

April programme

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1 Birdwatching	2	3
4 Table Tennis	5 Petanque	6 Monthly meeting	7 Music Appreciation	8 Golf Singing for Pleasure	9	10
11 Rural Essex visit	12 History Visit	13 Art Group Luncheon Club 3 Patchwork & Quilting	14 Garden Group visit Reading Group	15 Photography	16	17
18 Table Tennis Committee meeting	19 Petanque Woodturning	20 Woodturning Scrabble Art Group Luncheon Club 1 Theatre visit	21 Family History Olympic tour	22 Singing for Pleasure Luncheon Club 2	23	24
25	26	27 Art Group	28 Craft Group Walking Group	29	30	

Blackwater U3A newsletter April 2011



U3A

www.blackwateru3a.co.uk

Reg. Charity No. 1113334

From the Chair

We had the AGM last month so now it is a new year for our U3A. I hope you are all pleased to see and hear the sights and sounds of Spring. Despite being retired I know life seems busy, but much of that is our choice, we decide to do so many things. It is important though to enjoy the moment of what we are doing and to really appreciate it and our surroundings because it is all transient, and tomorrow it will be different or gone.

We have a new programme of talks for the Wednesday monthly meetings, lots of new speakers, and I hope you will enjoy them. Please let us know the ones you find really good and the ones you don't like so much. We can't please everyone as you all have different tastes but we will try to please most of you most of the time.

There are 204 members and you all probably use the High Street at some time. We have started a group to look at some of the buildings and their history with the idea to learn about some of them and pass on that knowledge to the rest of us. We would like very much some more people to take an interest in one of the buildings so we could cover a lot of the High Street. Could I persuade anyone else to find out about one building? I promise it would be rewarding to yourself and others. You will find more details later in this newsletter. *Dennis Eraut*

Subscription Renewals

Members are reminded that our membership year now runs from 1st May to 30th April. Last December the majority of members paid a full subscription to cover the period up to April 2012. If you are one of the few who paid up to April of this year, then your subscription for 2011/12 of £20 should be paid by 30th April 2011. Payment is by cheque in favour of 'Blackwater U3A' and should be accompanied by a renewal form which can be obtained from the Wednesday meeting signing-in desk. Alternatively please contact our new Membership Secretary: Doreen Stockton, 45 Hopping Jacks Lane, Danbury CM3 4PJ to request a form. A stamped addressed envelope would be appreciated. *Adrian Stockton*

From your Membership Secretary.

Hello, may I introduce myself – Doreen Stockton – as your new Membership Secretary? I am happy to receive any of your membership enquiries and will do my best to answer them. Our waiting list still shows over fifty persons waiting to enjoy the benefits of Blackwater U3A membership. Anyone wishing for an application form to join the list should first contact me by telephone. Doreen Stockton 01245 225081. *Doreen Stockton*

May newsletter deadline—earlier

Deadline for the May newsletter is Wednesday 20th April—please submit early as the following week is full of bank holidays. Contributions to ian@ianlinton.demon.co.uk 51 Washington Road, Maldon, CM9 6BN

Social Group

Thursday 30th June - BBC Tour leaving at 9am. The trip is almost fully booked. The cost is £20.00 as we have been able to reduce the price. Please make payment and confirmation at the March meeting.

Thursday 13th July - The Royal Savill Gardens and Thames Cruise. The price of £40 will include coach, tour of the gardens, 2 course lunch, river cruise and afternoon cream tea on the boat.

Monday 19th September - Visit to Great Bardfield Lodge Experience, including a tour of the 17th century Grade II listed farmhouse, ploughman's lunch in the farmhouse and tour of the vineyard with wine tasting in the walled garden.

Friday 21st October - Social evening

Friday 18th November - Dance.

Barbara Brand —01621 853218

Luncheon Group 2

The venue for the March meeting of Luncheon Group 2 was the Blue Strawberry at Hatfield Peverell. Nineteen members came and all thoroughly enjoyed a wonderful meal with excellent company. Our next meeting will be on Friday, 15th April at the Red Lion, Latchingdon, at 12.15. *George Wallis*

Luncheon Group 3

Seven members of the group went to The Anchor at Runsell Green for our first luncheon on 9th March where it was agreed that both the food and the company was most enjoyable. Our next meal is on Thursday 14th April (normally the second Wednesday). This new group meets on the second Wednesday of the month at various hostelries in the Maldon district and surrounding area. Please phone me if you would like to join the group.

Pam Mills, Coordinator 01621 874883

Scrabble Group

The group is now meeting and Sylvia Harden would be pleased to hear from anyone else who is interested in playing Scrabble. Meetings are every 3rd Wednesday of the month - April 20th, May 18th, June 15th, July 20th, August 17th, September 21st, October 19th, November 16th, December no meeting.

Sylvia Harden - 01621 858506

Current Committee Members 2011/12

Dennis Eraut	Chair	01621 829758
Val Wilson	Vice-Chair	01621 842455
John Wallace	Vice-Chair	01245 225093
Adrian Stockton	Treasurer	01245 225081
Dawn Mundy	Secretary	01621 854065
Barbara Brand	Social Activities	01621 853218
Dorreen Linton	Interest Group Coordinator	01621 853428
Sheila Rowsell	Committee Member	01621 740820
Sheila Wallace	Committee Member	01621 856667
Peter Holmes	Co-opted Member	01621 854108
Gill Cato	Co-opted Member	01621 740153

Local U3A contacts

Maldon—Joyce Cotterell 01621 858287
 South Woodham Ferrers—Heather Richardson 01245 320205
 Heybridge—Peter Thorpe 01621 850828

