



Quarterly Newsletter - Winter & Spring Edition



Wine Group 2 - Christmas Dinner at The Hawk, Battlebridge

Newsletter No 195

From the Chair

My first newsletter in 2025, and it's already proving to be an eventful with two new groups being proposed so far, and I know that both of them have had or have a date for their initial meetings. In other news, there is a new president in the USA, (in case you hadn't noticed), but closer to home, Chelmsford City Council are putting an additional, optional, charge on us of £60 pa for them to collect our brown bins, I can say no more.

Our last meeting was at the beginning of December, a dim memory to some of us by now, but hopefully, the performances by our two groups has sparked some interest in you - I know that you will be made very welcome if you choose that they are of interest to you.

At our first meeting of the year, on February 5th Rebecca Loader will be talking about "Caring for Carers", something I suspect has affected many of our members.

Our Cluster Group continues to be active, hopefully you read the letter from the Burham u3a about their Archaeological group. I know that some of our members already participate in other u3a's activities, and we have members from other u3a's in our groups.

Please take the time to read the other articles in our newsletter, the groups always have interesting information to share, and our Treasurer has some particularly important news.

If we have a member who is familiar with sound systems, would they care to take a look at our one? The headset etc. continue to "play up", and although we can use the system in the hall, we have to remember to hold the mics in a particular position. Please contact me if you think you can help.

I have often wondered why the month of February only has 28 days, and after spending time down the rabbit hole that is the internet, the explanation that I like is that in Roman times, the King Numa decreed that February, the month the Romans honoured their dead, would only have 28 days, as he also deemed it to be the unluckiest month, (they hadn't figured out leap years at that time). This custom obviously carried over to our modern calendar. Oh, and they also considered even numbers to be unlucky - something to remember when you next play roulette at the casino!

Some good things about February:

- Days are getting 'longer', (just a little, but "every little helps")
- Spring starts next month (Allegedly)
- No council tax (if you pay it monthly)
- Valentine's day (gentlemen, you have been warned)

And finally: "Wine is proof that God loves us and loves to see us happy", (Benjamin Franklin)

David Hayes, Chair SWF u3a

From the Committee

We have had two committee meetings since the last newsletter, in addition to business as usual, we have reviewed the budget for this year and are pleased to say that we don't see any need to increase membership costs this year. We have also approved the purchase of a new laptop to replace our rather slow old one, this is used at main meetings and is available to groups to use at their meetings.

We are continuing to profile the various roles on the Committee, this month it is the turn of the Treasurer. We will need to appoint a new Treasurer in July this year as our current Treasurer will have completed 6 years in the role by July, the maximum permitted under our constitution. The Treasurer is one of the key executive posts which has to be filled, so if no one steps forward our u3a cannot continue. Please take time to read through the item below to find out what is involved.

We will also need to appoint a new auditor in July as, after six years of service, our current auditor will be standing down.

If you think you could take on either of these roles please speak to Kate Smith, our current Treasurer or a committee member. You can contact us via the website or speak to us at the main meeting, all committee members wear a blue lanyard.

The Committee.

In July this year we will need to elect a new Treasurer. To help you decide whether you could be that person I have put together a brief outline of the Treasurer's responsibilities.

The regular tasks cover the management of the u3a bank accounts, this includes paying any invoices/expenses, banking income, reconciling membership income,

updating the financial ledger to record all the transactions and reconciling these to the bank.

The Treasurer also prepares a financial report for the monthly Committee Meetings. All committee members have a joint responsibility for overseeing the finances of our u3a.

In addition to the regular tasks there are specific tasks during the year, these include preparing a budget each year for review and approval by the Committee, preparing and submitting the annual Gift Aid Claim and preparing the annual accounts which are audited, presented at the AGM and submitted to the Charity Commission.

You may be thinking how much time does this take? If you add up the time on the regular tasks, they take up on average a day a month, though some times of the year are busier than others.

Preparing the annual accounts is the biggest job, it involves preparing accounts for the u3a and consolidating the account information for all the interest groups who handle money. It takes up several days over a small number of weeks at the end of the financial year.

You do not need to have a financial qualification to be Treasurer; all you need is basic excel skills and to be confident in working with figures. It is a rewarding role and one that keeps your brain active!

