

February programme

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		1 Monthly meeting	2	3 Birdwatching	4	5
6 Table Tennis Maritime	7 Petanque	8 Art Group Patchwork Luncheon Group 3	9 Reading Group Music Appreciation Computer Group Birdwatching talk	10 Golf Sing for Pleasure	11	12
13 Garden Talk	14 Woodturning History Group	15 Art Group Luncheon Group 1 Woodturning	16 Family History STEAM Group visit	17 Photography	18	19
20 Table Tennis Scrabble Garden Visit Theatre Visit	21 Petanque	22 Art Group High Street Buildings	23 Walking Craft Group	24 Golf Sing for Pleasure Luncheon Group 2	25	26
27 Astronomy	28 Art Appreciation	29 Art Group				

Blackwater U3A newsletter February 2012



U3A

Reg. Charity No. 1113334

From the Chair

AGM

It is that time of year again. Next month in March we will have our AGM, so in this issue is the official notice of the AGM which includes presentation of the finances and election of the officers. There is also a nomination form for re-election or election of members to the 11 person committee. Four people are standing down.

NOTE - The notice and form are on pages 18 and 19.

Christmas Party

I forgot to mention this in the last issue. We had a very enjoyable party on December 7th and, this time, we were entertained by one of our own members John Hayes playing on his guitar and singing a lovely mixture of songs. Our thanks to John for this music. I would also like to thank all the people who brought food and decorations, and spent time arranging the hall, washing up and clearing away afterwards. It was good to see so many people playing a part.

Maldon Community Hospital

In December, NHS North Essex held a community consultation exercise at Maldon Town Football Club. A few members of our U3A were there for the discussions. They produced a very optimistic plan for the services that they were hoping could be achieved from a community hospital. The 50 or so people who represented various groups in the district were then split up into groups to discuss and put forward ideas on paper concerning: 1 - The new hospital as a hub; 2 - What is important for service users; 3 - pros and cons of current options. The overall idea of a new community hospital is agreed, but the business case is not. Sadly, current economic woes of the country make any big plans in the near future unlikely. However, the Blackwater U3A members and our group concentrated on what sort of service did we want. Hopefully, some of the ideas will be approved and some action taken. Obviously, there was no final decision taken on the site. If anyone wants to see a DVD on "How health care is changing in your area," please contact me at one of our meetings.

March newsletter deadline

Deadline for the February newsletter is Friday 24th February.
Contributions to ian@ianlinton.demon.co.uk 51 Washington Road,
Maldon, CM9 6BN

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
Computers	Peter Holmes	01621 854108
Crafts	Sheila Wallis	01621 856667
Family History	Geoff Pugh	01621 843297
French beginners	Val Wilson	01621 842455
Gardening	Jennifer Fowler	01245 222834
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
	Gill 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
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

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 Wallis	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
 Limebrook—Paul Madge 01621 855883

Third Age Trust

Shared learning project with the Queen's Nursing Institute (Clerkenwell) - 'The Story behind the Badge.' Team to meet on alternate weeks from Tuesday 13th March - contact Dr. Susan Cohen drsusancohen@gmail.com - closing date 17th February 2012

How does live theatre work? - workshops for U3A members will be held on 12th and 27th March at the Piccadilly Theatre, London. £20 per person, includes lunch and refreshments. Subjects include directing, backstage, theatre history and writing. Application form from Dawn Mundy.

2012 photography competition: theme 'Seasonal Britain.' Winning entries to be printed in U3A's 2013 engagement calendar. Closing date 8th May 2012. Flyer to be displayed at February monthly meeting.

International U3A Conference in Lisbon 17th/21st April 2012 - cost £522. includes 4 nights bed and breakfast. Flights from London Gatwick, dinner on the first night, guided tours. The conference (cost approximately £55) 'Tourism, Universities and the Third Age' will be attended by U3A members from around the world. Details: www.u3a.org.uk and www.aiu3a.com. Flyer to be displayed at February's monthly meeting.

Gershwin Musical 'Crazy for You' - 2 for 1 tickets are available to U3A members during February, except 13/17th. To book call 084 44825171 and quote '2 for 1 offer'

Advice Sheet 10 – Licences relating to photocopying - Copyright Licensing Agency. This advice sheet will be displayed at February's monthly meeting.

Contact Dawn Mundy for further information. Check the display board for details of these and other U3A events.

Social Group

Friday 29th June - a trip in the 'DUCK' amphibious landing craft in London. £30.00 including coach. Sign-up sheet will be at the February meeting. Limit 30 people, so sign up early £10.00 deposit.

Friday 9th March - Games evening at West Maldon Community Centre.

Legal London and Saville Gardens Windsor are both full.

