

## June programme

| Monday  | Tuesday                                       | Wednesday  | Thursday                           | Friday   | Saturday | Sunday |
|---|---|--|------------------------------------|--|----------|--------|
|   |   | 1<br>Monthly meeting   | 2                                  | 3<br>Birdwatching                                | 4        | 5      |
| 6<br>Table Tennis                               | 7<br>Petanque<br>Community<br>Garden          | 8<br>Art Group<br>Luncheon Group 3<br>Patchwork<br>Swimming<br>Rural Essex visit | 9<br>Reading Group                 | 10<br>Golf<br>Singing for<br>Pleasure            | 11       | 12     |
| 13<br>Garden visit                              | 14<br>Woodturning<br>Community<br>Garden      | 15<br>Woodturning<br>Luncheon Group 1<br>Art Group                               | 16<br>Family History               | 17<br>History visit                              | 18       | 19     |
| 20<br>Theatre visit<br>Table Tennis<br>Scrabble | 21<br>Petanque<br>Community<br>Garden         | 22<br>Art Group<br>High Street<br>Buildings<br>Swimming                          | 23<br>Craft Group<br>Walking Group | 24<br>Luncheon Club 2<br>Singing for<br>Pleasure | 25       | 26     |
| 27<br>Astronomy<br>Maritime<br>visit            | 28<br>Community<br>Garden<br>Art Appreciation | 29<br>Art Group  | 30<br>Social visit                 |  |          |        |

# Blackwater U3A newsletter June 2011



[www.blackwateru3a.co.uk](http://www.blackwateru3a.co.uk)

Reg. Charity No. 1113334

## From the Chair

### A caring role for the U3A

My view and that of the committee is that we should have a caring role in looking after in a social way our fellow members. So we should try and ensure that if anyone is sick (apart from the usual minor complaints) someone who hears about it should inform the coordinator of the group that they attend, and Dorreen Linton from the committee. In this way our best wishes and any other action can be taken. A really nice bunch of flowers is sometimes sent which can be very comforting. This ultimately comes from you all, generally from the occasional profit from events and if needed from your subscriptions, so I hope you are all in agreement with our current plan. If you have reservations about this please let me know.

It has also been our practice to thank retiring members of the committee with a small gift in recognition of the contribution they have made to our U3A. These gifts are also funded from surpluses. I write this so that we can be entirely open about expenses.

### Use of Tutors for U3A events

Dennis Eraut approached the Third Age Trust to clarify the issue of paid tutors being used by groups. It was confirmed that this is not within the ethos of the U3A. A single session to give information, to lecture, to learn new skills is admissible. A course over multiple days is inadmissible as a U3A activity. Groups may choose to attend other courses paid or unpaid run by other organisations or tutors, but should ensure that the tutor or organisation holds suitable insurance. If groups set up tutoring or courses themselves the sessions cannot be said to be U3A courses, the Treasurer cannot handle the monies, and insurance issues need to be addressed. If using West Maldon Community Centre, it should be booked as a private event. *Dennis Eraut*

### July newsletter deadline

Deadline for the July newsletter is Friday 24h June. Contributions to [ian@ianlinton.demon.co.uk](mailto:ian@ianlinton.demon.co.uk) 51 Washington Road, Maldon, CM9 6BN

**On the cover** - Flaming June by Lord Frederic Leighton

## 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 |
| <b>Joint groups with Maldon U3A</b> |                    |              |
| 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

## News update

### Interest groups survey forms

Thank you to all those who returned their forms. Comments from members are:

- Everyone enjoys the groups they attend and would like to thank the coordinators for their time and effort.
- Some would like the groups to be on different days. (That may happen in the future if 2<sup>nd</sup> groups set up)
- More new groups requested – so signing up sheets will be put out at the monthly meetings to ascertain the interest.
- More weekend events have been requested (if there a group of members who would like to go to events together – perhaps we could have a list of events which are taking place both local and national (London) each month and then see if members sign up and then they can go to events together.
- A request that new members are helped a little more at the monthly meetings ‘signing up’ areas. (Committee will discuss)

