

South Woodham Ferrers



<https://swf.u3asite.uk/>

Quarterly Newsletter - Spring & Summer Edition



Members of the Gardening Group at Ulting Wick Garden

Newsletter No 196

From the Chair

Great to see the daylight hours getting longer, and the weather getting warmer. We can finally get into the garden and start clearing them ready for summer.

Last month's speaker was quite interesting and fleshed out the characters from the book and TV series, he certainly knows his stuff. And the people from the Helen Rollason charity were very informative too, I wasn't aware of the wide range of services they provide.

Our talk in May by Bill Lindsay about "The forgotten Victorian Shipping Magnate" sounds very promising, especially to those of us with an interest in history.

I attended the extraordinary GM of the Heybridge u3a on April 11th where it was wound up, very sad. I was there with representatives from other 3a's in our Cluster group to provide information on those members of Heybridge who are thinking of transferring to us. I think we shall be welcoming several new members in May and I know you will make them very welcome.

I will be attending a meeting of the cluster group chairs in Maldon on the 25th where we will exchange updates on our groups, speakers and other matters. One point to note is that the Maldon u3a has requested that if you want to attend one of their monthly meetings, please check with them in advance as they have limited capacity where they meet in Wickham Bishops. We, and most other u3a's do not require visitors to check beforehand.

This is the link to our website where you can find all the information about our activities, meetings and the other u3a's in the Cluster Group: <https://swf.u3asite.uk/>.
Also, we do have our own Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/767659561371370>

Finally: "Never argue with stupid people, they will drag you down to their level and beat you with experience", Mark Twain

David Hayes, Chair SWF u3a

From the Committee

This is the last from the Committee before the AGM in July, when we will elect a new committee. Since the last newsletter, in addition to the normal monthly business, we have approved the budget for 25/26. We are not anticipating any significant increases in costs next year and so the annual membership cost will remain at £16 per person.

Our focus now is planning for the AGM in July, please see details of the AGM which includes deadlines for nominations.

If you have a question for the committee or would like to set up a new interest group, please come and speak to us. All committee members wear a blue lanyard

and badge at the main meetings so we should be easy to find, or you can find our contact details on the website.

The Committee.

Notice of Annual General Meeting 2nd July 2025

We are pleased to give advance notice that our AGM (Annual General Meeting) this year will be held at Champions Manor Hall on 2nd July. Please note the date in your diary.

The AGM will give a report from the Committee on the past year, a Treasurer's report and accounts for twelve months ending 31 March 2025; receive any resolutions proposed and carry out the election of any Officers as appropriate and Committee members. Our speaker following the AGM will be Stephanie Disch from the Basildon Dogs Trust.

Timetable

- Closing date for nominations for Committee members and for any motions for consideration at the AGM - 13th June 2025.
- Formal notice of the AGM with agenda; details of voting arrangements; accounts for 2024/25 to be sent out on 27th June 2025.

Nominations for the Committee

The Chairman, Vice Chair and Secretary are prepared to stand for a further year but Kate Smith, the Treasurer, will be standing down as she has completed six years in office. Under the terms of our constitution these four posts must be filled for our South Woodham Ferrers u3a to continue to function.

The following additional Committee members are prepared to stand for 2025/26.

- Shirley Masterson (Speaker's secretary)
- Eileen Drane (Groups Co-ordinator)
- Janet Kelly (Membership secretary)
- Bob Tyas (Webmaster and Newsletter)
- Roger Gatford (Publicity and Recruitment)
- Mary Brindley

Tracey Dowling (Social Secretary) was co-opted onto the committee in July 2024 and is prepared to continue in this role so needs to be formally elected.

If you wish to stand, please complete the nomination form available on our website stating the role you are applying for. Committee members are responsible for

vital activities in our organisation, such as membership, co-ordinating group activity and keeping our u3a active. You do not need prior experience of committees; your enthusiasm is the most important asset and there will be plenty of support from the existing members of the committee. Do speak to any of the Committee members to find out more about what they do or attend a committee meeting as an observer.

Only paid-up members can stand for the Committee, propose or second nominations.