Coordinators

Interest Group Coordinator	Dorreen Linton	01621 853428
Art	Anita Sandison	01621 741351
Art Appreciation	Dorreen Linton	01621 853428
Birdwatching	Peter Leggett	01621 852377
Community Garden	Dorreen Linton	01621 853428
Crafts	Sheila Wallis	01621 856667
Family History	Ken Johnson	01621 828490
French beginners	Val Wilson	01621 842455
Gardening	Jennifer Fowler	01245 222834
Geology	Anita Sandison	01621 741351
Golf	Alan Chapman	01621 816860
History	Dorreen Linton	01621 853428
Local Theatres	Sheila Rowsell	01621 740820
London Theatres	Gill Cato	01621 740153
Luncheon Club 1	Di Johnson	01621 828490
Luncheon Club 2	Kathy Leggett	01621 852377
Luncheon Club 3	Pam Mills	01621 874883
Maldon High Street	Dorreen Linton	01621 853428
Maritime Group	John Wallace	01245 225093
Music Appreciation	Mani Koenig-Roach	01621 854235
Patchwork & Quilting	Molly Middleton	01621 859914
	Gil Reeves	01621 855845
Petanque	George Wallis	01621 856667
Photography Group	George Wallis	01621 856667
Reading Group	Pat Wade	01621 740253
Rural Essex	Dorreen Linton	01621 853428
Science, Tech, Medicine	Alan Chapman	01621 816860
Scrabble	Sylvia Harden	01621 858506
Social Group	Barbara Brand	01621 853218
Spanish	Sue Watson	01621 852941
Swimming	Anne Kellard	01621 853045
Table Tennis	John Mundy	01621 854065
Walkers	Dorreen Linton	01621 853428
Wine Group	Stella Bradbrook	01621 854235
Woodturning	Charles Middleton	01621 859914
Joint groups with Maldon U3A		
Astronomy	Alan Chapman	01621 816860
Ballroom Dancing	Jean Smith	01621 843054
Singing for Pleasure	Jacky Holmes	01621 854108
Snooker	Brian	01621 842619
Tenpin Bowling	David Arnold	01621 853866
Scottish Dancing	Shirley Grummett	01621 853288
Trouble-Shooters	Liz or Bryan Jones	01621 857031

News update

Plume Lower School link with Blackwater U3A

The team of Blackwater and Heybridge U3A members who have volunteered to listen to young students read during their registration time is well established. As one member states the process is 'satisfaction guaranteed'. The children are showing improved reading skills and confidence when reading aloud and we benefit from the newly-established routine. We are up and out by 8.00 am, do a very worthwhile duty and are home in just over an hour. The volunteers attend 2, 3 or 4 sessions each week, which ever suits them. Guidance and coaching is given, and we have even enjoyed meetings over coffee on the Prom. If you would like to join us in our quest to strengthen the link with the younger members of our community by supporting their literacy skills please ring me. More volunteers, male and female would help us help more children. We do need people to cover volunteers' holiday dates and CRB checks are compulsory.

Dawn Mundy 01621 854065.

Plume Community Forum

Ian and Dorreen Linton went to a forum about the Plume/Community partnership. We were told of the vision, aims and objectives of the forum and the different ways Blackwater U3A members could become involved. One of the objectives is to engage the students with the world outside the classroom. So our members could, on a one-off basis, talk to small groups of children about their working live and their jobs. It is an opportunity for members to share their knowledge, skills and expertise with the younger generation. One young student told us about the Creative and Media Department that has been set up and how they have experienced the pressure of real briefs, real deadlines and working with clients. Another year six student has set up his own website company. He is building up his clients and has 15 in total at the moment. If you are interested in being involved with this aspect of the Plume/Community Partnership, please speak to Dennis or Dawn. *Dorreen Linton*

Ex-member – Maxie Neff

I thought I would let you know some news about one of our ex-members. Maxie Neff moved to the Dereham area in Norfolk and has now settled in her new home. She recently decided to find out the interest for a U3A in her area. Expecting 30-40 people, she and a group of new friends were amazed when 150 came along. She is now part of the committee setting up Dereham U3A. She would like members to know that the blue and yellow spring bulbs we gave her are now in full bloom - a reminder of her days with Blackwater U3A.. *Dorreen Linton*

New groups

To most of you this will seem a strange question as you probably think that we have plenty of groups, so why would we want more. Although we have a hard core of very active members, there are some who don't appear to come along to interest groups – why is this? Is the reason that the groups are on a day when you are busy already? Is it because none of the groups at the moment interest you? Is it because the groups you are interested in already have sufficient numbers?

So, here is your opportunity, please fill in a form about interest groups and return it to me. There will be a box by the newsletters. I do hope that everyone will use this opportunity to let me know. Those who already attend groups could you please let me have any comments. Here are some of the groups where a little interest has been shown and signing-up sheets are available: Creative Writing, Badminton, Cookery, Card Games, Italian, Study of other Religions.

Dorreen Linton 01621 853428

Third Age Trust communications

The National U3A Office have issued Advice Sheets to cover the following subjects: Accessibility for Disabled Members, First Aid, Organising our AGM, Data Protection, Sorting out Problems & Grievances. A folder of the sheets will be available at the monthly meetings. Please let me know if you want a copy of any of the sheets. Information on Code of Conduct for U3A Trustees is also available as is sight of the Phonographic Performance Ltd Licence document. This Licence authorises the use of sound recordings by all member sites for the period 1st January 2011 to 31st December 2011.

The 28th AGM of the Third Age Trust takes place on 18th September 2011 at Nottingham University. We will receive relevant information about proposed resolutions by the end of May. There are vacancies for election to the posts of Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and regional trustees. Further information on the national U3A website or contact Dawn Mundy

Enthusiastic astronomers may wish to contact Betty Ford of Ferndown U3A on 01202 873125 who has a lot of information, pictures and diagrams to pass on, and also books and equipment. Correspondence from Third Age Trust is available to view at each monthly meeting. *Dawn Mundy 01621 854065.*

Maldon Choral Society concert

Maldon Choral Society presents Gloria by Vivaldi and Requiem by Faure, conducted by Dr Gillian Ward Russell on Saturday 16th April 2011 at 7.30 pm at United Reformed Church, Market Hill, Maldon. Tickets: £10 available from Tourist Information Office, Wenlock Way, Maldon, 01621 856503 or reserved by telephone 01621 853220.