Previous new group signing up lists have the following interest from members:

- 6 members – Different religions around the world
- 3 members – Creative writing
- 2 members – Badminton
- 3 members – Card games
- 2 members – Italian
- 9 members – Cookery
- 9 members – Investments, savings etc
- 4 volunteers – ERO

There are now sufficient numbers to be able to start some of the above groups so I will be contacting those involved. *Dorreen Linton*

### From your Treasurer

Thanks to all of our tax-paying members who completed a Gift Aid mandate, we have just received just over £500 of your subscriptions back from the Chancellor. *Adrian Stockton, Treasurer*

### **Cream teas for charity**

We are having a 'Cream Tea' event in our garden on Friday July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2.00 – 5.30., 31, Acacia Drive Maldon, Essex, CM9 6AW. Minimum contribution: £3.00. We do it properly – cream sent up from Devon, jam sponsored by Wilkins Tiptree and home made scones. This is the third time we have opened our garden to raise money for the RNLI and Essex Air Ambulance, and hope that you will be able to support us. As well as coming along on the day, we would be very grateful for help – publicising the event and also by contributing prizes for the tombola and raffle. We are happy to include your name on our 'sponsored by' list on the menu. Do contact me if you are able to offer any help, or need any more information about the event. We are just hoping for a fine day – and a good turnout. Thank you, Diana Rogers 01621 853841 or [diana.rogers2@btinternet.com](mailto:diana.rogers2@btinternet.com)



### **Maldon Choral Society concert**

An Evening with Maldon Choral Society, Songs and Food, conducted by Dr Gillian Ward Russell on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July at 7.30 pm at Maldon Town Hall, Market Hill, Maldon. Tickets £12, including a 'summer's evening snack' available from Tourist Information Office, Wenlock Way, Maldon 01621 856503 or reserved by telephone 01621 853220.

### **Plume School Volunteer Reading Support Group**

Our band of merry women continue to arrive promptly at Lower Plume School each morning at 8.40am.. If anyone would like to join us, details are in the April newsletter., or contact *Dawn Mundy* 01621 854065.

## **Social Group**

### **BBC TV Centre tour**

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June. Still 4 places available, cost £20.00. The coach will leave West Maldon Community Centre at 9am.

### **The Royal Saville Gardens, Windsor**

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> July, including lunch, river trip and cream tea. £40.00, early start 7.30 am at West Maldon Community Centre. If you just want to visit Windsor, the cost of the coach will be £14.

### **Great Bardfield Lodge Experience**

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September. A trip to the lodge and vineyards with Ploughman's lunch and wine tasting. £17.50 plus car share  
*Barbara Brand* 01621 853218.

## **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.

*Managing flood and coastal risk around the Essex coast and estuaries* - in July Karen Thomas, Eastern Area Coastal Advisor, Environment Agency will be covering the content of the Essex and South Suffolk Shoreline management plan and how we will need to work in partnership around the coast to manage the future of the area. She will cover the coastal and estuarine processes and latest saltmarsh monitoring and coastal monitoring surveys as well as talking about all the work the Agency is doing with local landowners and groups.