Please make sure that any person you nominate has agreed and is a paid-up member.

If you require any further information about the roles or to discuss any specific positions or further information on the AGM please contact the Secretary, Ann Woolley on email ann.woolley.u3a@gmail.com or phone 07956 918521.

Social

We have two dates for your diary:

Due to the popularity of our quiz nights, we will be holding another on Saturday 4th October 7:15 to 10:45. We had wanted to hold this in the summer months but found there were too many conflicts with holiday dates.

Please put this date in your diaries, more information to follow.

On Wednesday 17th December we are holding a Christmas lunch from 12-5pm in the heated marquee at Rettendon Lodge. It will be a two course Christmas dinner followed by tea and coffee. There will of course be a bar which will be cash only.

Live entertainment has been arranged that is age appropriate which you can sing along to or if you're feeling energetic get up and have a boogie.

Tickets are £45 and a deposit of £10 is required to secure your place.

We know many groups go out for restaurant meals in December and if you belong to several groups this can prove both expensive and fill up your diary. We are hoping that by having one big meal we will keep costs down for everyone at such a busy and expensive time of year. Maybe you can celebrate with a few nibbles at your individual groups.

For more information find me at the desk at the main meetings where I will be accepting deposits.

Tracey 07913 978630

Local History Group Trip to Ely - Spaces Available

The Local History Group have a few spare places on the day coach trip to Ely Tuesday 8 July. The coach trip is open to all u3a members.

If you are interested, please come and see us at the main meeting.

The outline for the day is travel to Ely by coach, tea/coffee and biscuits on arrival at the Almonry (situated behind the Cathedral), and a morning guided tour of the Cathedral. Afternoon at leisure in Ely.

The cost is £40pp. An initial payment of £25 is payable on booking a place either by cheque (payable to South Woodham Ferrers u3a) or cash. The balance payable in June.

There is also the possibility of a guided tour of the Octagon Tower. The group size is limited to 12, it requires a certain level of fitness for this as there are 170 spiral stairs up to the inside of the Octagon Tower, the cost for this tour is £11. When you book your seat on the coach, please can you indicate whether you would be interested in doing this.

New Group

At our April meeting it was announced that a new group is setting up to do Scrapbooking. Scrapbooking is a fun, therapeutic, creative craft activity to document precious memories, keep souvenirs and mementoes and channel your inner artist. Even in our fast-paced digital world creating your own personalised scrapbook album remains a popular way of preserving memories and creating lasting heirlooms.

Don't leave photos behind your family can't identify, organise your photos, printed media and artwork in a book, box or card. Even day to day life when recorded becomes history. This group will meet monthly, details yet to be decided. There are a limited number of places. For more information contact Linden Rosam at linrosam@gmail.com

Eileen Drane - Groups Coordinator

THE GREAT BIG GREEN WEEK

7th - 15th June 2025

The Eco Group are organising a "Let's Get Green" event on Saturday 14th June at Champions Manor Hall, Hullbridge Road from 13.00-16.00. There will be short talks at 13.15, 14.15 and 15.15. If your group would like to participate with a display table, please let me know. We will be having display tables on various topics with information on green travel, helping the environment, what you can do in your home, waste and recycling, energy and finance. Do come along and support us and find out more about getting greener!

ann.woolley.u3a@gmail.com

Eco Group Leader

Ann's Big Hike 2025

Ann Woolley is going to tackle a 26-mile marathon hike in the Cotswolds on 12th July in aid of Cancer Research. She will be hiking in memory of friends and family who have died of cancer, are suffering from cancer or are cancer survivors. Any support would be much appreciated.

<https://fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org/page/anns-big-hike-12>

Pauline Coster

Many members of our u3a were saddened to hear of the sudden death of Pauline Coster. Pauline who was a member of several groups had been a member of South Woodham Ferrers u3a almost from its inception. She will be particularly remembered for the running of the Theatre Group, which she led for many years and which gave pleasure to many.

