28 10:00 am: Quiz Group 12:00 pm: Pickleball Thursday 2:00 pm: Garden Group	29	30	31