

South Woodham Ferrers



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

Quarterly Newsletter - Spring & Summer Edition

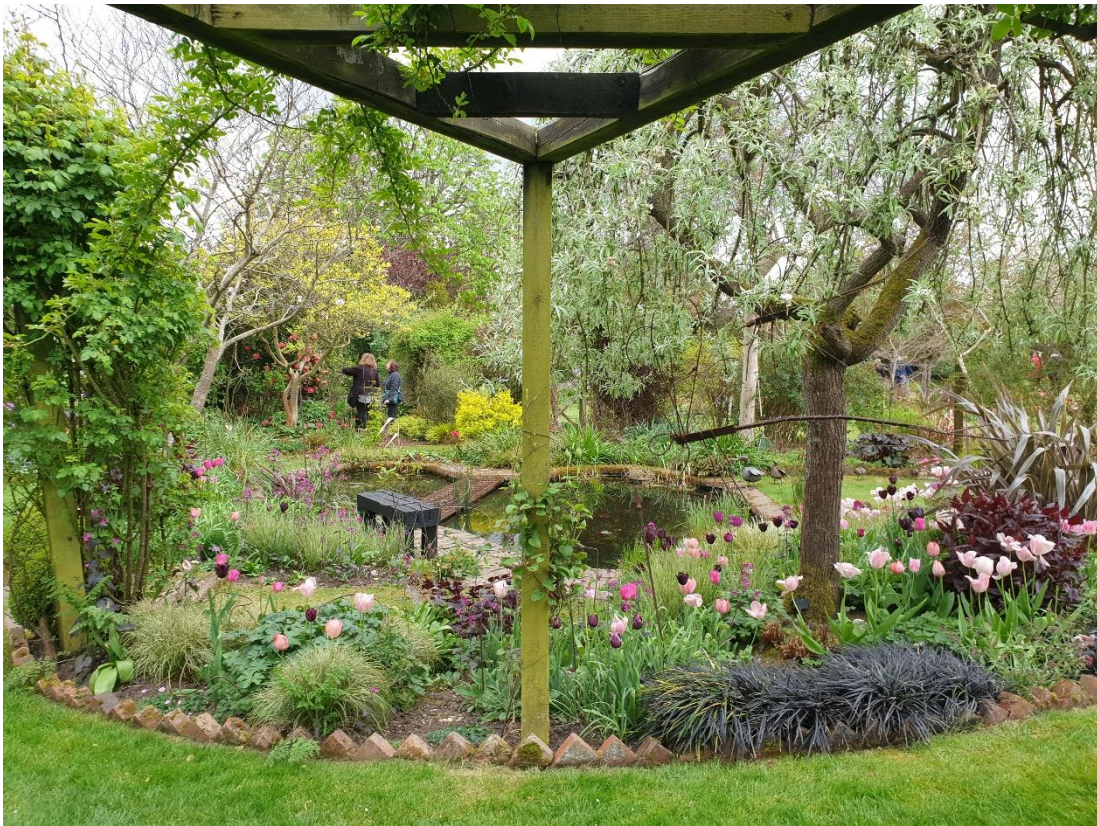


Photo taken at Grove Lodge in Saffron Walden by Gardening Group

Newsletter No 200

From the Chair

We're neatly into May already - where has the time gone? Well, we've had a mild, if damp winter, and the days are stretching out so for those with gardens, it's a busy time of year.

On April 1st we had Joanne Larner telling us about "Handwriting Analysis for Fun", which was interesting and informative, who knew you could tell so much about a person from their handwriting? I'll be taking a bit more care with my signature from now on! Our talk on May 6th is from Philip Lyons about "The Wild West comes East" - I really don't have a clue about what it's about, just that I'm expecting it to be good given our Speakers Secretary - Shirley's - track record.

Ticket sales for our anniversary event in June are off to a great start - get yours before they sell out, it's promising to be a great day. More on this from Tracey later in the newsletter.

A reminder that we have local elections on May 7th. I do think that we have a duty to vote if we are able. Who you vote for is up to you, we all have an opinion about who for, but like religion and money, we don't talk about politics. Please do make the effort, even if it's just a 'protest vote', it's important (I didn't say that).

As I am standing down as Chair at the AGM in July, as well as being available to have a chat about what the role entails, I've also prepared a brief "job description" about what's expected. Please do contact me if you'd like some information on this. Although the role isn't demanding, it is essential as if we don't have a Chair, we don't have an u3a.