Barbara Brand 01621 853218

Science, Technology, Energy & Medical Group

The STEAM Group usually meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at 9.30am at West Maldon Community Centre, with alternate site visits of science/technology interests, followed by an interest talk the next month at West Maldon Community Centre, meeting at 9.30am in the Jubilee Lounge. You will find a full list of talks and visits for the coming year on the Blackwater U3A website on the STEAM Group page.

Our January meeting saw the return of Dr David Petts (remember his Dengie Marsh Fever talk). This time, he gave a talk on the subject of Cholera – ‘the Essex Plague.’ This very informative and enjoyable talk explained how cholera was caused and how it was passed on. Fortunately, there are fewer cases of this terrible disease now.

Although we usually meet on the second Monday of the month, our February visit to the Combined Military Museum at Maldon will now be on Thursday 16th February. We will meet at 9.30am at West Maldon Community Centre and travel by car share to the Museum.

For any more information regarding the above visits and meetings, contact Alan Chapman on 01621 816860.

Walking Group

We now have a programme for most of the year.

The February walk will be around the Woodham Mortimer area meeting on Thursday, 23rd February at West Maldon Community Centre at 9.30 am.

March will be around the Stow Maries area

April will be around the Tiptree area

May – Hylands House and Park

June – Tollesbury area

September – Purleigh area

October – Heybridge Basin and Chigborough lakes

November - TBC

Dorreen Linton 01621 853428

Maritime Group

Monday 6th February: The Suez and Kiel Canals

I will give the second part of the ‘Canal’ talks, which proved so popular when Dennis and George took us through the Caledonian and Panama Canals, (in a manner of speaking!) I will deal mainly with the Suez Canal, but also cover the Kiel Canal. 2.00pm in the Linton Room, West Maldon Community Centre.

John Wallace 01245 225093

Scrabble Group

Meetings are every 3rd Monday of the month. New members welcome.

Sylvia Harden - 01621 858506

Art Group

We have returned to Mundon Victory Hall. Please contact Anita on 01621 741351 asandison@gmail.com for details.

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.

March - The speaker will be an Officer of St. John’s Ambulance Brigade. Within the presentation time there will be a slot for a Question and Answer session on what to do if an incident occurs that requires you to administer First Aid or to call the emergency services.

Please email Dawn Mundy or inform the signing-in desk with details of your question/s so that our speaker is well prepared on the day.

April - Jean Fullerton will take you on an Illustrated Walk through East London taking you back in time to 1850 without leaving your seats. Enjoy a leisurely stroll from Aldgate Pump in the West to the parish Church of St Dunstan’s in the East via the Dock and notorious Ratcliffe Highway taking in the sights and frights of that most notorious part of Victorian London.

Refreshments & Meet & Greet rota

March	Gardening
April	Golf

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REVERSE OF NOMINATION FORM

History Group

The history of the British Museum talk

Norman Jacobs gave a talk on the British Museum, taking us behind the scenes from its beginnings until 2004. The museum was first opened in 1753 for the selected few. It was later decided that the working class should be welcomed and now approximately 10,000 people a day visit. Norman gave us the social history including some of the characters who worked at the museum. Thanks to Doreen Stockton for the catering.

The British Museum is considered to be one of the world's greatest museums of human history and culture. Its permanent collection of a world collection of art and antiquities from the ancient and living cultures consists of approximately eight million works spanning over two million years of history. Founded in 1753 and largely based on the collections from around the world of the physician and scientist, Sir Hans Sloane, it is the first national public museum in the world granting free admission. The museum first opened on 15th January 1759 in Montagu House in Bloomsbury. Recent additions include the King's Library Gallery and the latest exhibitions of Chinese ceramics, the tomb-chapel of Nebamun, ancient Egyptian life and death together with the recent acquisitions of two hundred Japanese photobooks dating from 1945-2000.

The construction of the World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre has started. This important building will house state of the art laboratories and studios for the conservation, preservation and research of the collections, a new special exhibitions suite, world class stores, and facilities to support the Museum's extensive national and international loans programme. Entrance is free although there is an entry charge for exhibitions.

Forthcoming events

Tuesday 14th February - There is a change of speaker for the February talk; the subject will be the History of Goldhanger. 2 pm at West Maldon Community Centre £3. Please see signing and paying up sheet at the January meeting.

Tuesday 13th March – The Dickens Exhibition is full but I am running a reserve list.

Thursday 19th April – Legal London is full.