That might all sound a bit daunting but there will be a full handover and on going help for anyone taking on the role, so you won't be on your own.

If you think you could be the next Treasurer or Auditor and want to find out more, please come and speak to me or a committee member.

Kate Smith, Treasurer

Refreshment Crew

A heartfelt thank you to Mick and Pat Cohen & Gerry and Barbara Davis. They are the amazing team who has served us refreshments, with dedication and care, at our monthly Main Meetings at Champions Manor Hall for the past few years.



Your commitment, warmth and hard work have made such a positive impact on everyone, and your efforts have truly been appreciated. Your contributions will always be remembered with gratitude. THANK YOU and enjoy your well-deserved rest!

From The Committee

Social

Following a successful 2024 which saw us taking a coach trip to Lodges Coaches and a quiz night later in the year we are busy planning social events for 2025.

We received many positive responses regarding a Christmas dinner dance and have gone ahead and booked the Rettendon Lodge for a two course Christmas meal followed by entertainment. Please put Wednesday 17th December 2025 in your diary arriving at 12:30 for 13:00 sit down, details to follow.

We are also looking to confirm a date for another quiz night and also a coach trip for the warmer weather.

If you have any suggestions for a social event, please let me or a member of the committee know.

Tracey 07913 978630

Speakers for 2025

5th Feb

Caring for carers: This concerns a large group of people in our society. Carers are underpaid and overlooked. Rebecca Loader will give us a clearer understanding of her charity's work.

5th March

The time of your life: Were you lucky enough to grow up during the 60s and 70s? Ray Clark will remind you of the fun, excitement and magic of living through these wonderful times.

2nd April

The real folk of Lark Rise and Candleford: Mark Carroll will give you the background to the characters in the book by Flora Thompson and the British television costume drama series.

7th May

The forgotten Victorian Shipping Magnate: Bill Lindsay talks about his great-great-grandfather who was a Victorian shipping magnate in the 1850s. Based in London, his ships sailed in the East of England ports, delivering coal for steam ships.

4th June

Staying safe online: Barry Linton, who is an official Essex Police volunteer, returns to talk and answer questions about Cyber protection.

2nd July

The Dog's Trust: Stephanie Disch will give a brief history of the Dog's Trust and the Basildon Rehoming Centre. She will talk about the projects and services offered and answer questions about the charity.

6th August

The Undersea world of Indonesian Borneo: Paul Hatfield describes his journey from the UK to Malaysia and then on to Borneo. He talks about the diving and the very diverse creatures that he saw.

3rd September

Essex Girls: Don't get the wrong idea! Jane Piper tells us about the famous women of our county and their achievements.

1st October

Mister Gees: Douglas Gee will tell us all about his charity based in South Woodham Ferrers.

5th November

Polydactyl Cats and Interesting Facts: Whilst researching multi-clawed cats, Peggy Griffin discovered some fascinating facts about Anne Boleyn, Essex witches, Marie Antoinette and much more.

3rd December

Love is in the Air: Mike Grillo will entertain us with his music based on this theme.

News from the Groups

Eco Group

In October we welcomed David Smith, Environment and Leisure Officer with SWF Town Council. He talked to us about his role in the council and some of their responsibilities - children's play areas, allotments, cleaning graffiti and Woodham Fenn. He told us that there are going to be two vehicle activated speed signs which are going to rotate around the town. It looks like we might have a B&M and a Lidl on the outskirts of town, adjacent to the M&S garage.

In November Mark Smith, Waste and Recycling Officer for Chelmsford City Council talked to us about recycling, specifically plastics. There is some confusion as to what can be put into the plastic recycling bags we have in South Woodham (if you are outside of this area your scheme may be different). The best thing is to follow what it says in the leaflet that was delivered to all homes a couple of years ago - you can also look on their website - <https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/bins-and-recycling/what-goes-in-each-bin/clear-sack-for-plastics/>

The following items can't be put in the plastic recycling:

- crisp packets
- medicine blister packs
- wax coated coffee cups
- fruit and vegetable netting
- polystyrene and bubble wrap
- CDs/videos and their cases
- hard plastics, plastic toys and pens.