Here's a thought "At my age, when they ask for emergency contact details, I'm tempted to put Ambulance", (Anon)

David Hayes, Chair SWF u3a

Chairs Job Description

What does the Chair of the SWF u3a do?

Members meetings (monthly):

- Hosts the meeting reminding members about H&S and other housekeeping (this task can be delegated to other committee members)
- Reports on any information from the Cluster group, East of England and national u3a
- Introduces Group Leaders who want to share information about their groups
- Introduces the guest speaker.
- Keeps an eye on the time!

Committee meetings (monthly):

- Ensures everyone has time to present their information - treasurer, membership secretary etc.
- Holds votes on proposals by committee members
- Communicates questions, information etc. from members, Cluster group, East of England and national u3a
- Establishes ad-hoc committees for specific activities/reasons if required
- Keeps an eye on the time!

Cluster Group (6 monthly):

- Represents SWF at the bi-annual meeting and feed to the committee and members. As the cluster has been in existence for some time, there tends to be very little to discuss. The most recent issue was the closure of the Heybridge u3a

East of England, national, Essex and other (as required):

- Receive information from the above and decide whether it's relevant to the members or just info for the committee.

Other

- Handle queries and observations from members

- Handle queries from non-u3a organisations (other charities etc.)
- Monthly newsletter - not compulsory but should be at least quarterly

From the Committee

There will be no increase in membership subscription for 2026/27. If members wish to join a group but have accessibility problems, please discuss with the group leader.

The group leaders' meeting was held in February and was well attended.

It was agreed to hold a 20th anniversary event at Stow Maries aerodrome on 25th June and more information is later in the newsletter. Tracey has put a lot of work into organising it, so please support the event as it should be a lot of fun.

David Hayes, Linden Rosam and Bob Tyas will be standing down from the Committee, so we are looking for a new Chair. We do have a volunteer for the role of Treasurer though. Do come and talk to one of the Committee to find out more about the role as Chair and/or visit one of the committee meetings to see what goes on - the next one is 15th May. We're a very friendly and supportive group!

Our AGM will be held on Wednesday 1st July. The official notice is later in this newsletter. Nomination forms can be found on the website or will be available at the main meetings.

The Committee

Notice of AGM

South Woodham Ferrers u3a - Notice of Annual General Meeting 2026
1st July 2026 at 13.50.

We are pleased to give advance notice that our AGM (Annual General Meeting) this year will be held at Champions Manor Hall on 1st 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 2026; receive any resolutions proposed and carry out the election of any Officers as appropriate and Committee members. Our speaker following the AGM will be Terry Hiscock.

Timetable

- Closing date for nominations for Committee members and for any motions for consideration at the AGM - 5th June 2026.
- Formal notice of the AGM with agenda; details of voting arrangements; accounts for 2025/26 to be sent out on 22nd June 2026.

Nominations for the Committee

The Vice Chair and Secretary are prepared to stand for a further year but Linden Rosam, (Treasurer), and David Hayes (Chair) will be standing down. 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 2026/27.

- Shirley Masterson (Speakers secretary)
- Eileen Drane (Groups Co-ordinator)
- Janet Kelly (Membership secretary)
- Roger Gatford (Publicity and Recruitment)
- Tracey Dowling (Social Secretary)
- Mary Brindley
- Lynn Perham

Bob Tyas will be standing down from the committee. Sharon Bartlett (gift aid) was co-opted to the committee in August 2025 and is willing to stand for a further year.

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.

South Woodham Ferrers u3a 20th Anniversary

20 years ago, Blackwater u3a encouraged a small group of women in South Woodham Ferrers to start a u3a. Those women included Rosemary Dorado, Jennifer Brunning and Joy Wren. Rosemary was determined South Woodham Ferrers would have their u3a.

An advert was placed in Focus inviting interested residents to the first ever meeting of South Woodham Ferrers u3a. Approximately 40 people responded. At that meeting a Steering committee was formed, Rosemary Dorado became Chairperson and Five groups were set up: Walkers, Gardening, Wine, Water Colours and Luncheon.

Celebrating our 20th Anniversary, what began as a modest initiative has grown into a thriving network bringing together members from diverse backgrounds. Over two decades it has evolved not just in size but also into a spirit of participation, inclusivity and collaboration at the heart of everything. Today we have 300 members and 31 Activity groups.