Speakers for 2025

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

Bowling

Hello everyone, another season and another newsletter and what a season it has been for the bowling group. Don't quite know why but many of our members seem to be bowling out of their skins lately! They say success breeds success, and this is undoubtedly true for us. It started with our Kim who scored an unprecedented 195. Obviously, the rest of the group must have been inspired by this as the following week Jean scored a magnificent 171! However, it didn't end there as Bob went on to score a totally unbelievable 246! This included a run of six consecutive strikes - WOW!!! In fact, the whole place came to a standstill to watch him bowl his last two strikes and cheered him all the way!

We have also had Sue Crann who has had some brilliant scores over 180 and even our Chas, who would admit, himself, to having mixed success on most weeks, has reached scores in excess of 110! Well done to them all! However, our greatest success is still the members themselves. They always make every one of our weekly sessions a wonderful mix of skills, friendship and so many laughs.

As I write this, we are approaching our Good Friday meet, and I am about to bake some hot cross buns to share with the group at coffee time. They usually go down quite well. In fact, two of our members are away at the moment and have made me promise to save them two! Apparently, Phil West looks forward to them every year! So, don't worry Phil and Jean, I won't let the rest of the group scoff them all I promise! Have a great Easter everyone! Best wishes.

Diane Hurrell

Gardening Group

The gardening group meet up on the 2nd Monday of the month at 2pm. We like to visit gardens in Essex from March until November. The gardens we visit are usually part of The National Garden Scheme.

We had our first outing to Ulting Wick which is a lovely tranquil garden next to the river Chelmer and Blackwater. Our host told us that we were too late for the snowdrops and too early for the Daffodils, so we didn't have high expectations, but we all enjoyed walking round the garden. It had a lake and many interesting sculptures. Many of us walked to the river and visited Ulting Church. After exploring the garden, we all sat down and enjoyed refreshments and homemade cakes.

In April we visited Heyrons in High Easter, a garden with a wonderful display of tulips in every colour imaginable. This garden has fantastic views of the countryside and a wild meadow with lots of cowslips. There was plenty of seating for relaxing and to enjoy the vast array of homemade cakes

We were also able to purchase plants for a donation to NGS.

Our next outing is to The Mount in Harlow on the 12th May. The cost is £10 which includes refreshments.

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.

Here is a programme of our outings

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

June 9th Blunts Hall, Witham - £10 including refreshments.

July 14th Isobella's Garden, Leigh-on - Sea - This is an 11am start. £13 includes refreshments.

August 11th Rhona's Garden

September 8th Oaks Farm, Wakes Colne £10 includes refreshments

October 13th Place for Plants - £10 entry only

November 10th Garden Centre and lunch

December 8th meeting at Champions Manor



At Ulting Wick Garden



At Heyrons in High Easter

Sue and Shirley

Gin Appreciation 2

Gin Appreciation 2 meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month in the games room at the Village Hall.

Each month we taste 2/3 new gins either suggested by group members or whatever is about. Our winner so far this year is Brockmans Dark Berries Gin.

Being a member of the group is an excellent way to try before you buy. Our meeting fees are £10 for attendees or £5 if you are unable to attend. Our next meeting will be on 13th May when we will be tasting this selection:-



Tracey 07913 978630

Local History

Our year began well with our talks in February and March. In February Stephen Nunn took us on a pictorial journey 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. It made us realise how lucky we are to still have the branch line to Southminster.

In March, Burnham u3a Archaeological Group came to talk about their dig at the site of the old Mayland Church which they started in 2022. They brought along some of their finds which included some beautiful medieval floor tiles.

Our April visit to St Mary's Church in Woodham Ferrers was our first visit of the year and proved to be very popular. Steve Laws, a local artist talked about his painting recreating the medieval doom painting in the church, the remains of which are on the wall above the chancel. If you didn't come on the visit and would like to see the remains of the doom painting and exhibition, the church is open on Tuesday mornings.



Burnham u3a Archaeological Group



Steve Laws with Painting

Sheets for our next three visits will be put at the May main meeting.

Thursday 15 May a visit to Southchurch Hall, Southend, 2pm. This is a Thursday visit as it is not open on our normal Tuesday date.

