

South Woodham Ferrers



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

Quarterly Newsletter - Winter Edition



**Photo taken during gardening groups recent visit to
Bassetts, Little Baddow**

Newsletter No 198

From the Chair

We're well in Autumn now, and with the clocks about to change, the nights are certainly closing in very early.

Last month's talk by Douglas Green talking to us about his "Mr. Gees" charity was very interesting, I knew that he'd been active in the town for some time, but I didn't realise just how long, or the work the charity funds - from the Men's Shed to University Bursaries. I also know that they fund other good causes in the town. In November we have Peggy Griffen talking about "Polydactyl Cats and other interesting facts", which sounds very intriguing.

The Quiz Night went very well. Tickets are still available for our Christmas Social event on December 18th. Note, this is separate to our members meeting on December 3rd.

I have mentioned it before, but it's worth repeating. For those of us who have mobility issues, you are very welcome to participate in the activities of our u3a, but it is your responsibility to check whether you are able to 'keep up' (I'm thinking of the walking groups) and providing your own carer should you need one. Unfortunately, the Group Leaders (GL), or other participants are unable to assist because of insurance requirements. If you have any doubt, please check with the relevant GL beforehand.

Another 'housekeeping' matter to raise is that deposits paid to attend our social activities are non-refundable. I'm sure you understand that this is because, based on the deposits taken, we will book the venue/facilities to cater for that number and that commits us to that amount of money. This applies to u3a-wide events, the individual groups have their own rules.

Finally: "I like long walks, especially when taken by people who annoy me", (Noel Coward).

David Hayes, Chair SWF u3a

From the Committee

At our September meeting we co-opted Sharon Bartlett on to the committee, and she has now taken on the role of Gift Aid Co-ordinator and will be dealing with the end of year gift aid claim.

The Cluster Group application/renewal form has been changed slightly, so can group leaders please make sure that they use the one on the website for any new cluster group members. We are always pleased to welcome cluster group members at the various groups, if we have space, but if they wish to attend our monthly meetings then they need to join our u3a as Associate members.

Following a budget review at our October committee meeting, it was agreed that as our finances are looking quite healthy at the moment there will be no increase in subscription in 2026/27. It was also agreed that in future deposits for social events would be non-refundable as we have incurred unnecessary expense when members have dropped out at the last minute.

A copy of the newsletter will be printed out and put on the noticeboard so that members who do not have email can read it. Any new group information will also be on the noticeboard so do check it out when you attend the monthly meetings.

The Committee

Remaining Speakers for 2025

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.

Speakers for 2026

7th January

The SAS in Essex in WW2 - Gordon Brown Chair of Earls Colne Heritage Museum.

4th February

Porridge Revisited - Lindsay Whitehouse - tales of what goes on in prison.

4th March

A Walk On The Wild Side - Mary and Graham Brace - An illustrated talk about exotic places and wildlife in Ethiopia and Chile.

1st April

Handwriting Analysis For Fun - Joanne Larner.

6th May

The Wild West Comes East - Philip Lyon.

3rd June

Meet The Patients - Gary Jones - a nurse gives us an insight into his world of nursing.

1st July

A welcome return. Talk tba - Terry Hiscock.

5th August

More Anecdotes From Karen's Coach Holidays - Karen Kirby.

2nd September

u3a Ukelele Group and a Historic Talk - Entertainment by the u3a Ukelele Group

7th October

Deadly Victorian Fashions - Jane Piper.

4th November

Explaining The Inexplicable - Nicholas Henderson - Spooky!

2nd December

A Scandinavian Christmas - Andrew Baker.