## **Woodturning Group**

On the formation of the U3A Blackwater Group, I attended the first general meeting where a demonstration of woodturning was presented by Charlie Middleton, a well known figure in U3Acircles. He offered to form a small group of those interested to meet at his workshop and introduce us to the skills of becoming a wood turner. The size of his workshop, although carrying every conceivable implement required, has limited space and our working membership during one morning every month is four or five persons. We currently have a keen membership and no doubt Charlie had given thought to long term membership fees, being aware that some of us no longer purchase long playing records or CDs or whatever. In the true spirit of the U3A he provides us with a workshop and years of experience as a wood turner and in return we have the option of putting a few coins in his Hospice charity collecting box. As a novice one starts producing what's known as 'Designer Firewood' until one day you're proud to say 'I made that'. The amount of self congratulation can be regulated by Charlie who can generally bring out a box of any item you have managed to make one of, the message being "Carry on with the walking not talking, it's all been done before." Some of our sessions are swapping or solving each other's problems in order to make that special pot or bowl. Charlie's wife, Molly intervenes at half time, kindly providing us with tea and biscuits which is much appreciated and over which we talk of many things and confess to the jobs that went wrong or the piece of wood that jumped off the spinning lathe and chased us round the workshop. As the longest serving member of the current group and as a learner to a turner I would like to say "Many Thanks Charlie" from us all. *Mick Hopper*

## Art Group

We will spend the next few months sketching in and around Maldon. We meet on Wednesdays, except the first Wednesday of the month, at 10.30am, usually just for the morning. Please contact Anita on 01621 841351 asandison@gmail.com for details.



### Summer sketching programme

| Date                  | Venue                                  | Car share per person |
|-----------------------|--|----------------------|
| June 8 <sup>th</sup>  | Maeldune Centre Garden                 |                      |
| June 15 <sup>th</sup> | St Peter's Bradwell                    | £4                   |
| June 22 <sup>nd</sup> | Sandon: park near the church           | £2                   |
| June 29 <sup>th</sup> | Hythe Quay: park near Methodist Church |                      |

## Scrabble Group

Meetings are every 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month - June 20<sup>th</sup>, July 18<sup>th</sup>, August 15<sup>th</sup>, September 19<sup>th</sup>, October 17<sup>th</sup>, November 21<sup>st</sup>, December no meeting. More members are welcome. *Sylvia Harden - 01621 858506*

## Luncheon Group 3

Last month's venue, the Queen's Head on the Hythe, came up to the expectations of the group, when we shared the restaurant with a large party of ramblers. We will be visiting the Hurdlemaker's Arms in June. If you would like to join us please 'phone me for details. *Pam Mills, coordinator. Tel: 01621 874883*

## Refreshments & Meet & Greet rota

|      |                   |
|------|-------------------|
| July | Photography Group |
|------|-------------------|

## 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   |
|-------|------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| June  | Eating out for the first time      | Swing Riots | Roger/Kay |
| July  | Visit London Metropolitan Archives |             |           |

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*

## Maritime Group

### Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2.00pm

Visit to Mersea Island Maritime Museum, which will be opened especially for our group visit. There are many items of maritime interest and it is hoped that a specialist guide will be available to talk to us about the maritime aspects of the museum. We will meet at West Maldon Community Centre car park at 1.00pm, for car share to Mersea. Refreshments at local cafes afterwards! Cost £2 plus travel.

### Friday 29<sup>th</sup> July (note the day – not our usual Monday afternoon)

Boat trip on "The Balmoral" from Tilbury (11.30am) up the Thames through Tower Bridge and return to Tilbury (17.00pm). Balmoral is operated by the same company as The Waverley. It is not a paddle steamer, but is a most attractive historic small ship of a similar size. (Not Fred Olsen's Balmoral!). Cost is £22-50 for the ticket plus the cost of car share and parking at the London Cruise Terminal on the day. We will leave from the West Maldon Community Centre car park at 9.30am. All members of our U3A are welcome, as at all Maritime Group meetings. Please sign up as usual at the monthly general meeting. An early commitment will be helpful as the price depends on a minimum of 10 members going. There are light refreshments on board, but passengers may also bring their own packed lunch if preferred. *John Wallace 01245 225093*

## Gardening Group

How much longer can this dry weather last? While it is lovely to wake to glorious sunshine every morning, our gardens and the crops are desperate for rain. The blossom on the trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants is amazing, but it is sad to see it all fade so quickly for lack of water. Our first event this month was the annual Plant Swap in my garden. As always, it was well supported, so much so that I ran out of mugs for tea and had to use my best cups! For the first time in five years we had a fine afternoon, no last minute dashing for shelter in the garden shed, the summer house or the Granny flat, just a relaxed tea party on the lawn.