As I am being asked by the venues for possible numbers, could you please let me know your interest in coming along to the year's events as listed in the January 2012 newsletter or look on the website. I really would appreciate your cooperation. Thanks
Dorreen Linton 01621 853428

Gardening Group

I have had a lovely holiday in Thailand, but I am pleased to be home. The first thing I do on getting out of the car is a quick tour of my garden. It is amazing to see so many plants in flower, Hebes, Solanum, Hydrangea, Iris not to mention Viburnum Bodnantense and Hamamelis which has such a lovely perfume. The gardens in Thailand are mainly planted with evergreens and flowering shrubs such as Frangipani, Bourginvilliae of every conceivable colour. The trees are spectacular, palms, banana trees and one particularly pretty yellow one, Cassia Fistula, which is similar to Laburnum. One difference is that the flowers appear after the leaves have fallen. In spite of all the reports of floods, everywhere looked parched and trees and shrubs were being watered twice a day.

January meeting

The speaker, Brian Wickenden, with the aid of very colourful slides, explained how he and his wife converted a large overgrown waste land into a magnificent garden in just three years. He showed us the different stages of flowerbed construction and planting, the continual changing of grass into more flowerbeds so that they could accommodate more and more of their acquisitions. It is well worth visiting this beautiful garden full of groups of trees, unusual shrubs, scented roses and colourful perennial flowers. No annual plants or regimental borders here. It was a very enjoyable and interesting talk for a winter's afternoon with a promise of summer to come, maybe a garden for us to visit later in the year. *Wendy Diss*

Forthcoming events

February 13th - Talk by Tim Carter of Longplants Nursery, Romford. He is an amusing speaker who is passionate about his plants. He grows all his own and will be bringing some to sell to us. Stow Maries Hall, Church Lane at 2.30 pm. Cost £4.50 including tea. If possible, make your own way there.

February 20th - Visit to The Old Rectory Boreham at 12.00 to see snowdrops and cyclamen. Cost £5.50 including refreshments

March 26th - Visit to Woodview, Totham. Cost £5 including tea. Time TBA

Please sign the forms if you would like to come and pay as I need to give numbers to the host. I am looking forward to seeing you all and hearing all your news. *Jennifer Fowler 01245 222834*

Nomination form for vacant positions AGM 2012

Name of the member being nominated:

For the position of

Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, committee member (2 committee positions vacant), co-opted member (2 new positions on committee).

Proposed: (PRINT).....

(SIGNATURE)

Seconded: (PRINT)

(SIGNATURE)

Signature of the member being nominated.....

Please return completed form to the Secretary, Mrs Dawn Mundy, 11 Queen Street, Maldon CM9 5DP by no later than Wednesday 15th February 2012.

AGM 2012 Official Notice

The Eighth Annual General Meeting of Blackwater U3A will be held on Wednesday 7th March 2012 at 2.30 pm (doors open 2.00 at West Maldon Community Centre for the purpose of transacting the following business:

- To receive apologies for absence.
- To receive and approve the minutes of the Seventh Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd March 2011.
- To receive and approve the Annual Report for year ended 31st December 2011.
- To receive the Chairman's Report.
- To receive and approve examined accounts for year ended 31st December 2011.
- To approve the examiner for accounts for year ending 31st December 2012.
- To elect Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. Dennis Eraut, Adrian Stockton and Dawn Mundy, the current officers, are willing to stand for re-election.
- To elect a Vice-Chairman. John Wallace is willing to stand again.
- To elect two new committee members to serve for three years, as well as Gill Cato and Peter Holmes, co-opted members, who are willing to stand for election to the committee.
- To elect two new co-opted members to the committee.
- To consider Any Other Business previously notified to the Secretary

Notes

Eligibility for office and to vote—All paid up members for the year 2011 are eligible to stand for committee and to attend and vote.

Committee Members—Dorreen Linton is stepping down having been on the committee almost since Blackwater U3A began, six years and three of those as Chairman. She feels it is good that we should have a change. We will still have to source her wide knowledge of the U3A members. Barbara Brand, Sheila Rowsell, and Val Wilson are stepping down from the committee having served three or more years. We require four replacements, and Gill Cato and Peter Holmes who are co-opted members are willing to stand for re-election to the committee. So we need two members for the committee and two co-opted members for the committee. Sheila Wallis is willing to stand for re-election to committee.

Reading Group

In January, we read 'The Little Stranger' by Sarah Waters. It is a difficult novel to classify, as it's a psychological drama, a mystery, a novel of suspense, of the supernatural. We had mixed reactions, but agreed that it was a very clever book. Set in the late 1940s in depressed rural England, and narrated by Dr Faraday, it begins by revealing his attraction to the Ayres family in their dilapidated great house, Hundreds Hall. Waters creates a bleak atmosphere; post war life seems tedious and the Ayres are desperately short of money. We recognise that Dr Faraday is not sure of his place in society whilst the Ayres seem reluctant to accept the modern post-war society at all. Some of us found the slow paced beginning rather frustrating while others liked the slow build up of tension.