Southchurch Hall is Grade I Listed Medieval moated house, with later extensions, set in beautiful gardens. We will have a guided tour of the house with time afterwards to explore the museum and gardens. **Start time 2pm. The cost of the tour is £5pp, refreshments at own cost**

Tuesday 10 June we have an afternoon visit to the Moot Hall in Maldon

The Moot Hall dates back over 600 years and has been used for many different purposes over that time. Our guided tour will take us through the history of the building, it is set over three floors so there will be a series of staircases.

The cost is £5, refreshments are not provided in the Moot Hall but there are plenty of tea rooms in the High Street.

Tuesday 8 July, coach trip to Ely

We have a few places left. A reminder of the details is below. I will be contacting everyone who is booked on the visit with more details.

The cost is £40 per person which includes the coach, refreshments on arrival, a guided tour of the Cathedral. The deposit is £25 with the balance due in June. There is the possibility of a tour of the Octagon Tower at 2pm at an extra cost of £11, please let me know if you are interested in this as spaces are limited

If you are new to our u3a and are interested in joining our group please come and speak to us at our table at the main meeting or you can contact us via the link on the u3a web site.

Kate, Mary and Allen

London Walks

London Walks is a thriving group. Wednesday is still full, but Thursday is also pleasingly increasing in numbers. We have had two very different but equally entertaining walks so far this year. In March we had a very different Jack the Ripper Walk which focused on his victims and their haunts. We even had musical interludes with our guide playing the piano and even the organ. This month, April our walk focused on the Krays brothers I and their area of Bethnal Green and Whitechapel.

In May the walk is Darkest Victorian London and in June it's Rock n Roll London.



Photo taken on recent London Walks

Mary. 07941302947 rbmb4546@yahoo.co.uk

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. 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**.

In February we did something a little different when we had a fun afternoon at an Acrylic Painting Workshop in Maldon that was run for us by Nicky Gayle. We learnt about the basics of acrylic painting and had the opportunity to produce an artwork under Nicky's expert guidance. An example of the work produced is shown below.



Photographic Group

The members of the photography group recently had the opportunity to photograph a live model at the March meeting which was a new experience for many of the members. Many thanks to Wendy (the model) and Paul of South Woodham Camera Club who brought along some lighting equipment and who helped us with his knowledge and experience. Everyone, even those with mobile phones,

took their pictures some of which can be seen here. The only mishap was those members lying on the floor to get some low level shots having to be helped up.



Just a small sample of the photos taken

If you have an interest in photography the group meets on the first Tuesday of every month at Champions Hall so whatever your experience, even if it is with a mobile phone, please come along to the meeting.

Alan

Science and Technology Group

At our last meeting we discussed the new polymer bank notes that allow for enhanced security features, such as the see-through windows and holograms. Bill Bryson's slant on Atoms and learned about Colin the penguin in Antarctica that befriended a **HUGE** yellow digger machine!!

SCIENCE: "The pursuit and application of knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world following a systematic methodology based on evidence".

TECHNOLOGY: "Technology designed for the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes or applications".

Anything and everything really

We are happy to explore and discuss anything our members are interested in. **Why not join us?** We meet at Champions Manor Hall on the 2nd Thursday morning of the month. Contact us for more information via the website at swf.u3asite.uk or eileen.drane@googlemail.com

Striders

On April 7th the Striders walking group went to Warley to walk around the amazing Warley Place Garden of Ellen Willmott which, once a well tended garden, is now being brought back from a wilderness by Essex Wildlife trust to improve the gardens for plant life and wildlife.

As well as the trees and plant life, there are remains of the old house and outbuildings to see in the reserve.

After an hour walking around the Sixteen acre garden our group walked to the grade 1 listed church of St Mary where we had a guided tour inside one of only Three art Nouveau churches in the U.K.

After our walk we stopped off at the local pub for a well deserved rest, food and drink.

We don't normally arrange visits on our walks, but these two venues were worth incorporating into this walk, we do however stop to take in things which give us pleasure whilst walking whether it's a building, bird or the sun on the water.