Otherwise, everything else, including flimsy plastic that says, "Do not recycle at home" and cling film, can go into your kerbside plastic bag.

Food, for example, that is wrapped in flimsy plastic is sold nationwide and some Councils do not have the facilities to recycle that type of plastic that's why they're labelled "Do not recycle".

In case you don't know there will be an annual charge for garden waste collection from 4th March so do check the Chelmsford CC website for information and how to register for collection.

Medicine blister pack recycling - if you wish to use this service, which should only be for members of our u3a at the moment, please make a donation when you deposit packs in the box. This will go towards purchasing additional box(es) in the future. Don't forget that a recycling scheme is supposed to be starting at Boots in Chelmsford in the springtime and there will be no charge for that, however it is supposed to be a personal service so we can't take large bags full.

Later this year I shall be attending a u3a Climate Matters summer school at Warwickshire University, so I expect to be passing on lots more information!

Ann Woolley

Ann.woolley.u3a@gmail.com

French

Bonjour tout le monde. Hello everyone.

I started looking after the French group (Thursday pm - Week 2) recently. It includes people who are fairly confident and would not be suitable for someone who has either no knowledge of the language or a basic one. So, I intend to start a Beginners group, also on Thursdays but in Week 4. I have taught French all my working life, the ages of my 'pupils' ranging from 6 to 90! We will start from scratch. I intend to make our meetings fun. There will be little writing but a lot of conversation. So, if you are interested, please give me a ring on 07952843180.

Babette

Gardening Group

The Gardening Group are a friendly group who meet up on the 2nd Monday of the month at 2pm. We like to visit gardens in the Essex area from March until November. In the winter months we meet at Champions Manor Hall and have a meeting with a speaker.

We have had a busy three months. In November we had a morning visit to Hyde Hall to see the autumn colours and afterwards had lunch at Taz. Our December meeting was a workshop where Kate showed us how to create a beautiful Christmas arrangement which was followed by a delicious Christmas buffet.



Hyde Hall Visit



Producing Christmas Decorations



Christmas Lunch at Taz

In January we had Lynne from Moore & Moore Plants who gave us a fascinating talk called 'A Look behind the Scenes' which was about being an exhibitor at RHS Flowers Shows including Chelsea.

We have an exciting programme to look forward to. In February Lynne from Moore & Moore Plants is coming back to give us a talk called 'What's in a Name' A light-hearted look at the reasons behind the common names of plants and plant folklore. In March we have an outing to Ulting Wick to see the spring flowers and in April we are visiting Heyrons at High Easter and for May we have a visit to The Mount at Harlow. A full list of the 2025 programme is given below.

If you have a love of visiting gardens and would like to join our group, please come and see us at our table at the main meeting.

The Programme for 2025 is list below:

January 13th - Lynne, Moore and Moore Plants - "A look behind the scenes" Exhibiting at large RHS shows, Champions Manor £5.

February 10th - Lynne, Moore and Moore Plants - "What's in a name" A lighthearted look at the reason behind some common plant names. Champions Manor, £5.

March 10th - Ulting Wick, Woodham Walter £12.50 including refreshments.

April 14th - Heyrons, High Easter £10 including refreshments.

May 12th - The Mount, Harlow £10 including refreshments.

June 9th - Blunts Hall Witham £10.

July 14th - Isabella's garden Westcliff 11am £13.

August 11th - Rhona's

September 8th - Oak farm wakes Colne £10.

October 13th - Place for plants £10 entry only.

November 10th Garden centre and lunch.

December 8th - Indoor meeting Champions Manor.

Sue and Shirley

Gin Appreciation 1

We meet in the Village Hall Games room on the first Tuesday of every month but sorry, we are full to the brim.

Every month we taste three different Gins and very rarely do we duplicate. It is an evening full of fun, friendship and lively, noisy discussions and of course, Gin. Yes, we manage to cover so many topics!!

2024 finished with an evening of Gin Tasting at Bar Vino. Enjoyed by all.

I am hoping that we will be able to arrange an outing or two in 2025 hopefully joining forces with group 2.

I wish you all a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Mary 🍷

Gin Appreciation 2

It seems like only yesterday since we started Gin Appreciation 2 but we have just celebrated our first birthday. Throughout the year we have met on 2nd Tuesday of the month and enjoyed some very nice gins along with those we would rather not see again. December saw us taking a trip into Chelmsford for a Christmas lunch where a good time was had by all, and a few new gins were tasted.