Shared Learning Project

The meeting to discuss the possibility of undertaking Shared Learning Projects at Stow Maries Aerodrome took place yesterday afternoon. This note sets out the discussions held and future actions agreed. There were 25 members from six U3A's at the meeting. The meeting started with a talk about the history of the Aerodrome since its inception in 1916 and then moved on to what the owner wishes to achieve. The aims are two fold, firstly the restoration of as many of the original buildings as a possible to their 1918 state and secondly the establishing of a large conservation area with wild grass meadows, ponds and scrapes. Already seven buildings have been restored and the wild grass meadow sown, 5000 trees planted and one of three ponds dug. The progress in just over 2 years shows the intent of the site's owner. Whilst on the tour of the site we were treated to a ten minute flying display by an Army Apache helicopter, the Apache being their latest helicopter, very impressive, but back to the reason we were there. We were fortunate to have with us Jennifer Anning who is the National Organiser for Shared Learning Projects. She spoke briefly but enthusiastically about the benefits of SLP's to the U3A member and the sponsoring organisation.

The discussion that followed was about the SLP's that those attending thought we could do and indeed wanted to do. The first project that was agreed was a tapestry depicting the life of the squadron stationed at Stow Maries in 1918 and some of the local landmarks closely associated with them. Hopefully this project will appeal to needlewomen and men no matter what needle craft technique they use. The next step is for the recipients of this note is to ask members in their U3A if there is anyone interested in being part of this team, if there are, to forward their names and contact details to me. From there a meeting will be called to discuss all the practicalities that need to be sorted before undertaking such a project, attending this meeting will not commit them in any way.

The second project agreed was the writing of a series of walks, based on public footpaths, around the area that would either start at the aerodrome or where the aerodrome could be included in the walk. The aim would be to publish these walks locally for the benefit of the general public as well as walking groups. As for the tapestry project, the next step is for the recipients of this note is to ask members in their U3A if there is anyone interested in being part of this team, if there are, to forward their names and contact details to me. From there a meeting will be called to discuss all the practicalities that need to be sorted before undertaking such a project, attending this meeting will not commit them in any way. I can see that in both the above projects that help might be needed from writers, photographers and local historians to ensure a successful completion. For these projects to be successful and indeed any future projects that might be undertaken we need your help to spread the word amongst your members. If you would like me to come to a meeting to discuss SLP's that can be arranged, there would not be a charge made for this type of visit. If you would like a group visit to the Aerodrome or somebody to give a presentation on the history of Stow Maries, please let me know, there is a charge for these visits.

Other projects that were discussed but no action currently planned, unless somebody expresses an interest, were:

Museum Guide to allow visitors to self-guide themselves around the museum building and the site.

Critique the Aerodrome leaflet and Website from a visitor's perspective and make recommendations for their improvement.

Conservation Issues: These are many and varied and anybody interested in conservation or the local fauna and flora will find something to interest them.

Service details of the other ranks that served with Stow Maries.

Roger Smith - 01621 843054

Refreshments & Meet & Greet rota

May	Local Theatre Group
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Speakers' Corner

Our monthly general meetings feature a wide variety of guest speakers. The meetings are held at West Maldon Community Centre on the first Wednesday of the month. Remember doors now open at 2.00.

Speaker for May - Sholto Morton 'Odd Corners in the Square Mile' (full details in March newsletter)

Speaker for June - Brian D'Arcy R.V.M. (Royal Victorian Medal). Illustrated Talk on Living with the Ghosts of the Tower. Brian will speak to us about how he became a Yeoman Warder and lived in the Tower of London for 23 years. He will tell us about the ghosts who walk the battlements and throw stones at the sentries, about the Earl who pushes people down the steps of the Martin Tower, about who screams. Come and hear the true stories of life in the Tower of London told by storyteller Brian D'Arcy who during his time at the Tower also served as Curator of the Crown Jewels.

Wine Group

The U3A Wine Group met on Monday 4th April at the home of Stella and Mani Koenig-Roach to taste 6 to 8 wines followed by cheese and biscuits. There will be a report in the next newsletter.

For more information on the group ring Stella on 01621 854235.

Craft Group

The Craft Group met on 24th March. The new project is wool embroidery. Unfortunately, due to the limited space available in my house, we cannot take any new members at present. Sheila Wallis - 01621 856667

Gardening Group

What a difference the sunshine makes to us all - forget the spring cleaning, tackle the weeds, plant the vegetables, take a break have a coffee and enjoy the daffodils, other spring flowers and the blossom on the trees and hedges. At our February meeting at Stow Maries, Linda Holdaway, one of the County Organisers for The National Gardeners Scheme gave us a very interesting and informative talk on the history of the organisation. This charity is involved in fundraising for nursing, caring and gardening - such as Marie Curie Nurses, McMillan Nurses and Hospices. Countless people have immense pleasure from visiting these gardens and gaining inspiration and hints to improve or alter their own patch. The gardens are many and varied; town gardens, woodland gardens, estate gardens; roof gardens, you name it and there will be one somewhere. In Essex alone there are 67 to see. Another feature of this scheme is the enthusiasm, knowledge and generosity of the owners of the gardens. The teas, homemade cakes and scones they provide is legendary. In order to be admitted to the scheme you have to have forty five minutes for visitors to enjoy and no untidy compost bins, or weedy corners, not for me I fear! If you are going on holiday in this country, it is well worth having a copy of The Yellow Book with you.

Hyde Hall Garden is always changing, not only the flowers but the design and our March visit was no exception. Ten of us, a much smaller group than usual, had a most enjoyable morning wandering round the garden in the sunshine. There was plenty of colour, violas, hyacinths, polyanthus, primroses, daffodils. The perfume from the Daphnes was gorgeous. For most of us the most outstanding flowers were the Hellebores. They were so upright, colourful and varied. There were white and pink camellias and even some azaleas in flower. It was very interesting to see how the roses are pruned and trained. The Dogwoods had not been cut down yet and the various species made a lovely background to the low growing flowers. We admired the beautiful green grass - no weeds. The hedges were trimmed to perfection. After a delicious snack in the Barn Restaurant we walked to the shop and some of us bought plants. In all it was a very sociable morning totally without stress for the organiser !

FORTHCOMING VISITS

Thursday April 14th - Visit to Barnards Farm, West Horndon by car 11.30am. Meet at West Maldon Community Centre at 10.30am, cost £6. Lunch is available at a reasonable cost or bring a picnic. £3 for Driver. This is quite a big place so we will probably do half the garden before lunch. I need 25 for this visit as they are opening the gardening especially for us. Let me know if you cannot come.

Monday May 9th - Plant Swap at Lodge Farm Woodham Walter 2.30pm. No money changes hands, come and enjoy the afternoon and bring any treasures you have to swap.

