South Woodham Ferrers u3a

https://swf.u3asite.uk/

Quarterly Newsletter – Autumn & Winter Edition



Plant photos taken on Strollers Walks

Newsletter No 202

From the Chair

Before I write letters or notices, I jot down notes as I think of things and it's amazing how many of them refer to the weather. It's so changeable at the moment, winter in the morning and autumn or even summer in the afternoon.

I'm continuing to grow into the Chair role. Joining all the groups that are recommended for my role, and I seem to spend a lot of time on zoom meetings. I even attend the annual national u3a AGM last week, it's always interesting to find out what is going on. If you want to view it, just google u3a AGM. One of the things mentioned was that they are looking for a celebrity to become the u3a Ambassador. Unfortunately, it will be an unpaid post, but if you have anyone in your circle of contacts who fit the bill, please let them know.

I met with Sue Jacob's the Crouch Valley u3a Chair a couple of weeks ago and she was welcoming and supportive. Giving me details of the various forums and Facebook chat rooms for Chairs. She attended this month's meeting to see the different ways our groups work and in return she has invited me to attend their meeting in November.

I will be attending the biannual Cluster group meeting later this week and I'm looking forward to talking to the other Chairs and finding out more about their u3as.

I'm looking forward to meeting more of you at the next meeting.

Lorraine Hayward

Chair SWF u3a

From the Committee

An updated Financial Policy has been reviewed by the Committee and has now been uploaded on to the website. Group leaders should make sure they have read it.

Our forecast for 2026/27 shows that we are in a healthy position financially at the moment. The 2025/26 accounts have been uploaded to the Charity Commission.

Please consider whether you could take on the role of Secretary next July. Without a secretary our u3a cannot continue. I am happy to discuss the role confidentially, no commitment – it's not that onerous.

Shirley has also been organising the speakers for us for several years and needs to stand down from the role next July. So, we also need someone to take on this role. Shirley has already booked the speakers for next year so the new person would need to deal with checking requirements with the speaker prior to each meeting, greeting them and arranging payment.

A brief questionnaire will be sent to all members shortly. It would be great if as many people as possible could complete it to help inform the committee and organise meetings. Thanks.

Ann Woolley

Social News



We've been busy planning our annual Quiz Night which is taking place on Saturday 14th November with doors opening at 7:15 pm with a 7:30 start.

Tickets cost £5 and will be available before the main meeting on Wednesday 4th November. Please bring your own nibbles, drink and glasses as refreshments will not be available on the night.

Tables will be set up for teams of 8; you can come as individuals and be put in a team on the night or come as a team of 8.

Tracey

South Woodham Ferrers Art Trail

On Saturday 10th October, I met up with a few u3a friends, and we set off to complete the Art Trail. We really enjoyed being welcomed into various shops and businesses that had kindly agreed to show the artwork. On the walk we met several u3a friends and were lucky to meet up with June Best at Timpson. I managed to take a photo of June at her venue, and I have also photographed the window displays of Keith Mean at the Timeless Tattoo Parlour and Geof Clark at Hays Travel. I hope you also had the opportunity to complete the Art Trail. We are very lucky to have such talented people in our u3a and in South Woodham Ferrers. We thoroughly enjoyed the day and finished with Afternoon Tea together, scones jam and cream. Perfect!







Some of the art on display

Eileen Drane - Groups Coordinator

Remaining Speakers for 2026

4th November

Explaining The Inexplicable - Nicholas Henderson – Spooky!

2nd December

A Scandinavian Christmas - Andrew Baker.

Speakers for 2027

6th January – Emma Marns – Irish Mother and Baby Homes

3rd February – Graham Brace – Photography – India

3rd March – Leigh Bees

7th April – Alan Goldsmith – Promoter of Pop Artists and owner of Mountfitchet Castle

5th May – Gary Jones – Meet the Patients 2

2nd June – Gary Crocker Men's Shed

7th July – Linda Scoles – The Yanks are Coming

4th August – Laura Bayley from Essex County Fire and Rescue Service – Safety on the Road

1st September – Jason Middleton – The History of Jewellery

6th October – Lindsay Whitehouse – The Essex Executioner

3rd November – Judith Hood - In Touch with the Other side

1st December – In House – Group Displays – Xmas Buffet

News from the Groups

Eco Group

A further full box of medicine blister packs has been sent off for recycling and two more have been ordered, courtesy of a donation from the Rotary Club and your donations. Whilst it would be good if we didn't have to pay to recycle the blister packs, there is a cost involved in the process and the government doesn't fund it. Perhaps we should view it as a small price to pay considering most of us don't have to pay for our medication in the first place!