Striders walks are the first Monday in the month and we walk 4 to 5 miles approximately in about Two hours.

We enjoy the journey and always get to the destination!!



Warley Place Garden



Remains of the old house

Larry Ladbrook

Strollers

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 4 miles, about an hour and a half at a leisurely pace and are ideal for people who:

Are new to walking.

Want to do short walks.

Want to explore the local area.

Like the outdoors.

Share laughs.

Walking can reduce stress and improve wellbeing and fitness.

At the end of the walk you have the option of coffee and cake or similar !!

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

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

Walking Group

We meet on the first and third Friday of the month at 10 am with the meeting point being dependant on the walk. The length of the walks vary with most being in the order of 6 miles and we tend to walk whatever the weather.

Walks for the next three months

May

Friday 6th - Blake Wood Walk - 6.5 miles - Meet in the National Trust car park which is almost opposite the Cricketers Pub in Danbury.

Friday 16th - Crondon Park Golf Course Walk - 6 - 7 miles - meet in the Galleywood car park which is situated on the left in Margaretting Road.

June

Friday 2nd - Woodham Ferrers/Hyde Hall Walk - 6 miles - meet in the sport field car park in Lodge Road.

Friday 20th - Goldhanger/Blackwater Walk - 6 miles - Meet in the Chequers Inn car park in Goldhanger.

July

Friday 4th - Bicknacre/Cock Clark No2 Walk - 6 miles - meet in the sport field car park which is adjacent to Bicknacre School.

Friday 18th - Danbury Circular Walk - 7 miles - Meet in the National Trust car park which is almost opposite the Cricketers Pub in Danbury.

Bob Tyas (robert.tyas82@gmail.com)

Wine Appreciation Group 1

Wine group 1 were very saddened to hear of the sudden death of Pauline Coster, one of our founder members. We dedicated our April meeting to her drinking some of her favourite wines. In February we had a visit from Missing Gate Vineyard enjoying contrasting different vintages of some of their popular wines and in March we checked out some of Waitrose cellar recommendations.

Janet Tipping

Wine Appreciation Group 2

This quarter, is about our activity, since all the specific arrangements of our group ,e.g when we meet, our quarterly subs, etc. can now be found on the SWF website :-

https://swf.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/wine-appreciation-2/ .

February, we tried wines from France where a white blend from Vacqueyras was considered the best and the red was a Syrah from the Luberon area of France both wines are from the Rhone Valley. Both these wines were the more expensive of the tasting.

In the **March** tasting we tried wines from South Africa where a Shiraz (named as Syrah in France) red was considered the best, and for white the grape used to make Sherry in Spain (Palomino) produced the best white wine from the group. In this case, however, both these wines were not the most expensive tried.

Lastly in **April** we tried mostly wines from Majestic, taking the usual 6 bottle discount and looking for unusual wines and grape varieties to try. For example we had a red wine from Armenia AM which our group rated highly, in fact the 8 wines tried were from **6 countries with 12 different grape varieties** including 2 Rose wines one from England and one from France (covered up in the tasting) for comparison. The group voted 7-6 in favour of the English Rose from Lyme Bay both bottles were £11 each

The wine voted the best of the month was a Gran Reserva from Rioja.

However, each month we search for wines of value, new grapes, and different countries of production, usually we buy the wines for the group from individual wine suppliers across the U.K rather than supermarket wines. The volume of production required to supply them and even M&S and Waitrose means small winemakers, however, good or bad can never appear on their shelves. Similarly, a small independent wine supplier cannot match the big retailers, on price for these volume producers and to stay in business, they have to search out smaller producers whom score either on price or taste and often both. In this regard the Majestic wines with discount price for 6 bottles could be matched or bettered for 1 bottle at small wine shops from a google search.

We have a full group at present but any prospective new member is welcome to give us a try for a session.

Jeff Body Group Leader for SWF 2 wine group

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 Intermediate		French Beginners
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 23rd July, to Bob Tyas at robert.tyas82@gmail.com or deliver to 55 Clements Green Lane, SWF. Alternatively, you can ring him on 07889949685.