Monday May 23rd - Visit to Byndes Cottage, a private garden in Pebmarsh 2pm, cost £5 including tea. Meet at West Maldon Community Centre at 1.10, £3 to Driver (contact Wendy Diss if unable to come 01245 223459)

Monday June 13th - Visit to Cobwebs near Rochford 2.30 pm, cost £4 including tea. Meet at West Maldon Community Centre at 1.45pm, £2 to Driver

Monday July 4th Visit to Capel Manor Gardens Enfield by coach 11.30. Cost £4 (concessions) plus £2 tour (optional) plus coach £12 approximately. Please sign for this to give me numbers and pay next month

Thursday 4th August - Visit to Helmingham Hall Gardens, Suffolk by coach 12 noon. Cost £6 entry plus coach approximately £12. Lunch available. Meet at West Maldon Community Centre at 10.15 (to be confirmed)

Monday 12th September - Visit to Buckingham Palace state rooms and garden highlights at 11.45am Cost £22.80 plus coach. I have to pay for this in July so will need cheques in June. Only 25 in our party so may have to ballot.

Please sign for any of these that you would like to come to. If you are unable to come to the monthly meeting, please ring me Jennifer Fowler 01245 222834 or Wendy Diss 01245 223459

Music Appreciation Group

Our second meeting of this year was held at Dorreen and Ian's home - thank you for your warm hospitality and delicious refreshments. We concentrated on the letter 'B' and shall be doing so for the next session as there is so much to explore! This next meeting will be held at Manni's home at 96 Farnbridge Road from 2 pm until 4pm on Thursday 7th April so please phone Manni to let him know that you will be coming. As always, we enjoyed our mixture of musical tastes. We did, during our teabreak, listen to the inimitable Larry Adler on his 'talking' harmonica: 'Begin the Beguine' and others. Does anyone now play the harmonica, and how many know of this man who was 'one of the world's most skilled harmonica players'? A genius - self-taught!

American composer Samuel Barber I thank for introducing me to classical music, having heard his 'Adagio for Strings' when I was in my teens. But we did not hear this; Manni gave us something new: Barber's 'Concerto for Violin and Orchestra'. The violinist Isaac Stern took my breath away with his virtuosity. The composition was 'modern' and to me it was 'a seascape of sounds'. Having looked him up I discovered that Barber was an individual, not conforming, always going his own way. Bach's Concerto for 2 violins in D minor is considered among the best examples of the late Baroque period - Bach did conform! It is truly an exquisite piece of music. Chichester Psalms by Bernstein came next and was first performed in New York in 1965 even though it was commissioned for a 1965 Festival in Chichester. It is a complex but sublime piece! We heard Bizet's 'Carmen' - not in its entirety of course, but the overture. Then Victoria de los Angeles gave us a perfect rendition of the doomed gypsy. The music portends sadness and disaster, but we loved it! As you see, an eclectic mixture.

Pat Willis. Mani Koenig-Roach, Coordinator 01621 854235

Walking Group

Our March walk left Daisy Meadow car park in Heybridge Basin for a walk along the river edge and then around Chigborough Lakes. The 5 1/2 mile walk at this time of the year was particularly good as the Reserve was busy with the wildlife - plants and birds - waking up after the winter months. Dorreen zig-zagged around the many tracks – sometimes on the edge of the lakes, sometimes in the woods, on the edge of the fields and then back along the river's edge to Wilkins Tearooms.

The programme for the next three months is:

28th April – leave West Maldon Community Centre 9.30 am for a walk around Bicknacre

26th May – leave Tesco 9.30 am for a walk around the Wilkins Estate, Tiptree

23rd June – leave West Maldon Community Centre at 9.30 am for a walk around Tillingham

There will be a break for July and August and then the autumn programme will begin in September. I have been given the offer of guided walks around the Little Baddow area for either historical or nature walks and then a visit to the History Centre. Please let me know if you are interested and I will arrange these.

Dorreen Linton 01621 853428

Science, Technology & Medical Group

The inaugural meeting of this new group was held at West Maldon Community Centre on Monday 14th March when Roger Wilson gave the group a very interesting and informative talk on the Science of Comets. The group are proposing to meet on the second Monday of each month at 9.30 am with alternate site visits of science/technological/medical interest followed by meetings at West Maldon Community Centre where we will have talks on one of the main subjects.

Our first visit will be to Chelmsford Sewage Treatment Works for a guided tour and talk by a member of Anglian Water Authority staff. The good news is that the visit/talk is FREE. The bad news is that this visit will not be on the second Monday in the month because of clashes with school trips. Our visit will be on Thursday 14th April when we will meet at West Maldon Community Centre at 9.30am and travel to Chelmsford by car share.

At the next meeting, which will be in the Linton room at 9.30am on Monday 9th May, we will have a medical-oriented talk by Dr David Petts, a microbiologist, who will be telling us about *Fever in the Dengie Marshes* and explaining why, in the past, some of the marshmen married up to 25 times in their lifetime because their young wives died of the Dengie illness.

Alan Chapman, Group Coordinator 01621 816860

Maritime Group

February meeting

We learned about a rather different use of the marine environment when Roger Smith led our meeting with an illustrated talk about seaplanes on the Solent. Roger described the development of seaplanes from the earliest days of aviation at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the unusual concentration of companies around the Solent and its tributary rivers such as the Hamble. Some of these became household names, including Fairey Aviation and perhaps the best known, Supermarine, whose chief seaplane designer, R G Mitchell went on to develop his designs into the famous second world war fighter, the Spitfire. Roger took us up to the 1930s, including the Schneider Trophy seaplane races. We look forward to the second half of the talk sometime in the autumn.

March meeting

15 members heard a fascinating talk from Ken Johnson, describing the development of ships through the nineteenth century. This was a time when, after centuries of relatively gentle development of sailing ships, both naval and merchant, huge changes took place both in the size of ships and their engineering. In the 1800s, few ships were larger than a couple of thousand tons, but by 1900 ships of 30,000 tons or more were being launched. The ill-fated Titanic weighed in at 45,000 tons in 1912! Sail eventually gave way to steam but only after a fight back by a series of new sailing designs, such as the Tea Clippers, some of which could outrun the latest steam ships in the mid nineteenth century – providing the wind blew as needed! Paddle steamers gradually gave way to screw propeller driven ships, while steam engines went through major technical developments before finally being ousted by marine oil powered engines. Many shipping companies still trading today, such as P & O, began life in this period, both as commercial carriers and with the passenger trade. Economic forces, such as the availability of coal, changing patterns of empire trade and the cutting of new canals, such as Suez, all played their part in shaping the development of ships in this time of unprecedented change. Throughout, Ken supplemented his thorough and knowledgeable presentation by the use of many contemporary illustrations. The talk was warmly appreciated by all present.