There is no meeting in October and the 23rd of November meeting will be a chat with Stuart Bird, who is one of the members of the Common Green project in Danbury (formerly Sustainable Danbury) which is a "community benefit society that does sustainable stuff" – see their website www.commongreen.org.uk for more information. If anyone outside of the Eco Group is interested in attending, please let me know by early November as we may need to book a different venue to our normal one!

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

Gardening Group

The gardening group usually meet up on the 2nd Monday afternoon of the month, and we like to visit NGS gardens in Essex.

In August Rhona kindly opened her garden for our group to visit in the evening from 6pm until 8pm. This was a great success, we were served wine, prosecco and soft drinks on arrival and Rhona made sausage rolls.





In September we visited Dene Court in Chelmsford. This was a compact and colourful garden owned by Sheila a retired RHS gold medal winner. As she had plants for sale, most of us took the opportunity to buy some.



Our October outing was to Green Island in Ardleigh. This was our last outing of the year and was on a Tuesday. It was raining when we left Woodham but by the time we arrived it was blue skies and sunshine and pleasantly warm. We were served tea and cake on arrival and then we were able to explore the ten acres of

garden. The colours of the acers were beautiful. They had azaleas and camelias in bloom. The garden was well worth visiting even though it was a long drive.



On 9th November we have a meeting at Champions Manor Hall at 2pm with a talk about hedgehogs by Byron Jenkins. The cost is £5 and will include refreshments.

On 14th December we will have our Christmas buffet. The cost is £5.

Lorraine will show us how to needle felt a Christmas decoration. We can choose from a Carrot or a Brussel sprout.

If you are interested in joining our group, please come and see us at our table at the main meeting.

Sue Crann and Shirley Masterson

Golf Group

"I'm Phil West, and I am the coordinator for the golf group. I am looking for some new members, ladies or gents. You don't have to be particularly good at golf, but a little experience of playing a few full size 18-hole courses and even having a handicap would be great.

We currently play on the Jubilee course at 3 Rivers, Monday and Thursday mornings. On Mondays we all put £1 in, and winner takes the kitty, but gets his handicap reduced. If you are interested, please contact me on 07751022666 or by email on Philwest33@sky.com. "

Local History

After the break for August and September we have two more events this year.

Our October visit is to the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford for a guided tour of the building, visiting the search room, conservation, storerooms and viewing a display of their treasures and local maps. This is planned for October 29th, after the deadline for the newsletter. It should be an interesting visit.

As stated in the previous newsletter, I am stepping down from running the group after being Group Leader for 8 years. To date no one has come forward to take over running the group, so the last event for the group is a buffet lunch and talk on Tuesday 10 November at Champions Manor Hall, 1pm start. Andrew Mowbray, who gave his talk on Colchester last November, is returning to give a talk on 'A history of Placenames'. The format will be the same as last year with lunch at 1pm followed by the talk at 2pm.

The cost is £3pp, it would be a big help if you could bring the correct money when you sign up. Please can you let me know by the main meeting if you wish to come so that I know numbers to cater for.

It is sad to see the Group close after a very successful 20 years, I hope it might start again in the future. We have visited so many local places of interest listened to many interesting and informative talks on the local area and had some good coach trips to places further afield.

I am hoping this is a temporary pause for the group. If you enjoy organising visits then maybe you could be the person to re start the group.

Kate

Needle Felting

The needle felting group has been very busy over the last 3 months. In July and August they made pumpkins, leaves and toadstools. Then at our September meeting they transformed them into these amazing wreaths with the aid of needle felting and glue.



I also took the opportunity to take on new members during this period. They are all very enthusiastic and picked up needle felting skills very quickly. October and November we will be making Christmas decorations. No idea what will get made at the moment as there all sorts of ideas being suggested. As usual I will arrive at October meeting with all my wool and bits and see where their imagination takes them.

Don't forget to check out the group on the SWF U3A website where pictures of everything that the group makes is recorded.