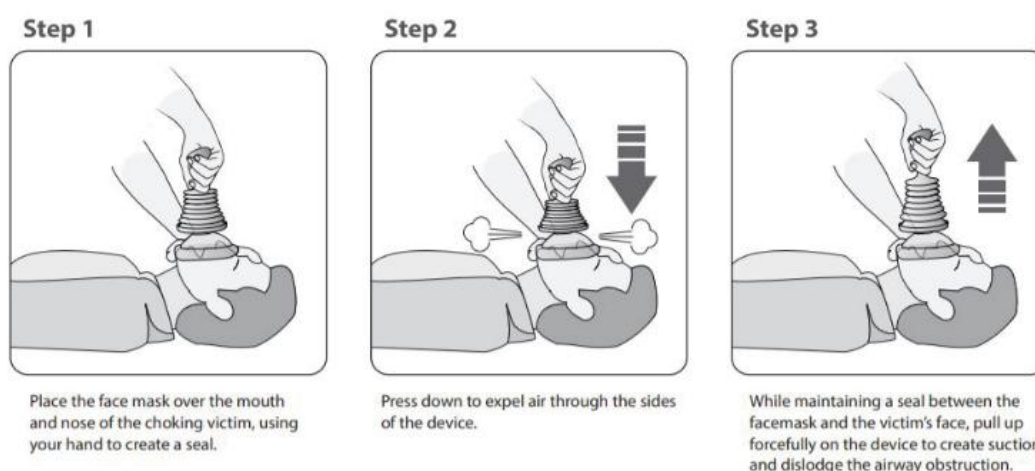
LifeVac Choking Rescue Device

The following information regarding the device has been provided by Champions Manor Hall. Groups leaders who use CMH should make themselves familiar with its whereabouts and how to use it. Obviously, any of our members can use it in the case of a choking incident.

We are pleased to announce that a LifeVac choking rescue device has arrived and is now available in the kitchen. This device is equipped with three interchangeable masks to accommodate different age groups: **paediatric**, **small adult/child**, and **adult**. It's crucial for everyone's safety to familiarise yourselves with its operation.

How to Use the LifeVac

A summary of how to use the device is shown below.



Training and Certification

I encourage everyone to participate in the online training offered by LifeVac. Completing this training will enable you to gain the LifeVac Training Certificate. The entire process, including the video and test, should take no more than 15 minutes. You can start your training by visiting <https://www.lifevac.uk/about-lifevac-europe/lifevac-training/>.

Maintenance and Testing

We have a test mask available for practice purposes. If you are interested in having a go yourself with the test mask, please let me know and I can arrange for

this. We don't want it left downstairs in case it gets lost or used instead of the intended masks in a real-life situation.

If the device is ever used in an emergency, it's important to inform the office immediately so that replacement masks can be ordered.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Let's all take a few moments to familiarise ourselves with the LifeVac to ensure we're prepared for any potential choking emergencies

News from the Groups

Bowling

Hi everyone. Well, the heady days of a glorious summer are behind us but many of our Bowling members are still heading off on holiday! However, this has not stopped us all putting in some good scores over the summer. Bob in particular has managed to achieve over 200 on at least two occasions so well done to him! Phil has also set himself a goal of becoming a member of the 200 club, but so far it has eluded him despite his changing his bowling style several times to try and achieve it. Never mind Phil keep trying! The rest of us have had a mixture of good and bad days in terms of scores but every single meeting is still a great deal of fun and highly enjoyable for everyone. Hopefully most of our members will be back from late summer breaks before too long and we can get down to some serious scoring. Well, not that serious if I'm honest! It will soon be time for everybody to nominate the player they think has improved the most over the year, in time for our Christmas get together. Lots of food for thought there. Which reminds me I must dust off my mince pie recipe! Have a great autumn everyone!

Diane

Eco Group

The Eco Group has had a break after our Let's Get Green event in June although we continue to collect empty medicine blister packs at the monthly meetings. We certainly have enough through donations to keep the scheme going for a bit longer but don't forget you can also take them along to Boots. We have two more meetings planned for this year - Monday 27th October will be a showing of the David Attenborough narrated film "Ocean" which highlights the problem with bottom trawlers. It's at Champions Manor Hall in the Multipurpose room at 2pm for 2.15pm and refreshments will be available. It is free of charge, but a donation would be appreciated to cover the cost of the hall.

On Monday 24th November, Cllr Terry Sherlock from SWF Town Council and also Climate Ambassador for Chelmsford City Council will be talking to us about his role. Please contact me if you are interested in attending.