The Doctor is a superb creation. He is dull, rather a snob, shows no sensitivity to Caroline, daughter of Hundreds Hall; his internal musings about her read like descriptions of stock on the family's farm! When he proposes to Caroline, one feels that it is Hundreds Hall that he really desires. The plot includes a hideous injury, insanity, and two unexplained suicides; the author doesn't give us any answers, and there is some ambiguity about the final death. Class and money are important themes, but we spent a lot of time discussing the supernatural, which plays a major role in the story. It has happened with the group before, that a book no-one enthusiastically endorsed provoked animated discussion.

Our book for February 9th is 'Cleo: The Cat Who Mended a Family' by Helen Brown. *Anita Sandison*
Coordinator Pat Wade (01621 740253)

London Theatre Group

At the Theatre Group members' meeting in West Maldon Community Centre three ideas for London trips arose which received considerable backing: namely a return visit to the Globe Theatre, another visit to the Royal Albert Hall and possibly a trip to see "The Mouse Trap." At the February meeting I should be able to put out sign-up sheets for at least one trip. Please email me at cato662@btinternet.com or phone (answerphone) 01621 740153 if you won't be there. *Gill Cato*

Table Tennis Group

Sessions take place on the 1st, 3rd and 5th (when applicable) Monday at West Maldon Community Centre. Four tables are available for play. Time 11.45 am to 1.30pm (please do not arrive before 11.40). Fee £3.00 per session. The group has been running since April 2010, numbers playing have grown and the current membership is over 20. Please note that the group is unable to take on any new members at the present time as we are running at full capacity. Should any members wish to join the group, please contact John Mundy to be placed on a waiting list.

Burnham Table Tennis League

The season is now just over halfway point. In Division 2, West Maldon B continue third from bottom. Ray Cheung, Blackwater member, has now won 14 matches with a 52 percent win ratio. Remaining on the bottom are Maldon F which includes John Mundy who is also a Blackwater member. John Mundy still remains at two wins. The team has shown some improvement this year, they have 22 points from 15 games which equals the annual total for 22 matches last year. In Division 3 the top team is South Woodham D with 112 points from 15 games. The situation below them is very fluid as the next 3 teams keep changing places. Maldon U3A are now second after beating Maldon G 7-3. This was a clash of U3A members meeting each other with only one non-U3A person playing for Maldon G. Maldon H continue to remain at the bottom but scored a surprise 6-4 victory over South Woodham E. This was a case of Maldon team turning out a strong team and South Woodham leaving out their strongest player, 15 year Shannon Rolfe. This has helped the cause of both Maldon U3A and Maldon G. However the Maldon H team played very well with U3A member Bill Stichbury winning a very valuable game. Maldon H team now has another new U3A member, Julie Lake from Limebrook. The team has 4 U3A members from 4 different local U3As. Playing in the league are some 20 or more U3A members.
John Mundy 01621 854065

Historical Buildings of the High Street

The group met in January and discussed updates on members' research, then visited the Bell House, Silver Street.

In February, one of the local shopkeepers will be giving a talk at 2pm on Wednesday 22nd February at the Oakhouse.

Hopefully March will see another local visit and more details of members' research.

Dorreen Linton 01621 853428

Petanque Group Winter League

The team was back in action after Christmas playing against the likes of the Onley Arms at Stisted, The Sun at Feering and The Rayne Swan. Unfortunately, we keep playing these pub teams which mean we have to take liquid refreshments at the hostelrys. The teams we have met have been very friendly and made us most welcome. We have not been able to win any more points, but feel we are gaining invaluable experience in learning how to play the game.

The teams we play often include players who have represented the UK abroad. We are home at the Prom on 5th February to the Chequers, Great Tey and also on the 12th February to Bocking, playing at 10.30am. So if you want to come and support us please do - no football rattles. We were relying on our talisman George Wallis playing his first match against the Feering Sun to help give our first win. Unfortunately, his mojo needed recharging. We should have had the drinks prior to the match. The Petanque Group meets on the first and third Tuesday of the month at 1.30pm. New members are welcome at the Terrain on Promenade Park.
John Mundy, Deputy Coordinator Competition Team 01621 854065