A defining feature of our u3a's success has been its volunteers. Drawn directly from the membership our Group Leaders generously give their time and expertise to create and lead a wide range of activity groups for us all. As members join these groups they not only learn new skills or deepen existing interests but also build meaningful connections with others, turning participation into lasting friendships and shared experiences.

Jennifer and Joy remain active members of our u3a. We are all grateful for South Woodham Ferrers u3a and the pleasure it gives to so many of us. Our thanks go to Rosemary, Jennifer and Joy for taking up the challenge and creating this amazing organisation which continues to inspire us all. Happy Anniversary!



Rosemary Dorado Cutting a Cake to Celebrate 10th Anniversary

The Committee

South Woodham Town Council Meeting



David and Ann represented our u3a at the SWF Town Council AGM on Tuesday 21st April. They talked to town councillors and a few members of the general public, and it was a worthwhile PR exercise.

Social Group

Plans for our 20th Anniversary event are well underway. Tickets went on sale at the April meeting with 48 members either paying £10 deposit or the full ticket price of £30. We are trying to involve as many interest groups as possible on the day which will give members a good insight into what's on offer.

If you would like to join our celebrations and enjoy a hearty picnic with copious cups of tea, tickets will be on sale 6th May at our next main meeting. Please note that full payment is required before or on 3rd June by the very latest.

Tracey

Speakers for 2026

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.

News from the Groups

Eco Group

Tony and Ann joined the Town Council's tree planting session at John Cox on Wednesday 8th April. A variety of native tree "whips" were planted although the ground was very hard and unfortunately there was no water provided for them. The wind, or possibly vandalism, has meant that the protective tubes are no longer round the trees although most still seem to be in situ. I did rescue a few and brought them home for some water - the Town Council have been informed!

I put in a successful grant request to the Town Council to cover the cost of hall hire in order to show "The People's Emergency Briefing". This follows on from the National Emergency Briefing to MPs last November and is a summary of the talks about various aspects of climate change and the environment and highlighting the seriousness of the current situation. As soon as a date is confirmed u3a members will be informed. The Town Councillors and our MP will be invited as well as anyone who is interested within the town. Scan the QR code in the following poster for more information. - If any u3a member would like to know more about this and assist with organising the viewing, please let me know.

Blister pack recycling - we have just about filled another box but there isn't enough in the kitty to purchase another box just yet. Please remember that this recycling scheme is only offered to u3a members (not families and friends) and we do ask for a small donation to contribute towards the cost of having them recycled. If you're not prepared to do that then please put them in your general waste or take them to a Boots store where Boots can afford to cover the cost of having them recycled!! Also don't forget to make sure the packs are actually empty and aluminium ones squashed. Thank you.



Pills extracted from the last batch of blister packs!

Finally, I shall be doing my third 26-mile marathon hike in June, this time in the Lake District. If anyone would like to support me, I shall have forms available at the Eco table or you can sponsor me online -

<https://fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org/page/anns-big-hike-32>

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

If you care about:

Local Flooding

Air Pollution

The Cost of Living

Food Prices

You might like to view this



People's
Emergency
Briefing

Screening everywhere for everyone

Gardening Group

The Gardening group meet on the 2nd Monday of the month at 2pm. We usually visit NGS or RHS gardens and try to carshare as much as possible

In February we had a Gardening quiz which was very popular.

In March we had our first outing of the year to Grove Lodge in Saffron Walden. As it was a long drive many of our members decided to make a day of it and look round the town first. We met at the garden at 2pm, the fog cleared and the sun came out. It was a lovely walled garden full of hellebores and daffodils. This garden had two ponds one for newts and the other for frogs. We counted more than 20 frogs. This garden has an unusually high biodiversity and is eco-friendly.

We all enjoyed sitting out in the garden in the sunshine eating delicious homemade cakes.



Enjoying homemade cakes at Grove Lodge

In April we visited Furzelea in Danbury. As it was local this visit was very popular with 42 of our members attending. This garden is filled with so many different varieties of tulips, peonies, spring flowers and shrubs. There was so much to see, we enjoyed the delicious homemade cakes made by Roger. We did have a little rain, but it didn't spoil our visit. Before we left many of us bought some of the plants they had for sale.



Tea at Furzelea

This is our programme for the next three months.