Everyone had brought plants of every kind, shrubs, tomato plants, seedlings, cuttings, herbaceous plants and even a tree. It really is one of our best meetings, we have some very knowledgeable members in the group who are only too willing to share their expertise and give practical advice.

After tea the ballot for the Buckingham Palace trip was held. Quite a large number of people have decided not to go, so I am hoping that everyone who signed the list will be able to go. The list will be on the table at the next meeting and everyone notified. I would like payment in July please as I have to book in advance. There will be space on the coach if anyone would like a few hours in London.

### Forthcoming Events

**Monday June 13<sup>th</sup>** - Visit to Cobwebs a small private garden near Rochford. Cost £4 including tea plus driver £2. Meet at West Maldon Community Centre at 2.00 pm.

**Monday July 4<sup>th</sup>** - Visit by coach to Capel Manor Gardens at Enfield. Meet at West Maldon Community Centre. Cost entry £4, tour £2 (optional), coach £12. There is much to see here, gardens, trial grounds, animals, garden designs. Please come I need to fill the coach.

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> August** - Visit to Helmingham Hall Gardens, Suffolk. Entry £6, coach £12. This is a lovely garden, but I need to fill the coach.

*Jennifer Fowler 01245 222834*

## Table Tennis Group

Sessions take place on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> (when applicable) Mondays at West Maldon Community Centre from 11.45 am to 1.30 pm. (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 group has been running since April 2010 and new members are always welcome.

### Burnham & District Table Tennis League

The Burnham & District Table Tennis League has a number of Blackwater & Maldon U3A members competing for the Maldon U3A and Maldon Table Tennis Club. Something like 20 members are registered to play in the league. The winter season has been completed apart from one outstanding fixture between Maldon G and St Lawrence B. This is unlikely to be played which is a shame as it denies the Maldon G the opportunity of another win. There are 3 U3A members playing for the G side - July Doidge, John Mundy and Bill Stitchbury.

### Blackwater U3A Table Tennis Competition

On Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> May we held our first Table Tennis Competition at West Maldon Community Centre. The event was well attended and six ladies took part in the ladies singles. The standard was very good and played in a sporting manner. The winner was Christine Hall who was in sparkling form and won all her 5 matches. In the first round of the round robin she defeated a dangerous opponent in Doreen Malone of South Woodham U3A who won 4 matches. There were a number of tight games in the competition. Other ladies competing were Brenda Broom, Carol Mead, Terri Hardcastle and Jenny Wall. Due to a number of absences only one group of the men's matches was played. The winner was Keith Lawson who won all his 3 matches. He played very well to defeat some tough opposition. The surprise runner up was Fred Johnson of Heybridge U3A who had to battle hard to defeat both Ray Mead and Cyril Uttridge. The final men's group to be played later in the month will consist of Peter Holmes, Len Clark, John Mundy and Jack Veash. The men's competition is still open if any men wish to enter. The competition was enjoyed by all members. It is very impressive to see how much the standard of members has improved so much since the group started in April 2010. We welcome any members who would like to improve their table tennis skills.

*John Mundy 01621 854065*

## Golfing Group

Our golfing session last month was at the Benton Hall Golf Course, where the group played on the Par 3 course. Although it was enjoyable, most of our members in attendance commented how they now found this course too easy. That is an indication of how Ken, our professional golfing instructor, has helped us all to raise our golfing standards. Did I hear Blackwater U3A golfers will be playing in the next British Open! However, before then, we will be meeting on Friday June 10<sup>th</sup> at 10.00 am at Braxted Park Golf Course.