April: there will be no meeting as it will be Easter Monday

September : Advance notice!

On Thursday 29th September we will be having a joint all-day visit with the Art Appreciation Group to Greenwich. While they will be visiting things artistic, we will visit the National Maritime Museum. As you may know the NMM has three attractions, the museum itself (by far the largest maritime museum in the country), the Observatory, including the Meridian, and the Queen's House. We have booked a 35 seater coach, cost of the coach will be £12 per head. Depending on numbers we may be able to arrange a one hour museum tour (extra cost), nearer the date. Booking will be open to all Blackwater U3A members at the April General meeting. *John Wallace 01245 225093*

Birdwatching Group

As in the musical masterpiece, 'The Rustle of Spring' is now at Hanningfield Nature Reserve! Such was our experience starting with the call of the Great Tit and the song of the Chaffinch as the sun gradually and slowly appeared through the gaps in the vanishing grey clouds. Then came the wide blue sky and, gloriously, greater bird activity and the sight of masses of blue bells – in leaf with the flowers yet to come. This fanfare was for us on Friday 4th March. We were led by our expert guide, David Petts, around part of the hundred-acre mixed woodland along the edge of the eight hundred and seventy acres of Hanningfield Reservoir. The combined area is a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its nationally-important populations of wild fowl and is one of the top places in the county for both wetland and woodland birds. The Reserve is managed by Essex Wildlife Trust on a lease from Essex and Suffolk Water, dating from 1992.

First we arrived at the Trust's Visitor Centre, with its gallery providing panoramic views over the Reservoir, and to introductions to David while sipping hot coffee. We recounted what had happened on our journey beforehand. For one of our cars in the short convoy had broken down at Rettendon. Thanks to mobile telephones we received the distress call to which we organised a response. We started in Chestnut Wood and on to a hide overlooking the water. Here we observed large numbers of Cormorants almost packed on to an island with two Grey Herons and a few magnificent and large Great Backed Gulls. While swimming were some Teal and the larger Gadwell with their conspicuous black rumps. Walking under the high trees we saw several Goldcrests (half the weight of the Wren and Britain's smallest bird). They were difficult to focus on because of their smallness and flitting habit. Also seen were Long Tailed Tits and Great Tits.

Further on and from the landward side of the wood we saw in a field grazing Greylag and Canadian Geese together and distantly-grazing Widgeon, the yellow foreheads of the males showing clearly in the sunlight. Coming onto a "V" shaped part of the Reservoir we saw a pair of beautiful Great Crested Grebes. First not recognised because their necks were withdrawn then, when extended, the full beauty of the birds was revealed; necks glistening white and a black frill on each side of the head. We waited for their courtship ritual but, although the partnership was obviously established, their shyness dampened their ardour. Further on in the wood we saw a Tree Creeper and heard the drumming of a Great Spotted Woodpecker. Then in a large short-cut meadow we saw about eight or nine Redwings identified by the cream stripe over the eye and rusty red wings. The larger Fieldfare with grey head and rump, chestnut back and black tail were also present. Noticeable too were its spring colours of the under parts, bright ochre and boldly blotched. Both species are of the Thrush family and are winter visitors. This most enjoyable expedition was finished with a booked in advance, delicious lunch at the Café on the Water overlooking the Reservoir. We did not leave our specially laid large table until well after three o'clock. Then home in glorious bright sunshine.

There are only two bird watching outings left in our current programme which have vacancies, namely;

Oxley Meadows – Tolleshunt Knights. Friday 3rd June. Meet at West Maldon Community Centre car park 9.00am.

Pandemonium – Wimbish near Thaxted. Friday 1st July – meet West Maldon Community Centre car park 8.15am.

However a Reserve List is available for the combined Dawn Chorus and full English breakfast, price £12, taking place on Tuesday 3rd May.

Signing up sheets for this event and for Oxley Meadows and for Pandemonium will be available at the monthly general meetings in April and May.

Peter Leggett Coordinator - Phone 01621 852377 or mobile on day of event only 07881680260 in case of breakdowns.

Family History Group

All meetings are held on the third Thursday in the month at 1.30 pm in the Linton Room at West Maldon Community Centre. Beginners and new members welcome. *Coordinator Ken Johnson 01621 828490*

13:30 - 14:00 Memories 14:15 - 14:30 Website of the month

14:30 - 15:00 Main topic 15:00 - 15:20 Tea & biscuits

15:20 - 16:00 Questions & answer session or main topic continuation.

MONTH	MEMORIES SUBJECT	MAIN TOPIC	SPEAKER
April	Your first holiday abroad	Active help me session	Kay/Roger
May		Visit to the LMA	

For full 2011 programme, see Family History page on the website. With all question and answer sessions it would be very helpful if you can let me know your questions in advance. This then gives an opportunity to find the right person to answer and or do the necessary research to get a meaningful answer rather than just give a best guess at the meeting
Roger Smith 01621 843054

Swimming group

I am sad to say that our swimming teacher/Maldon U3A coordinator Gill Rowsell has decided to retire from our fortnightly swimming sessions. Gill has done this for over 10 years and has helped many U3A members to improve their techniques, some to conquer their fear of the water and learn to swim and others, myself included, to go underwater for the first time. I would like to thank Gill on behalf of us all for her fun lessons, help and enthusiasm. I wonder if there is anyone in Blackwater U3A who would take up her mantle and teach others. Alternatively we could continue to meet fortnightly for a social swim and coffee afterwards. It gives one the incentive to go if you know you will meet other members. Please let me know what you want to do. *Anne Kellard 01621 853045*