We are visiting Rookwards in Sible Hedingham on Monday 11th May. The cost is £14 and includes an afternoon tea.

On June 8th we are visiting Brook Cottage in Little Burstead. The cost is £12.50 and includes refreshments.

We are visiting Isabella's Garden in Leigh-on-Sea on Monday 13th July at the later time of 3pm the cost is £13 and includes refreshments. We will be booking lunch at The Grove at 1pm for those interested in joining us. This is optional.

If you enjoy visiting gardens and would like to join our group, please come and visit us at our table at the main meeting.

Sue Crann and Shirley Masterson

Gin Group 2

Our group is now well established with 12 members regularly attending our tastings. Each month we taste 3 different gins, some well known others from small craft distilleries. If you're looking for a great night out with plenty of chatter and laughter, why not join us?

Tracey Dowling - 07913 978630

Local History

Our programme for this year got off to a good start with our talks in February and March.

In February Cherry Burroughs spoke about the 1953 floods, in particular about the impact on the farming community on Foulness Island. Her husband, who was 4 at the time, had some vivid memories of the rescue from the island and the recovery from the floods.

In March, Neil Frost from the Chelmer Canal Trust gave a talk on the Chelmer and Blackwater Canal, covering the building of the canal in 1793 to the present day. The Trust is a charity run by volunteers which aims to protect and enhance the public rights of navigation on the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation, and the recreational use and enjoyment by the public of the waterway and surrounding conservation area. New volunteers are always welcome if you are interested.

Our first visit of the year was our April visit to Southend Museum to see the exhibition of the recovered artifacts from the ship the London which blew up in the Thames in 1665. The exhibition included a number of well-preserved items, the most impressive being a rare timber gun carriage that would have held one of the cannons on the 17th century warship, one of the very few of its kind in existence.

Our next two visits are

Tuesday 12 May. Andrew Mobray will be taking us on a guided tour of Colchester, visiting some of the buildings he covered in his talk last November plus a few more.

Start time 11.15 outside the Firstsite Gallery in Lewis Gardens and finishing outside the Mercury Theatre. Firstsite opens at 10am, it has a café and toilets if you get there early. The walk will take between 75 and 90 minutes, the cost is £10.

Thursday 16 July, 2pm start. A visit to Purleigh Church, where we will have a talk on the history of the church and a tour. Cost £5.

Sign-up sheets for both of these will be out at the May main meeting.

If you aren't currently a member of our group and would like to join or find out more, you can find us at our group table at the main meeting or contact us via the group link on the website.

Kate and Allen

London Walks

Following the "retirement" of Mary Brindley who managed this group for 11 years, we are very proud to take over the reins!

We had a very successful first walk in March, "London's Secret Village" which took us around Clerkenwell and the area around St Pauls Cathedral. We had an excellent guide Peter, who told us all about mystery plays and plague pits; riots and rookeries; bodysnatching and bombing; jousting and jesters; bloodshed and burnings; monks, murder, and medicine: Clerkenwell has a tale or two to tell.

Aprils walk "The Seven Deadly Sins - the Capital Vices" we were in the Covent Garden area, where again we had an excellent guide, Ulrike. She took us on a journey exploring the seven cardinal sins that were first identified by Pope Gregory I in the late 6th century, Lust, Avarice, Sloth, Envy, Gluttony Anger and Pride. We discovered that Lust was the most prevalent. We met the characters in history who had committed these sins and heard about George IV who in his life committed all seven of them! It was a most enjoyable day, filled with much laughter. We will hopefully be booking Ulrike again to continue and introduce us to the sinners of the City of London.

Our future walks we have booked include;

May - Charlie Chaplin walk. This walk is around the area of London near Waterloo, Kennington. This is where Charlie Chaplin was born in 1889 and spent the first 21 years of his life living there, where he was born into and spent his early years in great poverty in one of the poorest areas of London.

June - Little Venice. Part of the walk is along the canal towpath whilst we explore an area of Victorian domestic architecture in London; a Who's Who of famous residents (Freud, Browning, Edward Fox, David Ben-Gurion, Ruth Rendell, Mark Bolan, Joan Collins, and Annie Lennox

July - The Beatles Magical Mystery Tour, with our favourite guide Adam!

August - The Blitz on 19th and 27th with Simon, another one of our favourite guides!