Ann Woolley (ann.woolley.u3a@gmail.com)

Gardening Group

On 13th October, 22 members of the gardening group visited Bassetts, a house dating back to the Tudor period with a beautiful garden.

Buried in the countryside of Little Baddow, this property boasted wonderful views as well as a swimming pool and tennis court.

The autumn colours were stunning, and the landscaping was well planned.



The groups visit to Bassetts

Next month we are visiting Hyde Hall with a meal at Taz afterwards.

December will see us being taught to make Christmas wreaths by Kate Smith.

Shirley

Local History

We had our first visit after our summer break in October when we visited the Old House in Rochford. It is a gem of a building with its main hall dating back to around 1270. The historical significance of this amazing building was discovered in the 1980's when Rochford Council bought the property and renovated it.

The main hall was the first part of the house to be built around 1270. Our excellent guides took us through the structure of the building and what is known of the history, giving us a glimpse of what life might have been like living in the Great Hall in medieval times. One of our guides was a member of the last family to live in the house, they left in 1982. During their 11 years there they discovered a priest's hole in the Tudor chimney, and they were also visited by a number of ghosts. The descriptions of the sightings were very vivid, I don't think many of us would have wanted to stay there after hearing about the sightings.

Our last event this year is our lunch and talk on **Thursday 13 November, 1pm at Champions Manor Hall**. The buffet lunch will be from 1pm, followed by our speaker, Andrew Mobray, the talk is titled Virtually Colchester. Cost £5pp.

If you have signed up for this and still need to pay, please could you pay at the November meeting.

If you 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

This group meets on the third Wednesday and fourth Thursday of every month.

In August we visited Margaret Thatcher's Chelsea.

We visited the apartment where she first was married in the 1950s, multitasking - bringing up twins and studying law. We visited Flood Street terrace where she resided in the 1970s and turned into a crucible of Tory ideology. We saw where she went to church both as a Methodist and as a Church of England pensioner. We stopped beside her grave where our guide recited the poem Ulysses by Tennyson as she did once to win a recitation prize.



The Margaret Thatcher Infirmary



The Prospect of Whitby

In September our walk was Pirates, Press Gangs and Execution Dock.

Exploring a salt-encrusted, maritime world that was the making of Britain's empire, we step off the beaten track to discover a long-forgotten way of life - a time when rum-soaked buccaneers chased Spanish treasure ships, and Royal Navy crews fought criminal captains in the Golden Age of Piracy. Venturing through streets they knew and perhaps glimpsing the ghosts that still linger to this day, we walk from Tower Hill to St Katherine's Dock. Then following the Thames, we eventually finish at London's oldest riverside pub, where you'll be able to enjoy a drink in wonderfully atmospheric surroundings.

In October our walk was Spies and Special Forces.

Knightsbridge has long hosted the British intelligence community and their friends in special forces. Just a gunshot away from the nearby Russian embassy, this part of London is smart, fast, and conveniently crowded. But out of sight in its quiet backstreets are dead drops known to have been used by the KGB, the discreet apartments used by MI6 as a training school, and the home of diver Buster Crabb who vanished on a secret mission to investigate a Russian cruiser.

We encounter the hotel where MI6 met KGB officer Oleg Gordievsky - who they later rescued from Russia. Next door were the offices of the private military company run by the founder of the SAS.

We discover atom bomb spy Klaus Fuchs as he was being shadowed by MI5 watchers. We step into the world of secret agent Anna Wolkoff, we hear of the heroism of SOE's Christine Granville - murdered in the area - and we meet Belgium's Gabrielle Petit, who was shot at dawn in 1916 after spying for Britain.



Ennismore Gardens Knightsbridge

In November our walk is London in the Swinging Sixties. An era with fond memories for many of us.

December is the final walk of the year and will be a walk full of seasonal traditions.