Music Appreciation Group

Our December meeting didn't take place as too many things were happening at that time! So, on January 12th, six of us met at Manni's for a full two hours of easy-to-listen-to music from German and Austrian composers. Before we began, Manni gave us a very interesting talk about part of Haydn's life and, in spite of a sombre beginning, he maintained a great sense of fun and humour which is reflected in some of his music. We also learned that he taught both Beethoven and Mozart. His 'London Symphony' was a delight to hear, full of light and shade and we could feel an element of traditional folk dances. Bach came next, that amazing prolific composer. His Suite No. 2 in B minor included lilting, sedate and vigorous dances – Sarabande, Rondeau, Bourree, Polonaise, Minuet and Badinerie. Of course, Beethoven was with us also; his popular and well-known 'Fur Elise' which conjured up memories of trying to learn this on the piano as children! More variety came with part of Gluck's opera 'Orpheus and Eurydice' – 'The Dance of the Blessed Spirits.' Such a story had to be read out before we listened in order to fit this beautifully haunting piece into its context. We know that Debussy isn't German or Austrian, but Manni wanted us to end with Debussy's 'The Girl with the Flaxen Hair' - we didn't object; a favourite. Our next meeting will be at my home so please ring if you are able to come on 01621 852784. We are still continuing with German and Austrian composers. New members are of course welcome. *Pat Willis*

Birdwatching Group

Birdwatching – mammal watching

Good news! There is the largest population of Otters in Essex inhabiting the Chelmer Canal from the Beeleigh Falls area to Chelmsford. This was the evidence given by Darren Tansley, the Water and Wildlife Officer for Essex Wildlife trust on 12th January. Forty- three U3A members were enthralled by his talk and slides on Otters and Water Voles. The occasion was the joint meeting of the Witham-Braintree and Blackwater U3As at Rivenhall End.

The bad news came first with the decline in the numbers of these beautiful iconic mammals during the 1980s and 1990s. The loss of Water Voles has been attributed to habitat destruction, pollution and, more significantly, predation by the alien North American Mink. Now numbers are very slowly increasing by the elimination of these hazards by responsible bodies. For instance twenty- four mink were trapped in one large location in a single 24 hours. During the current massive enlargement of Abberton reservoir, Darren and his team have caught and quarantined Water Voles for a future return to the wild.

Otter revival is due to cleaner rivers, leading to more and healthier fish stocks, the animal's main food. Access for them to travel through joined up river sources to other rivers has been improved. Otters will not swim along tunnels under roads. Therefore they need constructed ledges above the water along the tunnel. Thus discouraging the road route, a big source of mortality.

So the next time you take a stroll along the local canal path on a quiet summer day and hear a "plop" that will be "Ratty" taking a dive (ref. Wind in the Willows) not a rat at all but a Water Vole. Stay until dusk and you might just see a black, metre length creature slither into the water, that will be "Tarka the Otter" (ref. Ring of Bright Water).

Future events

Friday 3rd February – Bird Recognition – FULLY BOOKED - Marshes and sea wall beyond Maldon Promenade. Without a guide – to test our skills unaided.

Meet at West Maldon Community Centre at 9.30am for car sharing arrangements.

Thursday 9th February - Lecture and slides by Barry Kauffman-Wright at the Henry Dixon Hall, Rivenhall End. Subject will be "Birds of Prey." Meet first at the West Maldon Community Centre at 9am for car share arrangement. Cost £3.00 payable at door. But please sign up first. Car share £3.00

Friday 2nd March - RSPB Wat Tyler Country Park and Bowers Marsh. Brief talk and guided Tour by Steve Roach. Please bring packed lunch. Tea and coffee are available. Meet first at West Maldon Community Centre at 8.45am for car share arrangements and route finding.

Peter Leggett, Coordinator, 01621 852377

Family History Group

Our January meeting began with a talk by Roger Smith on the occupation of 'Lace Makers'. This was followed by the 'Memories' session where two members spoke of their recollections of 'The Ice Cream Man'. After this, Ron West gave a Powerpoint presentation about the history of ice cream. Did you know its origins go back to the Romans? Not many of us knew that!

After the tea-break, Kay Donald-Clark gave us a brief introduction to the FamilySearch.org website. As we ran out of time, this will be continued at our February meeting. For occupations, Angela Clarke will give a talk on her 'Apothecary' ancestors. The 'Memories' topic will be 'Childhood Illnesses.' We hope to arrange a visit to the Essex Record Office for a guided tour and, hopefully, a tour of the Conservation Department in the near future. If you are new to Family History, you are most welcome to join us and our members would be pleased to offer help and assistance with your researches.

Coordinator Geoff Pugh 01621 843297

Golfing Group

Our January Golf Group Meeting was a return to the group's winter venue - Woodham Mortimer Golf Driving Range. Due to the seriousness with which the group now takes its golf, we now meet on the 2nd and 4th Friday of the month. Our first February meeting will be on Friday 10th at Notley Golf Course near White Notley meeting at 10.00am. You might be interested to know that the golf course is owned and managed by Jimmy Greaves (the famous ex Tottenham Hotspur and England footballer). When booking the visit, Jimmy who lives in Danbury, said he had heard of Blackwater U3A and looked forward to meeting our golfing group on the 10th.