Lorraine Hayward

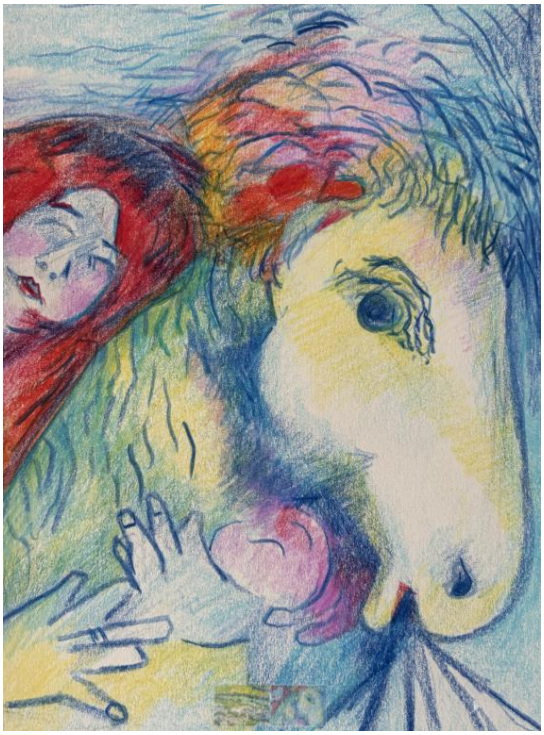
Paint and Pastels Art Group

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. 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 most recent two topics were Landscape and Working in the Style of a Favourite Artist. An example of work done in each of those two sessions is included below. The second one is based on a painting by the artist Marc Chagall.





Chris Miles

Science and Technology Group

We have enjoyed an enormous number of wide-ranging discussions and presentations during the last few months. Extremes from Psyche (was this a planet that never reached completion?) to McNugget Numbers - chicken nuggets come in packs of 6, 9, or 20. A combination you cannot make is called nonMcNugget numbers. And then there was the Mad Hatters and the 'Did you Knows' – Hot water freezes faster than cold water: At 60 you have lost half of your tastebuds: You can go longer without food than sleep, (to name a few). Dave kindly brought in his Gyroscope. It was huge and very heavy. They are used in Aircraft Navigation, Autopilots, Initial Guidance systems and Spacecraft stabilization. We had a lot of fun trying to use it.




David and Roy demonstrating the principles of a Gyroscope

Each session is different and always enjoyable. We are a mixed group of 12 to 14 and meet on the 2nd Thursday morning of the month. More details from Eileen Drane or Richad Peach.
eileen.drane@googlemail,com

Strollers

The Strollers group has enjoyed some lovely walks this summer despite the heat. These take place on the 4th Monday of the month and on 27th July we met at the Parlour cafe and enjoyed a walk where we walked partly along the River Crouch and saw plenty of boats.



On the 24th August we met at Tesco in Maldon. This walk included walking past Beeleigh Abbey and Lock and observed the low water levels and scorched grass.





The walk on the 28th September was in South Woodham Ferrers, and we met at Compass Garden. On this occasion we walked along the River Crouch to Marsh Farm and then back to The Coffee Lounge for refreshments.

Walking Groups

We are a small, friendly group of walkers who enjoy walking and meet on the first and third Friday of every month. All walks start at 10am and take between 2 and 2½ hours to complete depending on the length of the walk. New members are always welcome and if you think you might be interested, and want to find out more, just give me a call on 07889949685, alternatively, you can just turn up. You can also get more details of the group and view our walks catalogue by following this link https://swf.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/walking/



Recent Goldhanger Walk

Walks for the next three months:

November

Friday 6th – Gallywood/Hylands Park Walk (new walk) – Approximately 7 miles – Meet in the Gallywood car park which is on the left a short distance off the Margaretting Road (CM2 8TR).

Friday 20th – Stow Maries Aerodrome – Approximately 6 miles – Meet in Compass Gardens car park in SWF.

December

Friday 4th – Seven Woods Walk (new walk) – Approximately 7 miles – Meet in Belfairs Wood car park (SS9 4LR).

Friday 18th – Woodham Ferrers/Hyde Hall Walk – Approximately 6.5 miles – Meet in the Playing Field car park in Lodge Road in Woodham Ferrers.