Our Golfing thought for this month is from Zyanya Golf Course in the old British East Africa. In 1950 they had a local rule which stated that "If the golf ball comes to rest in dangerous proximity to a hippopotamus or crocodile, another ball may be dropped at a safe distance, no nearer the hole, without penalty." This rule will apply when we play next month at Braxted Park, where they have a large lake.

*Alan Chapman Golfing Group Coordinator 01621 816860*

## Rural Essex Group

### Abbotts Hall Farm

Following Alan's talk earlier this year, at the member's request I have booked a visit. We will learn about the arable farming, the changes around the edge of the crops and the changes in the cropped area, the new grassland and freshwater areas and the managed realignment which is beneficial to the wildlife. The visit will end with tea on the lawn in the garden area. Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June, leaving West Maldon Community Centre at 1.15. £5.00 per person. I need at least 15 for this visit to proceed.



### Lauriston Farm

This is a 210 acre fully Demeter certified Biodynamic Organic holding with rare breed Shetland cattle and North Ronaldsey sheep, bee hives, laying hens, vegetables and woodland. Ninety five per cent of the farm is designated as a SSSI. I need a minimum of six people and the visit takes maximum of 2 hours, including tea and cake at the end. Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July leaving West Maldon Community Centre at 1.30. Donations towards refreshments on the day.

I am in the process of organising the programme for the autumn and next year if anyone has any suggestions they would like me to include, please contact me *Dorreen Linton 01621 853428*

## Historical Buildings in Maldon High Street

Dennis and Dorreen went to Essex Record Office to look at the old maps relating to Maldon High Street. Maps are now available for the group to view and will no doubt be the subject of discussion. The group will be meeting at the Swan Hotel for an update on any information gathered by members. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June when we will be meeting at the Oakhouse for discussion and viewing of the Spindles building at 2 pm. *Dorreen Linton 01621 853428*

## Walking Group

Our next walk will be on Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> June. Jenny Wall will lead this walk around Tillingham. We will be leaving West Maldon Community Centre at 9.30 am. There will be a break in July and August and then the autumn programme will begin in September.



*Dorreen Linton 01621 853428*

## Community Garden

Another season starts, and the good news is that the plants donated by members last year have survived the winter. We have sent the entry form for this year's Maldon in Bloom competition which will be held during the week commencing 11<sup>th</sup> July. We would like to purchase more violas and some other blue and yellow plants to fill the beds. Some members have kindly agreed to donate some perennials to fill in the spaces. We will be working on the garden on Tuesday mornings from 10 am. If anyone would like to come along it would be appreciated. Please ring to check any late changes due to unforeseen circumstances.

*Dorreen Linton 01621 853428*

## Astronomy Group

The Blackwater & Maldon U3A Astronomy Group meets at West Maldon Community Centre in the Jubilee Room at 7.30pm on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month. *Alan Chapman, Coordinator 01621 816860*

## History Group

### Bulmer Bricks

The owner, Peter Minter gave the group a guided tour around his works. We learned about the different stages of producing bricks for restoration purposes. Peter has learned the process from his father and hopes to be handing over to his sons and grandson. We saw the pit that has been worked on for the last 75 years and he is applying for permission for the next 25 years. Digging takes place when the crops are harvested in August and September, approximately 1,000 tons a year. There are 15 employees who have worked there straight from school. As the kiln is now a listed building, he built a new dome where 12,000 bricks are fired each time 2 days loading, 3 days firing and 3 days cooling. Ninety percent of the bricks are made to order. The business is moving with the times and supplies terracotta decorated garden, glazed and correcting mass produced bricks. The Norfolk Wildlife Trust has ordered bat bricks and built bat walls.



### Little Baddow

Our guide Margaret told us the history of St Mary the Virgin church which dates back to 1086. The large wall painting of St Christopher c.1375, two oak effigies c.1330 and Sir Henry Mildmay (d.1639) and his two wives. We crossed over the road to Little Baddow Hall where the owner came out and told us information about the Hall, then across the fields to Water Hole, a Grade II star building dating back to the 1450s. The cottage would have been part of the Mildmay Estate. So much of the interior is as it would have been many years ago and there is plenty of work to keep this little gem from deteriorating. As if in keeping, a Penny Farthing came down the lane.