Finally, our golfing thought for the month is, "It's good sportsmanship to not pick up lost golf balls while they are still rolling." Mark Twain, 1835 - 1910 *Alan Chapman, Coordinator 01621 816860*

Computer Group

We are planning to start a new group for those members interested in improving their computer skills. The group will meet between 2pm and 4pm on the second Thursday of each month in the West Maldon Community Centre Linton Room, commencing on the 9th February 2012. The aim of the first meeting is to assess requirements and to set the syllabus for the first few months. Learning will be a mixture of hands-on practice (using your own lap-top) and instruction from our resident computer guru, Adrian Stockton. If you are interested, please contact me or enter your details on the monthly meeting sign-up sheet. *Peter Holmes 01621 854108 peter.holmes@virgin.net*

Local Theatre Group

Legally Blonde The show opened with a very frenzied song and dance routine to the song "Omigod You Guys" and started the story of supposedly dizzy blonde Elle Wood on her road to prove to the boy who ditched her that she could be a serious scholar while still wearing her beloved pink clothes! She blasts her entry into Harvard Law School, with pet dog in tow, and, via various and many pitfalls, succeeds in her studies and eventually wins a case. She also realises her former boyfriend was shallow and finds true love with a teaching assistant at Harvard. The show was pleasing and fun, with some wonderful comic moments, notably a great "camp" hairdresser and a wonderful hunky delivery man! The songs were sharp and fun while the dancing was hectic and full of many swaying hips! Overall I thought the best vocalist was Paulette, Elle's hairdresser friend, whose voice was strong and clear. A special mention must be made of the 2 dogs and their splendid walk-on parts! The only complaint was that the sound in the first half appeared quite "tinny" but this was rectified in the second half. Many thanks to our driver, John Rowsell, and a big thank you to Sheila for arranging the trip and securing such good seats, it was a lovely afternoon. *Terri Hardcastle*

The following events have been booked following our planning meeting in January. Thank you to all of you who came to help make the decisions.

February 20th - Murder on the Nile at the Palace Theatre. Full

March 1st Absent Friends at the Mercury Theatre. £8.50. Full

March 20th - Sleeping Beauty at the Cliffs Pavilion. Full

March 31st - Shanghai at the Mercury Theatre. £15. Extravaganza combining acrobatics, modern dance, martial arts within a fantastic adventure. Will suit grandchildren as well. Saturday matinee.

April 16th - Roots at the Mercury Theatre. £8.50 A revolutionary play which bubbles from the depths with humour, imagination and compassion.

April 27th - Midnight Tango. Vincent Simone and Flavia Cacace, stars of Strictly Come Dancing, at the Cliffs Pavilion – a matinee performance, £20.50. Perhaps we could have an Italian meal first. As this is already very full, I have had to reserve 20 seats in order for them to be held, so please get your name down very quickly.

April 23rd or 26th - Guys and Dolls at Witham Public Hall. £8.50

May 31st - Dancing at Lughnassa at the Mercury Theatre. £8.50. Set in rural County Donegal in 1936. Four sisters, laugh, cry and dance as the dusk sets on the life they know. A moving memory story.

June 21st - Lilies of the Land. This play charts the lives of 4 women who sign up for the land army. Mercury Theatre £10

I have managed to get some very good deals on seat prices, so please phone or sign up at monthly meetings. Car sharing as usual.

Sheila Rowsell. 01621 740820

Rural Essex Group

Members of this group were treated to a fascinating afternoon when Ed Heigham, Joint Site Director came to tell us about the Tollesbury Carrington Field excavation. The work at the farm was started by the study of crop marks showing up on an aerial photograph. Excavation started in 2001 and finds included Mesolithic flints and pottery from different periods. The group were granted Set Aside status from DEFRA which meant that they could leave the sites open and were not restricted to a period between crops.

After a resistivity survey was conducted in 2003, three trial trenches were dug. One produced 2.3kg of pottery, overwhelmingly from the Middle Ages. Pottery from the Middle Iron Age was found and then in 2004 and 2005 the area was extended and Ed spotted some greyware pottery and saved an almost undamaged cremation seal from instant destruction. Three vessels containing cremation remains dating from the Roman period were found so a Roman cremation site at Tollesbury had been discovered. The ashes were sent to the Museum of London for analysis and a written report.

During 2006, Ed Heigham persuaded the Colchester Archaeological Group to undertake a magnetometry survey on the most prominent of the clusters of features. Crop marks suggest a settlement of circular huts and the survey showed up other lines. Roman Samian ware was found together with over seven more cremation burials, making a total of ten. More finds were made in 2009 and 2010.