Mary. 07941302947 rbmb4546@yahoo.co.uk

Paint and Pastels Art Group

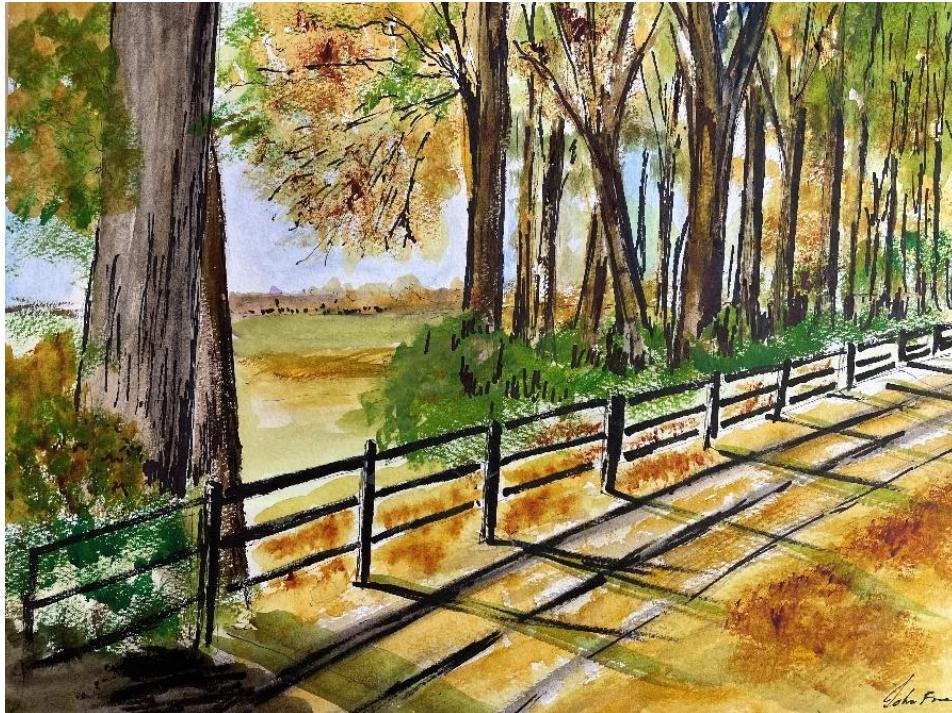
Paint and Pastels is a small Art Group that meets on the 3rd Monday of the month at 10.00am. We aim to have a topic for each of our sessions although group members are always free to 'do their own thing' at the meetings. Beginners and more experienced artists are welcome subject to availability of space in the hall that we use.

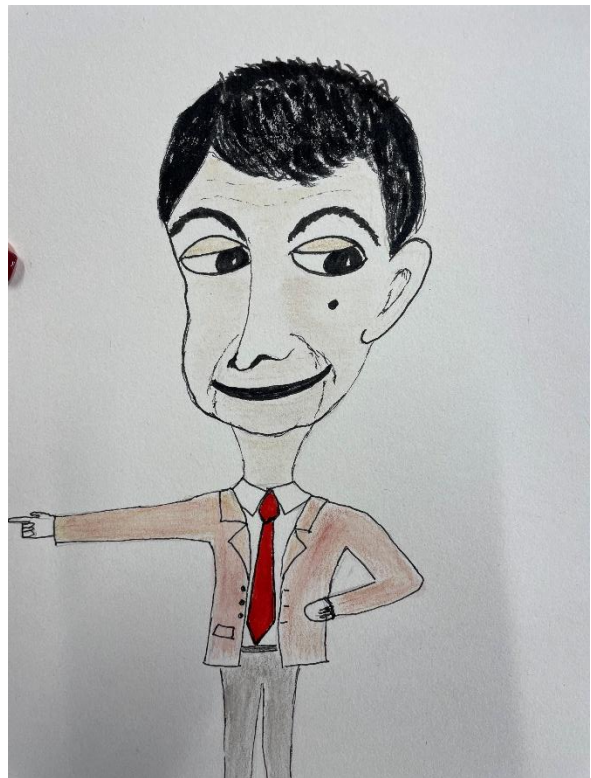
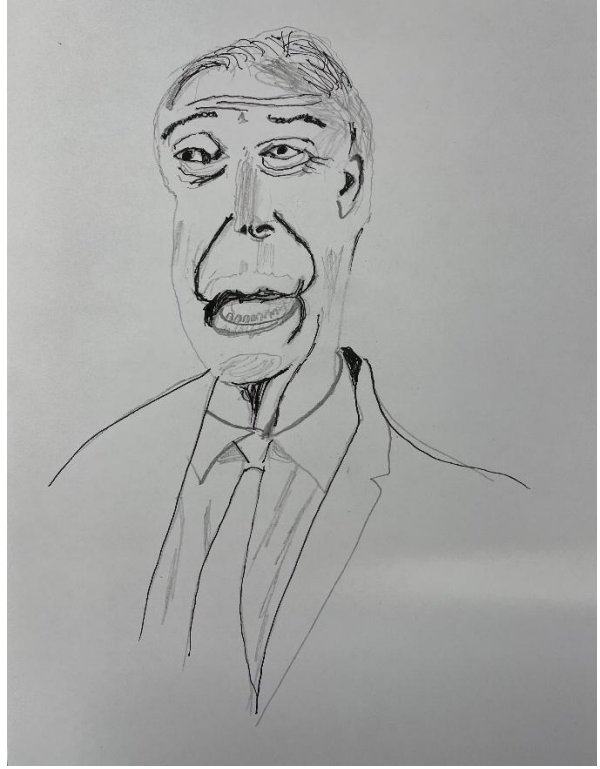
The group is currently at capacity, and we are operating a waiting list but if you would like more information about us please feel free to call Chris on **07946 024302**.