This year started off with a social evening around one of our members where suggestions were made for the forthcoming year, why not join us?

Tracey 07913 978630

Local History

Our 2025 programme begins with talks at Champions Manor in February and March, the full details of the talks and a list of the confirmed visits for the year to July are set out below. Sign-up sheets for February and March will be out at the main meeting in February.

Thursday 13 February, we welcome back Stephen Nunn for a talk on Maldon's Lost Railway.

With this talk he takes us on a pictorial adventure from the present-day Witham Station to Maldon's former East and West stations, on to the current Woodham Ferrers station and to the end of the line at Southminster. All stops will be described in between.

1.35 for a 1.45 start. Cost £5, including refreshments.

Tuesday 18 March, we welcome back Burnham u3a Archaeology Group. This year they will be talking about their dig at old Mayland Church which they started in 2022. The site was overgrown with very little remaining of the former church above ground when they started, so they were unsure what they would find. However, in the 3 years they have discovered a lot about the history of the site, which goes back further than was first thought and have made some good finds, which they will bring along.

1.50 for a 2pm start. Cost £5, including refreshments.

Future dates for your diary up to July

Tuesday 8 April, an afternoon visit to St Mary's Church, North Woodham

Thursday 15 May, an afternoon visit to Southchurch Hall, Southend

Tuesday 10 June an afternoon visit to the Moot Hall, Maldon

Tuesday 8 July, coach trip to Ely

If you are a new u3a member and would like to find out more about the group please come and speak to us at the main meeting, new members are always welcome.

Best wishes

Kate, Mary and Allen

London Walks

London Walks take place on the third Wednesday and fourth Thursday of each month.

We meet a guide in London who will take us to many interesting places that many of us have never seen before. They start at 11am and finish at 1pm. After they finish some of us go for a meal whilst others find other interesting things to do whilst they are in the big City.

In 2024 we enjoyed many interesting walks, and I am at the moment planning the walks for 2025 with the help of suggestions from the group. As soon as they are finalised, I will put them on the events page.

Our last walk of the year was 'Musical Christmas' enjoyed by us all. We were treated to Mulled wine too. 48 of us then enjoyed a Christmas Lunch at the Lodge.

I started coordinating London Walks in 2011 and have thoroughly enjoyed the journey. However, after this year I am going to step down and hand over the reins to someone younger to whom I will give all the support I can. I can tell you that I have a volunteer who will be excellent at the job. She is full of enthusiasm and ideas and will have a great team of support around her. An announcement to follow when all is set up.



A Happy and Healthy New Year to you all.

Mary. 07941302947 rbmb4546@yahoo.co.uk

Needle Felting Group

Hi, my name is Lorraine Hayward. I love needle felting and have been attending workshops once a month for the last 2 years but recently I have been going mainly to talk and share ideas. I'm finding the long workshops hard work, and I have decided instead that I would like to pass on my knowledge onto other members of the u3a.

My aim is to meet once a month for a 2-hour workshop working through some of the quick projects in the photo. Starting with the toadstool as it incorporates 4

different felting techniques. I will provide mats, needles, wool and advise the group on the equipment you can buy and the different types of wool and its uses.

We will be meeting at the village hall on the 4th Wednesday of the month starting on the 26th February. More details can be found in the group's sections of the website.