At last year's Festival of British Archaeology held at Tollesbury 120 visitors went along to hear more about the site and see the artefacts. The group were allowed to handle some of the finds, one of which was a beautiful palm pot, together with drinking goblets and urns and white flint and glass which would have a very expensive condiment in Roman times. This proved to be a fascinating afternoon in the life of a very keen archaeologist who took 50 hours to put together one of the items.

Our next event will be 'London's Green Lung.' Tricia Moxley will give a talk on the history, wildlife and management of Epping Forest at 2 pm on Wednesday 21st March at West Maldon Community Centre. Please sign and pay up.

Dorreen Linton 01621 853428

Luncheon Club Two, Christmas Do

A score of chatty people,
Members of Luncheon Club Two,
Descended on 'The Norton',
For their Christmas Do.

It was a cold and icy day
And a barn was where we sat,
So we started a fire with a napkin,
Helped along by a paper hat.

Around the temporary heat,
Our hands we warmed with glee,
Using the festive tea-lights
To set icy fingers free.

Of food there was a plenty,
As we tucked in right there,
The menu was quite varied,
Full of Christmas fare.

The serving staff were welcoming,
Their efforts hundred per cent,
Smiling and keen to please,
With attention sincerely meant.

Soon there will be changes,
To the Norton, we hear.
A much extended establishment
In the coming year.

In good company and joviality
We enjoyed our yearly repast,
And surely hope Norton's Community
efforts,
Will grow in strength, and last.

So we hope that many,
Will visit this Community venture,
For good food in our local area,
Without too much expenditure.

Angie Newman

New Groups

There has been a good response to the possible new groups by members so I will put out sheets again for: Different religions around the world, Creative writing, Badminton, Cookery, Investments, savings and other financial matters, Volunteers to help with cataloguing at Essex Records Office, Wellbeing group, Tenpin bowling, Card game group, Italian and Darts.

I have also made enquiries about our existing groups' capacity and the following are full so second groups could be set up if there is enough interest. Photography, French, Art, Crafts, Golf, Reading so there will be sheets for these groups.

Two tables will be set aside for the signing up of these groups or you can contact me to tell me of your interest.

Dorreen Linton 01621 853428

Art Appreciation Group

Alan Chapman told us about the life and works of Picasso. Picasso was born in the Andalusian city of Malaga on 25th October 1881. His father was a drawing teacher at a local Art School who supplemented his poorly-paid job with another as a curator at the local museum and a third as a picture restorer.

When Picasso was ten years old, the local museum closed and Don Jose took a teaching post at the School of Fine Arts in the Atlantic port of Coruna. Shortly afterwards Don Jose began to recognise his son's talent and concentrated on developing young Pablo Picasso's career as an artist. By the time he was 15, Picasso could paint brilliantly and was better than any of his teachers. At that stage of his life, his paintings of people look like people. His paintings of every day objects looked like every day objects. But making pictures that were realistic was boring to him, so he investigated, studied and tried again and again to develop new ways of painting the things that he saw around him.

He was a prolific painter, painting more than 2000 works in his life time, and each time he mastered one style, he quickly moved on to the next. As he developed new techniques, his paintings became more honest and revealing. The same could be said of his many affairs with women and the relationships between the women in his life and his different artistic styles are intimately interlinked. His pictures of his girlfriends, lovers, mistresses and wives are often excruciatingly honest, and depictions of what he thought of them at that moment in time. When he loved his women, they were painted as beautiful objects. But when he began to grow tired of them, his paintings of them were frightening. Picasso knew he was brilliant, but he didn't paint his pictures to be hung on walls of museums. Yes, he sold them because he had to make a living. But he couldn't do anything else. Picasso's true greatness and significance lie in his dual role as a revolutionary and traditionalist, all at the same time. He gave a new vitality to art, even as he preserved the creative presence (outside the museums) of its history. For this reason I personally believe he is the pre-eminent figure of 20th century art. *Alan Chapman*

Forthcoming events

Tuesday 28th February – the talk will be about the collection held at the Braintree Textile Archives 2 pm at West Maldon Community Centre. £3

Tuesday 27th March – we will be visiting the Porter's Lodge at Southend in the morning and an afternoon visit to the Beecroft Art Gallery, Westcliff (time of leaving West Maldon Community Centre to be arranged later)

Tuesday 22nd May – Sholto's walk is now full although I am running a reserved list.

Wednesday 27th June – Red House and Hall Place – all day combined visit with the Gardening Group .