Historical Buildings in Maldon High Street

I would like to thank everyone who has come along to the first two meetings of this group. I have found it very encouraging that some members have volunteered to find out the history of a specific building. There is another way that members could be involved. Could you please jot down your High Street memories - perhaps a favourite shop that is longer open. Have you photos of any of the buildings? They don't necessarily need to be very old - just photos of our High Street. Do you know any of the owners, so contact could be made for a visit or to tell someone about the history of the building. Please contact me if you can help build up a picture of our High Street over the years. *Dorreen Linton*

February meeting

The first meeting of this new group was held on 23rd February upstairs in The Oakhouse so that we had a view up and down the High Street at the old market end. Dorreen was practically voiceless at the time - well can't be completely can she, so Ian Linton gave the presentation. He showed us many pictures of buildings from medieval to modern, encouraging us to look at the buildings especially above the shop level to pick up details of their history. There were also scenes from the past. A number of different sources were mentioned to gain further information such as printed documents, the library, Essex Records Office, old maps, Tourist Information Centre, the Maldon Society, Maldon Archaeological Group and family histories of Maldon folk who owned the properties or businesses. Different methods could be used for research depending on our interests in the history or buildings; walk and see, history of a building, sharing of memories with both U3A members and senior folk in the town, photography comparing old and new, why did shops like these exist in Maldon?

Next steps

So what should the group do next? Each individual or pair can choose their approach. It was decided we should try and meet regularly to share and bounce ideas off each other. Dorreen arranged several visits to the Essex Records Office to see what was available and how to look up the books, documents and maps stored. Ian floated the idea "What should we produce from our activities?" and Dennis suggested we should produce a pamphlet combining our activities in different sections, illustrated with photographs, both old and new, together with drawings of the structure of some of the buildings. This might be popular among U3A members and could be carried on a walk down the High Street.

March meeting

A second meeting was held on the 23rd March in the Oakhouse and this time Dorreen's voice was restored. She explained how several of us had visited and enjoyed conducted tours of The Essex Records Office. There staff showed us how to look up details on a building from the extensive records held. In particular, the Office held maps from the 16th century, some showing villages and towns but some showing the individual houses, and in Maldon in detail down to the shape of the houses.

There were large scale maps of Maldon of 1874, 1890s, 1920s and 1930s and it was hoped we could obtain copies of these for the High Street to share around. Other resources mentioned were Parish records, listed buildings, Royal Commission of Historical Monuments, trade directories, records of sale of properties, Tithe maps and Census returns. As an example, we were shown a case study of "Tomlins" an old house in Hutton. For anyone with an interest it proved a fascinating introduction to the world of looking up records of the past. Dorreen had brought along her own collection of papers and books on Maldon and of special interest were some reference books on loan for the day from Maldon Library. A few volunteered to look up particular buildings, which included The Oakhouse, No 35, Nos 7, 11-13, 19-21, 57, 105, 162-4 and the Methodist Church. We would very much welcome some more. Further meetings will be held to report back and get further information from each other. *Dennis Eraut*

Reading Group

At our March meeting we discussed 'The Shadow of the Wind' by Carlos Ruiz Zafon. The story is set in postwar Barcelona. Daniel, a ten year old motherless boy, is taken by his father, a book seller, to a mysterious place called the 'Cemetery of Forgotten Books'. Daniel chooses a book called 'The Shadow of the Wind' by Julian Carax. Although a local book trader and a mysterious stranger try to buy the book, Daniel refuses. He discovers that all the other books by the author have been destroyed. With the help of his friend, Fermin Romero de Torres who works in his father's shop, Daniel learns more about the people whose lives were affected by Julian and becomes involved with a web of intrigue and murder. Although sinister at times, it is a well told story which most of us found interesting, but not all. Our next book is 'Sashenka' by Simon Montefiore, which we will discuss on April 14th. *Pat Wade coordinator 01621 740253*

Photography Group

The group met on Friday March 18th at a very wet RHS Hyde Hall. There were 12 of us braving the weather and exercising our skills at plant photography. We had a snack lunch at the site where we dried off and warmed up. Not the best of group welcomes for our newest member, Suzanne. Take a look at the photo gallery you might see the chairman under his big red brolly. *George Wallis - 01621 856667.*

Astronomy Group

The Blackwater & Maldon U3A Astronomy Groups meets at West Maldon Community Centre at 7.30pm on the 4th Monday of the month. *Alan Chapman, Coordinator 01621 816860*

Art Group

The Art Group now meet at the Village Hall in Mundon. from 10.30 - 12.30pm. New members are welcome. Initially we will work for a couple of hours on our individual projects. *Anita Sandison 01621 741351*

Local Theatre Group

The Haunting

A small group of us went to the Palace Theatre, Southend, on Wednesday 23rd February to see "The Haunting", a ghost story by Charles Dickens. A well-designed set, with plenty of cobwebs and dust! There were many bangs, crashes and wails to keep us on our toes! Paul Nicholas played the Lord of the Manor, and apart from the occasional appearance of the ghostly, wronged bride, there were only the two cast members. Both actors were very good. The plot seemed straightforward, but with a twist at the end we were left wondering. Was it all a dream?!!! An enjoyable evening. *Barbara Grimason.*

West Side Story

Fourteen of the Theatre Group travelled to Witham to see Witham Operatic Workshop (WOW) perform 'West Side Story'. WOW is the junior section of Witham Amateur Operatic Society, with ages ranging from 12-21 years. The standard of acting, singing and dancing of these young people was very high. The scenes of the fights between the rival gangs, the Jets and the Sharks, were very realistic and the excellent performances of the couple who played Maria and Tony deserve a special mention. I was full of admiration for this group of talented young players. *Sheila Harris*