We have also planned an additional walk "Secret Palace of Downing Street" on Friday 28th August. This walk is guided by Dan Parry, the excellent ex-BBC journalist with whom we had two very enjoyable walks with last summer. This was the only available date he had, but if successful we will definitely plan this walk again for next year.

Come and see us at the next meeting if you would like any further information. All the walks are undertaken by qualified London guides, and last around two hours. The cost is £12pp and are the third Wednesday and fourth Thursday in the month. Most of us meet at South Woodham station to catch the 9.14am train.

Kind Regards

Di Bjorck and Elaine Turner

elaine.turneruk@btinternet.com & di.bjorck@btinternet.com

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.

If you would like more information about us, please feel free to call Chris Miles on **07946 024302**.

Our topic for March 2026 was Charcoal Drawing and examples of work created by members of the group at the class are included below:





Chris Miles

Photographic Group

This month's task was to take black and white photos, my pictures of a black cat in a coal mine and the backside of a polar bear in Antarctica were deemed unclear which rendered my day trip the Antarctica as wasted. We all found the task rather challenging and enjoyable in searching out suitable images and I attach a selection of photos taken by members...and not a polar bear amongst them!









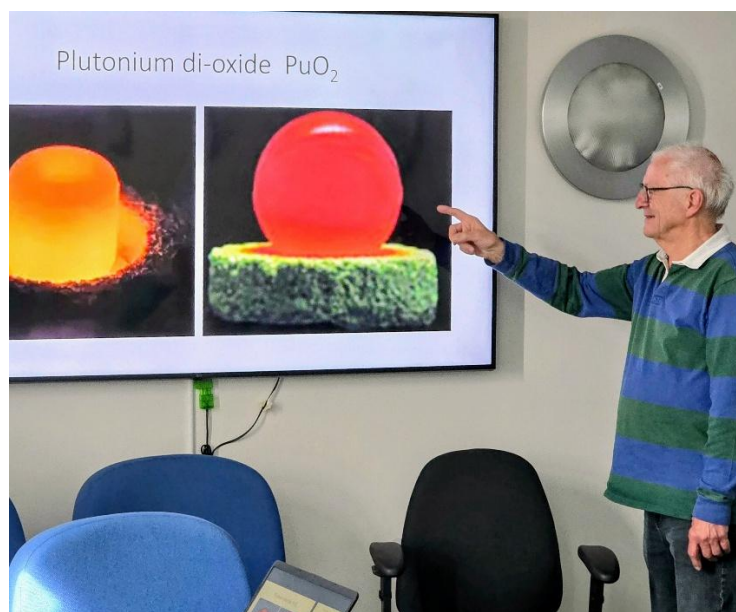
Science and Technology Group

Tucked between the usual routines of daily life is a place where curiosity gets to run wild - a Science & Tech discussion group feels less like a lecture and more like a lively gathering of friends. One session, the conversation may wander into the mysteries of black holes, the next it could dive into how your phone recognises your face. It is less about knowing the answers and more about enjoying the questions.

What makes the group especially fun is how ideas bounce about the room. There is always a playful side to it all. Mini debates spark up over things like whether robots could ever be creative, or if humans would like to live on Mars!

By the end of each session you don't just leave with new knowledge - you leave with stories, laughs and a fresh way of looking at the world. Rediscover that sense of wonder we all had as kids, just with better snacks and more interesting questions.

Did you know that Hippos can run at 35 mph.....



Working Through the Periodic Table - Element 94

Science & Tech meet the 2nd Thursday morning of the month. For more information contact Eileen Drane or Richard Peach

Eileen Drane

eileen.drane@googlemail.com

Singles, Social and Dining.

We met for lunch at Club Woodham on Wednesday 8th April. We enjoyed a lovely lunch and there was lots of conversation. We try to eat at Club Woodham each month as it is easy to get to and the staff there are so good to us.

The group is not large, but consists of warm, kind and friendly single people who meet on the second Wednesday of the month for a lunch together.

If you are single and would like to join us then you will be warmly welcomed.

Lyn Kear (01245321367)

Striders

For our first Striders walk for 2026 in March we visited Warley place in Great Warley which was the Home of Ellen Willmott who transformed the grounds into one of the most well-known gardens in the 19th century. The house and gardens fell into ruin, but the gardens are now being brought back to their former glory

by the Essex Wildlife trust and March is the best time to visit to see the stunning fields of daffodils.