**Canterbury visit** – Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June. I now have 31 members for the 35 seater coach. Would anyone like to go to Canterbury for the day? £26 coach and tour. Meet West Maldon Community Centre 8 am.

**Mersea** – Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July. I have arranged a guided walk and visit to the Museum and Barrow. Meet West Maldon Community Centre, 9.30 am £3.

**Copped Hall and Gardens** – Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July. Several areas of the Hall have been completed since our last visit. The volunteers working on the gardens have also been working extremely hard on the long garden, walled kitchen garden and the rock garden. Drink and cakes are included in the cost of £10. Meet West Maldon Community Centre 9 am.

**Eltham Palace and gardens** – Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September. Meet West Maldon Community Centre 8 am. I have 21 members signed and paid up although 36 have shown an interest for this 35 seater coach visit. Can you please confirm your interest.

**Glenham Hall** – We have an afternoon visit to the House and Gardens and a visit to Sutton Hoo or Woodbridge in the morning (please let me know your choice and we will go to the preferred site)  
*Dorreen Linton 01621 853428*

## Reading Group

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo was this month's choice for the Reading Group. Stieg Larsson, the author wrote it as part of a trilogy of books, none of which were published until after his sudden, unexpected death at the age of 50, so he was never aware of the considerable success of his writing. A little bit unusually for the group, everyone thoroughly enjoyed reading it, even though a few found it a bit slow to get going at the beginning.



Eventually however, all agreed that it was compelling reading until the final page. Indeed many felt that they couldn't stop thinking about the happenings in the book, even when they weren't actually reading it.

The book is set in Sweden and is full of mystery and secrets, some of which are unravelled as the book proceeds. There is a lot of violence towards women and this seems to be a predominant theme, with statistical information at the beginning of chapters highlighting this violence. There are several extraordinary characters portrayed in the story and some rather bizarre relationships, providing considerable contrasts, but we found ourselves accepting all of this, and sympathising enthusiastically with the two highly unusual main characters, Lisbeth Salander – the girl with the dragon tattoo - and Mikael Blomkvist.

The book led to considerable discussion about the numerous threads running through such as the Nazi links; the use and misuse of different kinds of power; the strange relationships and the resilience of some of the abused women. We all found it an absorbing and thoroughly enjoyable read and even after lots of discussions found ourselves asking further questions about the many issues raised. We hoped that some of these issues might be revealed in one or other of the other two books in the trilogy. *Val Fry*

*Pat Wade, Coordinator 01621 740253*

## Swimming group

Dates for the summer are Wednesdays 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July.  
*Anne Kellard 01621 853045*

## Birdwatching Group

At Chigborough Lakes we arrived for our annual concert at 4.15 am. Some performers, notably as always the Blackbirds, took to the stage first, in the dark. As daylight broke, so the crescendo from them and other birds grew stronger. The rising sun from behind pink clouds and the universal embracing of spring was breathtaking. It was at this moment that we confirmed with each other as to why we were there – at such an early hour. It was because of the intoxication of being the only humans present in this natural world of beauty, birdsong, nature's search for food and generally going about.

We saw a Muntjac Deer shuffling in and out of the woodland margin and three times a large rainbow Trout leaping vertically out of the lake for a fly. We watched and photographed close up a male Chaffinch looking at us while giving, not the usual song, but a staccato call and later we stood only feet away from a hidden Nightingale giving a magnificent solo. The evocative purring sound of summer by the Turtle Dove was heard in two separate locations. It has declined in numbers by 70% in the last ten years. From the Mediterranean area it now visits in summer only East Anglia. Thirty-five different bird species were encountered and thus recorded for the Essex Wildlife Trust.