The Rivals by Richard Brinsley Sheridan

I must admit that I was completely ignorant about the play before it commenced but I found myself entranced by all that was happening on stage. 'The Rivals', set in Bath and written in 1775, is described on the flyer as 'Sheridan's comedy masterpiece' and it certainly made me chuckle a lot. While the plot is complex – you have to keep paying attention – the characters are stock comic caricatures of human folly, aptly named. Hence there is Lydia Languish, rebelling as only she can, who spends her time feasting on steamy page-turners and fixing her heart on a handsome foot soldier, Beverley, who in reality is Captain Jack Absolute. Her aunt, overbearing and verbally challenged, is called Mrs. Mallaprop, whose delightful "derangement of epitaphs" consists of using sophisticated-sounding words incorrectly. Other characters include Sir Lucius O'Trigger, Faulkland and his would-be love, Julia. and the maid, Lucy, who has a great knack of extracting money from lovers both young and old. There is also Sir Anthony Absolute, Jack's father, who spends the whole play rumbling and thundering with rage, mostly because of Jack's actions. Overall, I thought the acting was very good, and particularly liked the character delivering his lines in a strong Birmingham accent! I see that The Rivals has recently been playing at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket with Penelope Keith and Peter Bowles, having transferred from Bath. We didn't have any 'names' in the Mercury Production but we certainly paid very little for our seats. Gari Jones directed the Mercury Theatre Company in this production. He also directed their productions of 'The Grapes of Wrath' and 'Under Milk Wood', both of which held me in rapt attention from start to finish. *Gill Cato*

The Rivals (Cont'd)

...on the other hand, and to give an alternative perception of this play by some of the group attending. Personally, my heart sank when I saw the words 'burlesque production' in the programme which was the first intimation we received concerning the type of production we had come to see. 'Burlesque' meant the cast wore masking, clown-like makeup, dressed in grotesque costumes unrecognisable from any century. Songs were included but with poor amplification and initially the acoustics were generally poor and some people experienced difficulty hearing what was being said/sung although this improved. It was a very long (too long!), bizarre production dragging on for a total of 3¼ hours. It was with considerable relief that I tottered away, exhausted, at the end of the evening having seen a production which I am sure Sheridan himself would have had trouble recognising. However, we were among friends and in good company and the drink in the interval was so welcome, it was almost medicinal. *Jenny Wall*

Private Lives

Members of the Theatre Group made a trip to the Mercury Theatre to see one of Noel Coward's best loved plays 'Private Lives'. This was an Oldham Coliseum Theatre and Harrogate Theatre Co-Production, in association with Anvil Arts. Coward presents us with a situation replete with wonderful comic potential, but he also offers us a very truthful analysis of a complex relationship. The acting was excellent and it was a very good production. Thoroughly enjoyed by all, judging by the laughter that went around the theatre from beginning to end.

Miriam Carney

Forthcoming events

Wednesday April 20th – 'Cirque de Glace' with Russian ice skating stars. Cliffs Pavilion, £22. Fully booked.

Monday May 9th - 'Anything Goes' by Cole Porter at Witham Public Hall. £9.

Friday May 27th – 'Cowardly Custard,' a smash hit Noel Coward review. Civic Theatre, £16.50.

Wednesday June 22nd - 'Dinner Ladies'. The catering staff of BBC TV's hit sitcom written by Victoria Wood. Mercury Theatre, £12.75

Sunday July 10th - Opera in the Orchard at Bouncers Farm, Wickham Bishops. 'A Laugh at the Opera' - laughs and surprises from Mozart, Rossini, and more. Tickets £20 for two until the end of this month, then £20 each.

Monday July 11th - 'Busy Body', a comedy thriller. Mercury theatre, £12.75
People do drop out of visits due to illness or commitments, so if you wish to see something that is showing full it is worth putting your name down on my waiting lists. *Sheila Rowsell 01621 740820*

Petanque Group

If you would like to join us, we meet on the first and third Tuesday of the month at 1.30 pm at the terrain in Promenade Park. *George Wallis - 01621 856667*

Art Appreciation Group

Vincent Van Gogh, born Brabant 1853, died Auvers-sur-Oise 1890.

Our February meeting was well attended and featured an interesting and lively talk given by Alan on Vincent Van Gogh which prompted much discussion. Vincent had a sad and unhappy life struggling with depression and mental illness for most of his adult life. It was clear he had a talent for art at the age of nine, but was to become first an art dealer in Paris then a bookshop apprentice while studying for the Church. He became a preacher and spread the word both in England and Belgium. He seemed to fail at both these occupations and his love life didn't flourish either. His younger brother Theo was his material and emotional crutch and tried to give him the support he needed. It was relatively late in 1800 that he started to paint. He explored various mediums - wood engravings, lithographs, watercolours and finally oils. Only one of his paintings 'The Red Orchard' sold for 400 francs during his lifetime and his uncle gave him his first and only commission - 12 pencil drawings of The Hague. We saw many of Vincent's paintings including 'The Red Orchard' and several self portraits which have left a record of his struggle against the social and material conditions and the hunger, illness, and loneliness which were resolved through the genius of his art. He became ill and tried to take his own life and entered a mental institution. It was during this period he painted the surrounding countryside when his work became bright and colourful. Sadly Vincent ended his life in 1890 shooting himself in the head. *Stephy Eraut*

Ipswich School of Art

Members travelled by car share to Ipswich School of Art. The curator Emma Roodhouse explained that the building is on a two-year lease and £600,000 needs to be raised by March 2012 to create permanent gallery space for modern and contemporary art of international importance and provide studios for local artists to show their work in this unique building. Christchurch Mansion holds the historical collection for Ipswich. The Art School dates back to 1859, during this time there have only been six principals and Emma's hope for the future is that the many art schools that visit the Saatchi Gallery in London will come to Ipswich so even more students will be able to see contemporary art first-hand on a regular basis. There were several galleries – the life room, prints, sculpture and drawing room. Many of the students have become tutors, others have become famous artists and returned to display their work at the centre. The present exhibition 'The class ...' By Maggie Hambling headlines the work of influential students and teachers from the Art School. Members commented that the enthusiasm of Emma and her knowledge to the artists and their work was valuable when viewing the studios. *Dorreen Linton*

24th May— Talk by Dennis on Japanese Hokusai and Hiroshige masters. West Maldon Community Centre 2pm. £2.50

29th September—Visit to Rangers House, Greenwich. £18 for coach, tour and refreshments. Combined trip with Maritime Group. Please indicate interest.

Table Tennis Group

Sessions take place on the 1st, 3rd and 5th (when applicable) Mondays at West Maldon Community Centre from 11.45 am to 1.30pm (please do not arrive before 11.40). Fee £3.00 per session. It is a very friendly group - balls and bats are provided and coaching is given. The section has been running since April 2010 and new members are always welcome.