Signing up sheets will be at the next general meeting for the above events

Dorreen Linton 01621 853428

Treasurer's Notes - Annual Financial Report for 2011

The Financial Report summarises all payments and receipts recorded during the 2011 financial year. It is in a similar format to that of previous years and has been examined and found to be in accordance with our books and records. The number of recorded transactions has again increased over the previous year – probably due to a significant increase in the persons attending our interest groups. Our total income was over £37,000 – but as you can see most of it was quickly spent on our activities.

NB. Negative amounts in the Financial Report are shown in round brackets, so '(12.34)' means 'a deficit of 12.34'.

No 1 Account – This is our main administrative account. I show the closing figures for 2011 and the amounts for similar items reported for 2010. An exact comparison between years is not always straightforward – it does depend on how each transaction has been categorized.

Our major costs have been the Newsletter (15% of subscription income), Capitation and U3A Magazine (12%), Hall Hire (9%) and Speakers (5%). The cost of speakers was less than budgeted due to use of some home-grown talent and some who only charged expenses. Apart from the recently announced increase of 5% and the loss of a small discount previously applied to WMCA Hall Hire fees, I expect other expenses to remain largely unchanged.

Income was again boosted by gift-aid reclaimed from HMRC (£502.39). Each additional signed mandate from tax-paying members contributes about £4 to our funds – *Taxpayers, do please sign a mandate form*. The receipt of gift-aid brings with it the obligation to ensure that subscription income is not used to fund purely social events. With this in mind, the hall hire and other costs for the Christmas Party were again handled through the No 2 account.

£100 of gift-aid income was set aside to fund the costs of setting-up the Limebrook U3A Group. Half the actual costs (£67.23) have been repaid by Limebrook.

I have included a new entry for 'Study Group Travel'. This is a formality on the advice of the Third Age Trust to document in our main account the Bird-watching group's planned trip to the Isle of Mull in May.

Income from teas at our Wednesday meetings produced a significant income over the year. It was decided to use part of the profit to support the Community Garden project which has improved a tatty corner of Maldon and serves as a showcase for our U3A.

£1,353.33 of subscription income is carried forward into 2012 to fund our U3A until the start of the new membership year on 1st May 2012. Also £189.75 is carried forward to pay for the first three months hall hire costs. This leaves £507.77 as a surplus from 2011. I propose to move this sum into the CAFBank account to boost our reserves/equipment fund.

No 2 Account – This holds income for our groups' events and activities, and corresponding payments for their speakers, guides, entrance fees, etc. Because the number of activities and the number of advanced bookings varies each year, I do not show comparative figures for 2010. Instead I show banked income and bank expenditure to indicate the amount of 'business' done through the Treasurer as well as the closing bank balance for each group. I also show the amount of cash reported as being held by coordinators - Our rules limit this sum to £50. The final column shows how much surplus has accumulated from events completed in 2011 - a total of £1,826.01. This 'profit' should be used to support groups' future events and activities.

Some of the profit from social activities in 2011 was used to subsidise the Christmas party. This was necessary since I had agreed to keep the ticket price the same as for 2010 having forgotten that the 2010 party was subsidised from a profit made on the 2009 party!

The Miscellaneous heading in the No 2 Account is used to fund small gifts and donations that the committee decides are an appropriate way to say: 'thank-you'. This heading is currently showing a small deficit, so I will need to seek the agreement of some coordinators to release a modest percentage of their balances to top-up this heading to around £50.00.

CAF Bank Account – This is our reserve/equipment fund account. In 2011 we used some of the reserves to fund the purchase of a new laptop computer to replace our original one that has become rather too unpredictable to be relied upon. The CAF account also has allowed us to experiment with Internet banking – this is not possible with the other two accounts. Payments can be made to third party accounts with a dual-authorisation procedure that mimics the dual signatures needed on our cheques. Our target remains to have about £1,500 in reserve – a sum less than the Charity Commission recommendation that reserves should be equivalent to 6 to 12 month's running costs. I plan to transfer some of the No 1 account surplus into the CAF account to top-up our reserves.

The Summary of Accounts – With a column for each of the three bank accounts we can see lines showing the *Opening Balance* on 1st January 2011, *Opening un-cleared items* (ie. our cheques that had not been presented by that day, and the *Income* and *Expenditure* throughout the year. These figures add up to the *Closing Total*.

We then see the *Bank Balance* as of 31st December 2011 and the *Closing Un-cleared items* which happily add up to the same total.

In Conclusion

Firstly thanks to Jean Healey who has diligently re-calculated and reviewed all my financial records, and signed the annual report as being in accordance with the 'books'. Also many thanks again to my wife Doreen who has endured another year with me shut away with my computer and all my Blackwater files. I will be happy to answer questions on the financial report at the March AGM, ever if any detail is required, then advance warning really is needed.

Adrian Stockton, Hon Treasurer, January 2012