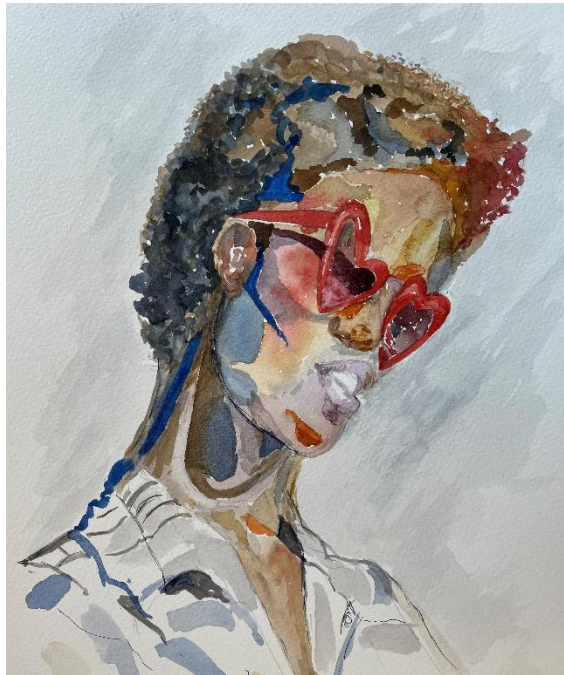
Lorraine Hayward

Paint and Pastels Art Group

Paint and Pastels is a small Art Group that meets on the 3rd Monday of the month at 10.00am. We aim to have a topic for each of our sessions although group members are always free to 'do their own thing' at the meetings - there may be a painting or drawing that you have started that you would like to spend time on or perhaps discuss with the group. Beginners and more experienced artists are welcome subject to availability of space in the hall that we use.

The group is currently at capacity, and we are operating a waiting list but if you would like more information about us please feel free to call Chris on **07946 024302**.

Examples of artwork created by members of the group are included below.





Photographic Group

Our South Woodham Ferrers u3a Photography Group meet on the first Tuesday of each month, in the Conference Room at Champions Manor Hall from 9:30 - 11:30 am. Whether you use top of the range equipment, "point and shoot" cameras or mobile phones - everyone is welcome, from the very experienced to total beginners. Some of our members are excellent photographers who, in the true spirit of the u3a, are happy to share their expertise. They will explain and demonstrate anything from the very basics to quite advanced techniques. Our meetings are always very friendly, interesting and enjoyable - with much light hearted discussion over refreshments.

The motto of our group is "for everyone to take better photos!"

Generally, we have chosen a topic, and members bring their photos to share and discuss. Recently we have been looking at buildings - a selection of our photos are shown below.





Science and Technology Group

A welcome refreshment break at Science & Tech after a presentation and discussion about "To Buy or Not to Buy" Electric/Hybrid cars? With the approaching date for the decline of diesel and petrol fuel - had anyone considered the amazing difficulties involved in recycling these electric vehicles when the time comes? Have you?



We meet on the 2nd Thursday morning in the month at Champions Manor Hall.
Why not join us?

Contact Eileen Drane or Richard Peach via our website and contact:

swf.u3asite.uk

eileen.drane@googlemail.com

Striders

We are a merry band of walkers who meet on the first Monday of the month from March to October and walk to enjoy the sights and sounds of nature and our local landscape or places of interest.

Our walks are around 4 to 5 miles and normally last about 2 hours at a reasonable pace, sometimes crossing fields and stiles, meeting and finishing somewhere with the opportunity for a drink or lunch.

Most walks are within a 12-mile radius of South Woodham Ferrers but occasionally further afield and we do encourage car sharing and sometimes lifts are available.

Contact Larry Ladbrook, lead walker or Janet Kelly. janet.kelly49@aol.com

Strollers Group

Our friendly group of strollers meet on the 4th Monday of the month from March to October and the walks start at 10:30.

We meet at or near a garden centre or pub within 10 miles of South Woodham Ferrers and we try to share cars.

Our walks are between 2 and 3 miles, about an hour and a half at a leisurely pace and are ideal for people who:

- Already enjoy a walk.
- Are new to walking.
- Want to do short walks.
- Want to explore the local area.
- Want to enjoy the local landscape.
- Share laughs with others.

Walking can reduce stress and improve wellbeing and fitness.

At the end of the walk, you have the option of coffee and cake or a pie and a pint.

If this sounds of interest to you, we would love to hear from you.



Strollers on a recent Maldon stroll

Contact Larry Ladbrook, lead walker or Janet Kelly. janet.kelly49@aol.com

Walking Group

The walking group meet on the first and third Friday of the month at various locations, all close to South Woodham Ferrers. Walks always start at 10am and are of about 6 miles and we would expect to complete that distance in just over 2 hours.

New members are very welcome so if there are any new u3a members who might like to give the group a try, why not come and join us on one of our walks.

We do walk all year round whatever the weather and it's up to individuals to decide whether to walk or not. At this time of the year walking boots are essential together with clothing to suit the weather conditions.