January

Friday 1st – No walk – New Years Day

Friday 15th – Burnham on Crouch Walk – Approximately 6.5 miles – Meet in the Riverside car park in Burnham (CM0 8PN)

Bob Tyas

Wine Group 1

After a hugely enjoyable trip to Carcassonne last year 6 of us returned in mid-September, sadly missing Allen Surrey who should have been with us. We were again hosted by Alexander Francis from Vins and Vinos, running a wine shop and wine export business makes Alex ideally placed for us to meet passionate winemakers with very interesting stories. Alex studied geology which adds further to the wealth of knowledge he shares willingly,

Our trip this time involved a four day tour, each day focusing on a different theme, Corbieres maritime and the influences of the maritime climate, restoring family vineyards to greatness, the importance of working the soil and biodynamics, old vines and old wines.

We passed some outstanding countryside and astonishing geological features, we learned a lot about the changing face of French vinification, significant reduction

of vine planting and the challenges of climate change. Earlier hotter summers mean sweeter grapes making heavier less acidic wines. One vineyard had to give pickers head torches to pick before dawn in more bearable temperatures.

We met small producers with wineries no bigger than a double garage, passionate to make the most interesting pure or blended wines possible. Several wineries have passed to the next generation and were determined to reinvent the family business and make their own wines again rather than sell their grapes to the cooperative.

We saw the use of traditional clay amphorae and wooden barrels over a 100 yrs old. The cultivation of the terroir made a huge difference with many winemakers seeing the importance of biodiversity and encouraging wildlife to improve the quality of their grapes. Many winemakers highlight the value of old vines for quality, and one has changed his pruning technique to encourage vines to be shorter and live longer, many have vines over a 100 yrs old. Quantity isn't everything, a small producer might settle for a yield of 12 hectolitres per hectare while the mass producers of poorer quality wine would make 10 times this.

We were able to taste some fortified wines from a specialist wine maker (tough at 9.30 am), some very old Rancio wines ,which are stored in old oak barrels for decades to slowly evaporate and concentrate, the oldest we tasted was 1955 which would retail at 200 euros for 50 cl.

We enjoyed delicious lunches varying from smart hotels with breathtaking vistas to small village bistros with the best aged beef we have ever tasted and the most extensive wine list to match.

We finished our trip with a chill-out day in Banyuls sur Mer and a delicious meal overlooking the Med.

Overall, we met 13 winemakers, tasted 78 wines in tastings, 10 with meals , half a dozen in the evenings and several more straight from the barrels (using something bit like a turkey baster).

The most unique experiences were electric scooting around one big estate, building a wildlife experience, and the last winery in Collioure where the couple had excavated into the rock adjacent to their small apartment to make the cave. We have left as members of Domaine of the Bee and owners of some old vines on Katie Jones, Domaine Jones. One of the vines we adopted was in memory of Allen Surry and has been named Allen.

After last year's trip we had great expectations and we were not disappointed.

Some of the photos taken during our trip are given below.













Janet Tipping

Wine Group 2

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/

July

This month the lineup was mainly Balkan wines, from Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Slovenia. Here the group preferred an unusual Greek red variety Mavrodafni grape and a Vermentino wine (white grape) from Bulgaria. This grape variety mainly from Eastern Europe and even Australia has been a hit before

August

In August, our tradition is we have a more informal garden party with wine in a member's garden, with sandwiches and snacks, and yet again we were blessed with good if rather hot weather Despite the climate the red wine went down the quickest of the 14 bottles of Red, Rose, and White wines. This year our gazeboes were needed for shade, but it was enjoyed by all as the Photo's below show.







September

In September our sampling was of wines from Saronsberg a South African winery of some reputation, our normal 3 Reds ,1 Rose and 3 Whites one of which was an Aldi Viognier as a comparison, which came out well although a third of the cost of the equivalent white Saronsberg. However, overall, the last red was rated truly outstanding by the group, but the rest nothing special at all. This shows a tasting is not always a hit

We go into the last quarter of the year with 2 tastings in October and November then our Xmas dinner at the Hawk to end the year. With partners this looks like 26 people this year

We are currently at full membership, but any prospective members are very welcome to try one session and they can join the waiting list for future opportunities if a place becomes available.

Jeff Body Group Leader -SWF wine group 2

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 20th January, to Bob Tyas at robert.tyas82@gmail.com or deliver to 55 Clements Green Lane, SWF. Alternatively, you can ring him on 07889949685.