Recent topics we have covered include *Autumn Scenes* and *Caricature*.

Included below are an example of an *Autumn Scene* painting and a selection of *Caricatures* by members of the group.

Can you identify the names behind the *Caricatures*? The answers are included at the end of this Newsletter.



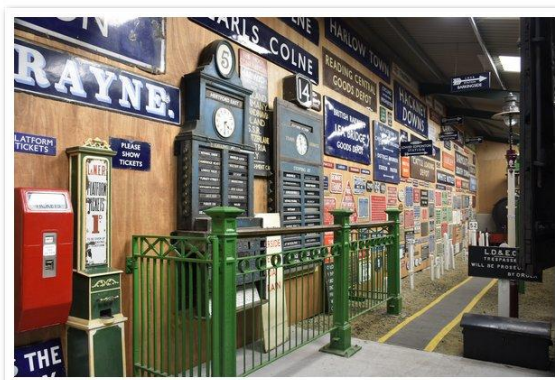




Chris Miles

Photographic Group

I early September (when it was sunny!) the Science and Technology Group arranged a trip to the Mangapps Railway Museum and kindly suggested the members of the Photography Group also went along. The railway is not part of a heritage line but has been built from scratch by a farmer and his sons. It runs for about half a mile near Burnham-on-Crouch and there are several sidings that hold wagons and engines as can be seen from the photographs. Our train was pulled by a diesel locomotive, rather disappointing in a way as there is nothing like the smell and sound of a steam engine. The museum is apparently the largest in the country and held many carriages and wagons in all sorts of condition (mainly bad!) as well as all sorts of railway memorabilia such as signals, notices, station name plates etc. It is only when you stand beside a carriage, truck or engine you realize how big they are.... they look fairly small on television.



Photographs taken by members of the Photographic Group

Alan

Science and Technology Group

On 11th September, members of the Science & Technology Group, the Photography Group and a few interested friends visited Mangapps Railway Museum at Burnham-on-Crouch. On arrival it was very exciting to receive our Train Ticket (for as many train rides as we wanted). We boarded the very comfortable vintage carriage where we all received an interesting and informative talk about the history of Mangapps from owner John Jolly. Amazingly, it all started on a farm. When you see the amount of track, locomotives and rolling stock they have, it is hard to believe this wasn't previously an established railway - certainly not a farm.

Our first train ride was from Mangapps Station, complete with all the usual station buildings and signal boxes, to Old Heath station $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away. All buildings are original and carefully restored 'as good as new'. The engine pulling our carriage was a 1961 0-6-0 Class 3 Diesel Shunter number 03399, built in Doncaster. There were a number of 'wanna be' train drivers in the carriage!! We were then taken to the HUGE Restoration and Repair Shop housing several engines of all kinds and carriages awaiting refurbishment where we learned about how some of the engines are transported to Mangapps. This was followed by our second train ride.