We are a very friendly group and use the walk as an opportunity to not only take in the view, but to have a natter and put the world to right.

Walks for the next three months are:

7th February - Stock/Margaretting Walk - About 6 mile walk starting from Stock village hall car park.

21st February - Bicknacre/Cock Clarkes Walk No 1 - About a 6 mile walk starting from the sports field car park which is adjacent to Bicknacre School.

7th March - Purleigh Walk - About a 5 miles walk starting from the sport field car park in Purleigh.

21st March - River Crouch Walk - About a 6.5 miles starting from, Compass Gardens car park.

4th April - Danbury/Sandon Hall Walk - About a 7 miles walk starting from the National Trust car park across the road from the Cricketers Pub.

18th April - Woodham Walter Walk - About 5.5 miles walk starting from the lay-by opposite The Bell Pub.

Bob Tyas

Weekenders Group

Nine of us enjoyed a lunch at the Lodge on Saturday 18th January. While we were there, we planned a Quiz to be hosted by Barbara Willsmer on Sunday 23rd February. We also discussed going to a film in May.

If any members without partners would like to join this group, please contact Shirley Masterson on

fambridgehouse@yahoo.co.uk.

Wine Appreciation Group 1

The group spent a very enjoyable afternoon at The Hawk, Battlebridge for their late Christmas get together.



Janet Tipping

Wine Appreciation Group 2

This quarter we have had our once-a-year Christmas members and partners event again at the Hawk for the December wine tasting slot. The 2 photos below show the group's enthusiasm for this annual outing, including 2 previous members.



We continue going forward with our quarterly subs now raised to £25 per person which provides cheese and crackers and a tasting of 7 wines per monthly session. This is on the second Friday afternoon of the month in the small rear hall of the SWF village hall. The higher increase, however, allows us to provide for some more expensive wines in the monthly line up which the group seem to enjoy, especially as we do not reveal the prices paid for the wine until after the tasting. There is therefore a mixed individual prices for the 7 bottles tasted, and not always does the most expensive bottle rate as the best wine tasted.

We have totted up the 2024-year end with 10 monthly tastings which includes the garden event in August and established that we tried/consumed 86 bottles of wine from 15 different countries There were 68 bottles contained no less than 68 separate grape varieties. As a group we have branched out from the typical Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon that most people are familiar with, (although these can still figure in the line-up). For example, Italy has over 1000 different grape varieties under commercial production so there is a long way to go.

This following quarter for 2025, we are targeting wines from Italy, South Africa and of course France as the largest producer in the world again.

We have small amount of education combined with a large amount of tasting and friendly chatter at each of our gatherings.

The knowledge within the group is very diverse and that is what makes it enjoyable for all

We do have a full group of 18, but if you would like to go on the waiting list or better still come along for a one month try, we could organise this if you are interested

Just contact me -Jeff Body if you are interested or in any event happy to discuss further detail.

u3a -SWF Wine group 2

Groups Monthly Meeting

Days of the week		Weeks of the Month			
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Monday	AM	Golf Book Group	Golf	Golf Paints & Pastels Art Group	Golf Strollers
	PM		Gardening		Eco Group Curry Clique (odd months)
Tuesday	AM	Photographic Group			Picks & Brick (Art & Architecture)
	PM	Gin Appreciation 1 Ukulele Group	Local History Tai Chi Gin Appreciation2 Ukulele Group	Ukulele Group	Ukulele Group Tai Chi
Wednesday	AM		Fine Your Voice	London Walks 1	Needle Felting
	PM	Monthly Meeting	Singles & Dining		Cards and Games for Fun
Thursday	AM		Science & Tech		London Walks 2
	PM		French		
Friday	AM	Bowling Walking	Bowling	Bowling Walking	Bowling
	PM		Wine Groups 1, 2, &3		Whisky Appreciation

For more details on any of these groups please contact the Group Coordinator Eileen Drane 07719789929

Deadline for Inclusion in Next Newsletter

Please send your contributions to the next Newsletter by Wednesday 19th March, to Bob Tyas at robert.tyas82@gmail.com or deliver to 55 Clements Green Lane, SWF. Alternatively, you can ring him on 07889949685.