The walk is only 1.5 miles about a third of a normal Striders walk but there is so much to see at this time of year our walk lasted almost Two hours, about the same time as our lunch spent in the Thatchers arms next to the reserve, so a pleasant trip!



Warley Place daffodil's

Larry Ladbrook.

Strollers

For our first walk of 2026 we visited Warley place on March 23rd, the walk was a repeat of the March walk we did earlier in the month for our Striders walk group because the daffodil display was too good to miss. The walk around the reserve is about a mile and a half which can take from 45 minutes to Two hours depending on which of the many floral, wildlife or remains of the old house you are interested in, as well as the daffodils there was a great show of early English crocuses and occasional wafts of wild garlic and the volunteer gardeners were a mine of information. The walk ended with a visit to the Thatchers arms next door for lunch and a chat!!

Larry Ladbrook

Walking Groups

We meet on the first and third Friday of the month at 10am and are a cheerful group who enjoy the outdoors, as you can see from the photograph below. This was taken during our second walk in April in Blake Wood. The weather was perfect for walking and as you can see the bluebell were in full bloom.

Most of our walks are in the region of 6.5 miles and within a 10-mile radius of Woodham. New members are always welcome, and more information is available on the South Woodham Ferrers website at:

https://swf.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/walking/

Alternatively, you can call Bob on 07889949685.



Blake Wood Walk

Walks for the next three months - All walks start at 10am

May 1st - Crondon Park Golf Course Walk - 7 miles - please meet in the Galleywood Common car park which is a short distance on the left down Margaretting Road (CM2 8TR)

May 15th - South Woodham/Stow Maries Aerodrome Walk - 6.5 miles - please meet in Compass Gardens car park.

June 5th - Burnham on Crouch Walk - 6.5 miles - meet in Burnham Riverside car park (CMO 8PN)

June 19th - Stock/Margaretting Walk - 6 miles - meet in Stock Village Hall car park (CM4 9NF)

July 3rd - Danbury/Sandon Hall Walk - 6.75 miles - meet in the National Trust car park which is almost opposite The Cricketers Pub in Danbury.

17th July - Paper Mill Lock Circular Walk - 6 miles - meet in The Generals Arms pub in Little Baddow.

Bob Tyas

Wine Group 2

3-month update Feb 26- April 26

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/ .

February

In February we tried 7 wines from 5 countries from a French supermarket and two small wine suppliers in Suffolk and Yorkshire, 2 white wines were voted as joint first a White Burgundy(Chardonnay) and a very scented Gerwurztraminer from Germany. From the red wines a South African Pinotage blend was the group favourite. All wines are tasted with some background about the wine but without the cost being revealed

March

In March at the finish of our financial year, we had a small surplus of funds so treated ourselves to some more expensive wines including a French Champagne to start from Pierre Morgan universally appreciated by all. Again, we tried wines from 4 countries a white South African blend topped the white wines tasted. The red was an expensive (£45) Pinot Noir from South Africa which was shared with a French Syrah as the best taste, where of course we all appreciate wine differently.

April

This April the theme included 5 Italian wines (from 7 tried) which included some very unusual grape varieties, but also a red Uruguay Tannat grape, and another South African white blend with 7 different grape varieties, in fact with the wines tasted this month a total of 15 different grape varieties were tasted. All were liked by the group, but the standout favourite was a 50% Primitivo/Negroamoro RED wine blend.

Our £25, 3 monthly subs allows wine tasted from £15-£24 bottle even allowing the last budget tax changes on wine over 11% of alcohol was in place in February.

We are currently at full membership but would always be willing for an invitation to a prospective member to try us out for one session should an opportunity to join at a later time on a waiting list.

Jeff Body Group Leader

Wine Group 3

A good time had by all on our Wine Group 3 post-Christmas meal at The Bell, Woodham Walter. Food wine and company was excellent. We are now looking forward to our New Hall vineyard tour and wine tasting.



Pat Cowen

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			
	PM	Gin Appreciation 1 Ukulele Group	Local History Tai Chi Gin Appreciation2 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 07986935359

Deadline for Inclusion in Next Newsletter

Please send your contributions to the next Newsletter by 22nd July, to Bob Tyas at robert.tyas82@gmail.com or deliver to 55 Clements Green Lane, SWF. Alternatively, you can ring him on 07889949685.