We now had free time to explore and visit the largest museum I have ever visited. There is extensive railway memorabilia to see and refurbished carriages to walk through. Some even have sleeping quarters. It was very nostalgic to see the Woodham Ferrers station sign, station lamp and bench. Mangapps is a hidden little gem. I would recommend a visit but allow plenty of time to see it all.



Mangapps Visit

Science and Technology Group
Photographs courtesy of Photography Group.

Walking Groups

The walking group is quite a small group at present, and we would very much like to welcome a few new members. If you are feeling a little apprehensive about joining, please read the brief statement below from one of our new members:

"I am relatively new to the u3a and signed up for the walking group. Despite having done some walking before I was quite apprehensive, would I be able to keep up the pace, would there be any other women. From my very first walk everyone was welcoming, we've done some great walks in both rain and shine and nearly always finish with a drink in the pub. What more can I ask for?"

We meet twice a month on the first and third Friday with the walks starting at 10am at various locations in and around Woodham and I'm sure lifts can be arranged if they are needed.

Walks continue during the winter months and those planned for the next three can be seen below (all walks start at 10am):

November 7th - Stock/Magaretting Walk - 6 miles - Meet in Stock Village Hall car park.

November 14th - Danbury Sandon Hall Walk - 7 miles - Meet in the National Trust car park which is almost opposite the Cricketers Pub in Danbury.

December 5th - River Crouch Walk - 6.5 miles - Meet in Compass Gardens car park.

December 19th - Burnham on Crouch Walk - 6 miles - Meet in Burnham Riverside car park (CMO 8PN).

January 2nd - Bicknacre/Cock Clarkes Walk 6.5 miles - Meet in the Sport Field car park which is adjacent to Bicknacre School.

January 16th - Goldhanger/Heybridge Walk - 6.5 miles - Meet in the Chequers Inn car park in Goldhanger.

Bob Tyas (robert.tyas82@gmail.com)

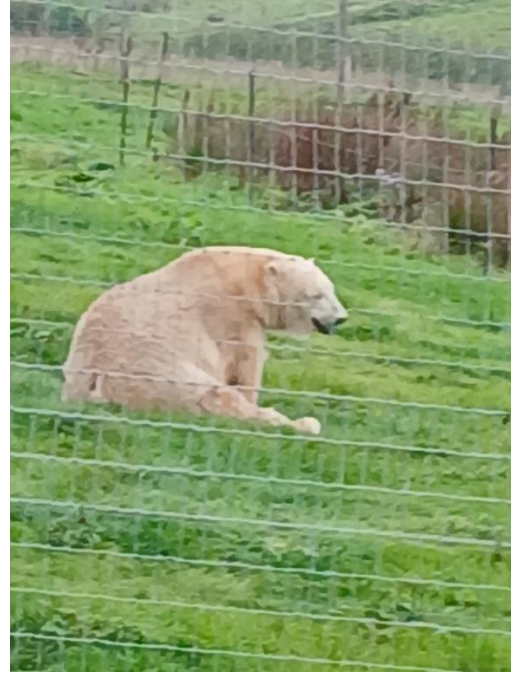
Weekenders Group

On 23rd August, a group of us spent the day at Stow Maries Air Show. What a wonderful display of early aircraft! There were stunts galore and plenty of time to walk round the museum and have tea before the next planes took off.

A highly recommended visit.



On Saturday the 11th of October a group of us visited Jimmy's farm near Ipswich. We enjoyed exploring the extensive grounds where all varieties of animals are kept safely and in humane conditions. The polar bears were rescued from a zoo that was closing down in Europe and many of the animals have been donated.



We spent 5 hours at the wildlife centre which wasn't enough really, but the trip organised by Kirbys Coaches was well worth it.