Our capable guide and expert the Reverend Jonathon Pearce aided us in this. From the inhabitants of Chigborough's water surfaces and margins, woodland, meadows and scrub the strangest call was that of the nesting Little Egrets that sounded like loud humans - gargling! Later as we hungrily ate our delicious breakfasts at the Lock Tea Rooms, Heybridge Basin, we had one sad reflection. For the first time during a Dawn Chorus Excursion we had not heard the Cuckoo – it too is in major decline.

### Future birdwatching events

**Friday 3rd June** - Oxley Meadows, Tolleshunt Knights. Meet at West Maldon Community Centre at 9am – NOW FULL.

**Friday 1st July** – Pandemonium, Wimbish near Thaxted. Meet at 8.15am at West Maldon Community Centre. TWO VACANCIES LEFT

**Friday 15th July** – Birdwatching planning meeting for 2011-2012. Meet at my house at 3.00 pm NB Not am as hitherto. Potential birdwatchers are welcome.

For the latter two events, please sign at the Wednesday General Meeting in June.  
*Peter Leggett, Coordinator, 01621 852355*

## Science, Technology & Medical Group

Our group had a very entertaining and informative talk by Dr. David Petts who introduced the topic with the thought that Essex was regarded by many in history as 'a dangerous place.' Marsh Fever or the Ague was common in South Essex and North Kent marshlands with Daniel Defoe calling it 'unhealthy marshes.' Figures show mortality was much higher in these areas especially in infants. Laindon was even called 'kill priest'" as so many died there. In Defoe's time in the 1720s there were stories of men of the marshes going to upland areas and Scotland to get wives, only to find they died in a short while. One story told of a man who had 25 wives.



So was it Malaria? Well the symptoms fitted fever, shivering then sweating, relapsing fevers every few days or months, and a high mortality up to 25%. Warm cattle sheds kept the mosquitoes alive in the winter where it was otherwise cold. It wasn't until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that the Malaria parasite was found and the life cycle with the mosquito explained. It was probably the Anopheles Atroparvus mosquito that bred on the stagnant marshland waters. Natural resistance kept the local inhabitants slightly better protected. However 'Jesuits bark' was found from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to cure the sufferers. This came from South America from the Chinchona tree, and contained Quinine (also found in Tonic Water). Vast amounts were exported to India especially via the East India Company to the Army.

Even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a good excuse for a gin and tonic. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the marshes were drained, arable began to take over from cattle, and drug treatment all combined to cure the problem and make the area safer and the wives lived longer! David did not think Global Warming was going to revive the epidemic here. We still get very cold winters at times, and cattle sheds get rarer. Marshlands are coastal or in Nature reserves. *Dennis Eraut*

Due to holidays, the group will not be meeting in June and our next meeting will therefore be on 11<sup>th</sup> July at 9.30am at West Maldon Community Centre when Roger Smith will be given the group a technical talk 'Steam from first to twenty first century.' Continuing with the steam engine theme, our 8<sup>th</sup> August visit will be to the Longshop Steam Tractor Museum at Leiston in Suffolk. And en route we are proposing to stop for a breakfast of hot/jammy scones, the venue recommended by Roger. The visit will be by car share leaving West Maldon Community Centre at 9.30 am. Members interested in attending the above events, should let Alan Chapman or Roger Smith know as soon as possible, and/or sign up on the sheets that will be available on display at our next monthly meeting.  
*Alan Chapman Group Coordinator 01621 816860*

## Local Theatre Group

### Anything goes

On May 9<sup>th</sup> a few of us went to Witham Public Hall to see Cole Porter's 'Anything goes' performed by Witham Amateur Operatic Society. As usual, they produced a very good show with music familiar to us, a lively cast and brilliant costumes, resulting in a good evening's entertainment. *Barbara Bicknell*

### Forthcoming events

**Monday June 20<sup>th</sup>** - 'Buddy' at Cliffs Pavilion. £18.50.

Tickets already bought, but extras may be obtained.