The Burnham & District TT league has a number of both Blackwater and Maldon U3A members competing in the league. In Division 2 Maldon U3A A after 18 matches have dropped another place to 8th place, they have 7 wins and 75 points. Maldon U3A member Norman Hayes' form has dipped but still has won 32 wins with a win ratio of 60%. Ray Cheung (Blackwater member) has won 15 matches - 56% win ratio. Maldon D, newly promoted to Division 2 have moved up a place to 3rd from bottom. After 18 matches they have now won 3 matches and two draws and scored 60 points. Rob Sach has been the pick of the U3A members, with 13 wins. In Division 3 Maldon U3A B team continues in 5th position and have played 19 matches, won 11 and drawn 3, with 111 points. Tony Murray continues to be the star with 27 wins - win ratio 82%. However, Tony is currently not playing due to back problems. The welcome return of Bill Puxley from a knee operation has helped the team cause. In Division 3 Maldon G are still 2nd from bottom. They have played 20, won 2 and drawn 1 - 48 points. A recent 9-1 win over the bottom team St. Lawrence B was very welcome. Blackwater member John Mundy has been playing for the G team due to regular member Bill Stichbury being unavailable. John Mundy won 15 matches - 50% win ratio. Julie Doidge, Maldon U3A member, has won 7 matches - 13% win ratio. *John Mundy 01621 854065*

Golfing Group

Our March golfing session was at Three Rivers golf course at Cold Norton where our group was very energetic, playing 18 holes rather than our usual 9. One of our members was only 150mm from achieving a hole in one! Our next meeting will be on Friday 8th April, when we will visit Woodham Walter Bunsey Down golf course meeting as usual at 11.00 am.

Our golfing thought for this month is: "A golf ball will always come to rest halfway down a hill, unless there is sand or water at the bottom." *Henry Beard (UK golfer)*

Finally, Sheila Rowsell has a Hilly Billy electric golf trolley for sale. Sheila says it originally cost £230 but will sell for £30. Anybody interested should contact Sheila on 01621 740820 *Alan Chapman, Golf Group Coordinator 01621 816860*

History Group

The first visit to Essex Records Office (ERO) this month was to find out more about the collections and the services offered to members of the public wanting to find out the history of a building. Sarah Dickie told us the background and up-to-date information about the ERO and their aims for the future. She said the staff are proud that Chelmsford is highly rated as having up-to-date conditions for preserving documents given to them and the way the public can gain access to seven miles of material.

We then met Tony King, conservationist, who showed the completed Colchester Hospital Attendance Record Book. This book is of great importance as it is the only one and has so much information which will be valuable - the illnesses, the length of stay, recovery. These will be important for research by medical students and for family history purposes. The last time I visited, the project was a pile of small pieces of paper - it must have been like piecing a jigsaw puzzle together. This one book took 500 hours to complete. We were given advice on how to preserve our own records and photographs. We were then taken to see the searchroom and some of the many articles of local importance held by ERO.

Olympic Visit – I will be contacting members booked for this event to give them the full information about the day.

Bury – I will be contacting members who have booked for this event. For anyone still wishing to accompany us we will be travelling by car share. We will have a morning guided tour of the Cathedral including the oak, glazed vaulted ceiling and the refurbished Cathedral organ. The afternoon can be spent visiting gardens, museum, art gallery or town centre. Let me know if you are interested.

Bulmer Bricks visit – we will have a conducted tour of the Brickworks. Bricks have been made almost continually on site since Tudor times. All Bulmer Bricks are handmade using the traditional methods and fired in a coal burning, down-draft kiln. The company's work involves the restoration of listed buildings although they do produce bricks to individual requirements. The list of historic buildings where Bulmer Bricks are to be found includes Hampton Court Palace, Windsor Castle, The Tower of London and Layer Marney Towers. It is essential that companies like Bulmer are still operating and employing people to produce these specialist bricks.

Copped Hall and Gardens – A guided tour of Copped Hall and Gardens will see the restoration in progress of the Mansion, ancillary buildings and extensive gardens of the estate. A group of volunteers are lovingly giving many hours of their time, please come along and show your appreciation for their dedication to continue the restoration of this Hall.

Mersea - A guided tour along the waterfront will reveal the history of the village, oyster industry and much more. After lunch at one of the fish establishments we will visit the Museum for an introductory talk and a visit to the Ancient Barrows.

For both Canterbury and Eltham Palace and Gardens visits there are just a few places left – please sign and pay up to secure your places. (please ask Dorreen for details or see signing-up sheets) *Dorreen Linton 01621 853428*

Theatre trips to London

The Lion King at the Lyceum Theatre, London – Wednesday 18th May 2011- 2.30 pm. Just 26 people have signed up so far. If you would like to come too please let me know straightaway and I will see what I can do. If anybody would just like to take the coach up to London on that day the same applies. I now need to collect payment for the coach trip, so can you please let me have £13 each, either a cheque or cash as soon as possible.

Classical Spectacular, Royal Albert Hall, London – Sunday 20th November 2011 – 3.00 pm. As requested, you can now sign up to go to the Classical Spectacular at the Royal Albert Hall on Sunday 20th November. The cost per ticket is £32.50 plus coach. We have to get in fast to book seats with the best possible view. Please place your cheque/cash in the labelled pot, or send me the money: *Gill Cato, "Melandra", Summerhill, Althorne, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 6BY. My phone No: is 01621 740153 and email: cato662@btinternet.com*

Rural Essex

Tiptree Heath, Monday 11th April - Leave West Maldon Community Centre 1.30 pm for guided walk around this 61 acre heath designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Please sign up or ring me.

This Luminous Coast, Wednesday 13th April, an illustrated talk by Professor Jules Pretty. A narration of the land and sea, their wild places and intertwined social history. Jules Pretty walked the coasts of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, completing some 400 miles on foot over 45 days. The Friends Meeting House 8 pm £1.50p donation.

The visit to John Rowsell's farm on Monday 16th May is full although there is a waiting list in operation.

Abbotts Hall Farm - Following on from Alan's talk earlier this year and members' requests for a guided tour, this has been arranged with Alan Shearing on 8th June. Car share from West Maldon Community Centre at 1.15pm. £5 (will include refreshments and a donation to EWT)

There will be a summer break for this group during July and August. If anyone has any ideas for future events please come and chat to me.

Dorreen Linton 01621 853428