Shirley

Wine Appreciation Group 1

Five members visited Carcassonne in France at the beginning of September. We stayed in a quirky Air bnb with chandeliers and a swimming pool but no decent wine glasses (easily remedied). Two of us flew from Stansted and were the advance party getting in the wine and the glasses, while the other three had the longer but much more scenic trip via Paris on the train.

Over four days we tasted over 70 wines of the Roussillon, Languedoc and Limoux areas. We visited 8 wineries ranging from small solo businesses to much larger establishments including Domaine de Dourbie who provide the wine at the Michelin award dinner. Tasting 6 sparkling wines at 10.00 in the morning was one thing but 6 reds the next morning was a bit more of a challenge.

We had wonderful lunch stops including a Michelin star restaurant and a picnic among the wines. Our guide Alex from Vins and Vinos was outstanding in his knowledge of the region, the terroir and the wine making of the area. We were

really fortunate to see the grapes being processed in some wineries and join in some of the hand sorting of the grapes. We learned so much about the factors influencing the wines and how each wine maker is able to add their own style.



Janet Tipping

Wine Appreciation Group 2

Third Quarter Update

This is about our activity for the last three months, since all the specific arrangements of our wine 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/

August

We had our annual get together in a member's garden with partners and food provided by the group with 7X2 different wines to try in the sun. It went on until early evening, please see below.



September

We had organized for a Charles Eaton from Nethergate Wines to bring 8 wines , the first wine was a call my bluff wine which had three explanations , a French Crémant , an Australian bubbly wine , or thirdly a South African bubbly .The group all liked the wine and some of us got it right as the Australian wine by Willouglen Brut Cuvee De Bortoli priced at £11.50 was the answer which made it even more attractive as several of the group who purchased afterwards .The following wines were white a Godelo Grape from Spain , a Luberon White from France , a Cote De Provence Rose and lastly A Japanese wine , Koshu Gris to Gris which none of us, even new Japanese produced wine . The group liked all the whites, but the Japanese wine was perhaps an "acquired taste "and very different from white wines we had all tried before. We then had 3 exceptional reds from Chile, Italy and Spain, followed by a sweet wine from France with a 16.5% alcohol level as it had been fortified, also enjoyed by all.



September Tasting with Nethergate

October

Eleven of the group went to Portugal and based in Lisbon where we tried wines from Portugal, who often have grape varieties that are unique to Portugal. We had some wonderful food and some sight-seeing. This is the third year the group have taken part in a Europe trip. We had two tours pre-arranged and again some Photos are also below.





At our October meeting we had 7 wines with 5 from a renowned South African wine maker Catherine Marshall, and in particular we tried two red Pinot Noir from the same year, same wine maker, same grape, the only difference being the soil (terroir) where the vines were grown on sandy soil, and Clay soil to see if we can taste the difference or even like the wine. The answer was liked and the group could detect a small difference in the taste and the clay soil was preferred. However, a red Cinsault wine was voted the best for this month, and a South African Reisling the best white

Each month we search for wines of value, with some new grape varieties, and different countries of production. We source the wines for the group from individual wine suppliers across the U.K, and the Wine Society, rather than supermarket wines. The volume of production required to supply them and even M&S and Waitrose mean 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 their volumes. So small independent wine retailers, to stay in business, must search out mainly these smaller producers, who score either on price or taste and often both.

We have a full group at present, with 2 new individuals in October who are giving us a try, but any prospective new member is welcome to give us a try for one off session to come along for £8 to see what we are like as a group and what we provide. Usually this is 7 different wines each tasting session, much chat, and a

little informative knowledge of what we are tasting and where and how it was produced

If you have an interest, please feel free to contact me for further information

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 Striders	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 Appreciation 2 Ukulele Group	Ukulele Group	Ukulele Group Tai Chi
Wednesday	AM		Find 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 Improvers
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 January 21st, to Bob Tyas at robert.tyas82@gmail.com or deliver to 55 Clements Green Lane, SWF. Alternatively, you can ring him on 07889949685.

Names of Caricatures

Julia Roberts, Actress

Nigel Farage, Politician

Stephen Mangan, Presenter / Actor

Rowan Atkinson, Comedian / Actor

Claudia Winkleman, Presenter / Host