**Sunday July 10<sup>th</sup>** - Opera in the Orchard, Bouncers Farm, Wickham Bishops. 'A laugh at the Opera'. Laughs and surprises from Mozart, Rossini and more. £20



**Monday July 11<sup>th</sup>** 'Busy Body,' a comedy thriller. Mercury theatre. £12.75 Full

**Monday August 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>**. Date to be arranged. The Pitman Painters on National tour prior to opening in the West End. See write up in your Cliffs brochure or at the monthly meeting. On at the Palace Theatre, Southend. £22.50.

**Friday September 9<sup>th</sup>** - The 39 Steps. Cramphorn Theatre, Chelmsford. £10.

Please sign up at June meeting or phone me at home. All trips are by shared car.

*Sheila Rowsell 01621 740820*

## Theatre trips to London

### The Lion King

Over a year ago a friend told me, if you ever get the chance, go to see the Lion King. On May 18<sup>th</sup> along with 25 other U3A members I did. On entering the theatre I realised we were totally outnumbered by youngsters (well, it was a matinee) and wondered whether I was in the right place. A roar of approval from the youngsters greeted Rafiki, the first character to appear, and then it all began - absolutely amazing. The music, the puppetry, stunning costumes and choreography brought African life to the theatre. The energy, vitality and enthusiasm of the performers, both the main and supporting characters, was breathtaking. More and more, the puppets became real animals to me and then thinking how it was all made to happen led me to appreciate the skill and ingenuity of the production team. One did not need to be a youngster to delight in this powerful performance but to see their enjoyment enhanced it all. If you ever get the chance, go to see The Lion King. *Brenda Broom*



*Gill Cato 01621 740153 or cato662@btinternet.com*

## Art Appreciation Group

### Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June - Jaywick Martello Tower

The visit this month is to an exhibition of photographer Dan Dubowitz and choreographer Fearghus O'Conchuir drawing on a shared interest in architecture and the body to explore the place these iconic military towers occupy in the landscape. 'If the invader comes' is part of the artists' residency at Jaywick and is their response to the Martello Towers of England's East Coast. I think it will be an unusual venue, although the natural environment that surrounds the town, its dramatic sea and sky, have proved inspirational for artists and visitors alike. There will also be a guided tour on the history of the Tower. Light refreshments are being provided. We will be leaving West Maldon Community Centre at 9 am. £5.00 per person.



### Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September - shared visit to Greenwich

I have 9 members signed up for the visit to the Ranger's House to see the astounding display of the culmination of years of collecting by the diamond magnate Sir Julius Wernher (1850-1912), the nearly 700 pieces of art. We will be able to enter the jewellery vault and admire one of the largest collections of Spanish Renaissance jewellery in Europe and be able to see the unusual pieces including a plate with a snake and an owl made from coconut shell. There is a maximum number of 15 members. There could also be a free visit to the Queen's House subject to availability. £6 for Ranger's House and £12 for the coach. We have a coach booked for 35 members and 16 members have paid up. Meet West Maldon Community Centre at 8 am. *Dorreen Linton 01621 853428*

## Olympic Tour

We have been busy with various visits since the last newsletter, so briefly 48 members enjoyed the Olympics tour. Many of the venues are nearing completion, so from our viewing points we were able to see what a vast amount of work has been done, and in some areas it is just a matter of tidying up. Our excellent guide was able to give us up-to-date information about the accommodation arrangements for athletes, coaches and medical staff, the warming up areas and the many arenas. We also learned about the arrangements for converting the areas into affordable housing, the administration area will become a school, and there will be sports facilities and parks where there used to be derelict industrial areas. We then enjoyed an afternoon on the River Lee although it was disappointing not to be going towards the watersports area due to health and safety regulations. *Dorreen Linton*

