

The deadline for contributions to the next Newsletter is Wednesday 25 March 2026
Please send items for publication to the Newsletter Editor - email: aru3a-news@mail.com

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We are now through the worst of the winter and not much snow for us this year in Essex. Things are looking up, the snowdrops have been wonderful and the daffodils are just coming into play. The gardening group went on a trip to Warley place to see the colour and here are some pictures from their trip.



NEXT MEETING

5th March 2026

Doors open at 1:15 pm
Meeting starts at 1:45 pm

FORTHCOMING SPEAKERS

*5th March
Graham and Mary Brace
Wildlife in India*

*2nd April
Bobbie Darbyshire
A beginning a muddle and
an end.*

*14th May
Dennis Eraut
The first Chinese Emperor
and Terracotta Army*

*4th June
Paul Clancy
Magician*

Unfortunately, I was unable to go, as like so many others over the last couple of months, I had one of the dreaded bugs that has been going around.

I know I mentioned this in the last newsletter however I'm going to remind everyone again. It's time to renew your membership before the end of March. Not all members at the last count, have paid their membership for next year, so if you haven't yet done so, please make sure you pay either at the next meeting or online to secure your membership before the end of March.

If you know someone who would like to join our u3a this is the ideal time to encourage them to put in an application or speak to the membership secretary Val Stenson. Did you know that non-members can come along to a meeting as a guest and pay a small fee to see if they like the feel of our u3a.

The serendipity and the social committee are working hard to organise outings and social events to interest members so make sure you take advantage of these offerings when available.

The various organisers advertise their events and trips in the newsletter and at the back of the hall, so go and have a chat with them to get more information.

Thank you to Rae for stepping in for me last month, and I'm pleased to say that I will be at the next meeting in March, so I look forward to seeing you all then.

GROUP MEETINGS CALENDAR

MONDAYS			
Walking	Weekly	9.45	Richard Paternoster, Anne and Ray Hill
Are you Curious	4 th Monday of month	2:00 - 4:00	Carol Collins
Beer Appreciation	2 nd Monday of month	2:00 - 4:00	Terry Lake
Bird Watching	2 nd Monday of the month	TBA	Paul Nice
Card and Paper Craft	3 rd Monday of month	1:30 pm	Wendy Paternoster
Discussion	3 rd Monday of month	2:30 - 4:30	David & Barbara Hine
Knit and Chat	4 th Monday of month	2:30 - 4:30	Barbara Hine
Petanque (Boules)	2 nd and 4 th Monday of month	10:00	Linda Deadman
Rummikub	Weekly	2:00 – 4:00	Pam Leys
Supper Club	1st Monday of month	6:00 pm	Val Stenson
TUESDAYS			
Book Club (2)	3 rd Tuesday of month	10:30	Maureen Pointer
Cross-Stitch	Every other Tuesday	10:00	Anne Hill
French Conversation	1 st & 3 rd Tuesday of month	2:30 - 4:00	Carol Clifford
Local History (2)	2nd Tuesday of the month	2:00	Graham Collins & Carol Collins
Petanque (Boules)	1 st & 3 rd Tuesday of month	2:00 – 4:00	Beryl Horrex/Janet Toms
Snooker (2)	3 rd Tuesday of the month	11:00 – 1:00	David Hine
Short Mat Bowls	Every other Tuesday	2:00 – 4:00	John Stenson
Ten Pin Bowling	Fortnightly	11:00	Jacqui & Keith Baker
WEDNESDAYS			
Knitting & Sewing	4 th Wednesday of month	2:00 - 4:00	Katherine Lake
Line Dancing	2 nd and 4 th Wed of the	2:00 - 3:00	Jill Nettleship
Local History (1)	2 nd Wednesday of month	p.m.	Sandra Dawson
Table Tennis	Weekly	7:30	John Owen
THURSDAYS			
Cribbage (cards)	4 th Thursday in month	10:00 - 12:00	Keith Baker
Gardening Group	2 nd Thursday of month	2:00 - 4:00	Paul Nice & Marion Cain
Knitting (2)	Fortnightly	2:00 - 4:00	Sue Dodkin
Serendipity	Monthly (Normally a	All day	Serendipity Team
Snooker	2 nd Thursday of month	11:00 - 1:00	David Lazell
FRIDAYS			
Canasta	2 nd Friday of the month	2:30 - 4:30	Ian Foster/Pam Foster
Book Club (1)	3 rd Friday of month	2:00	Pat Wilkinson
I.T.	4 th Friday of month	2:00 - 4:00	Robert Nickless
Local History (3)	1 st Friday of month	10:00	Sue Morris. Sue Mitchell & Karen Hunter
Photography	2 nd Friday of month Inside Outside	2:30 - 4:30 2:00 - 4:00	Roger Young
Ladder Golf	Alternate Fridays	6:00- 8:00	Anne & Rae Hill
Solo/canasta	4 th Friday of the month	7:00 - 9:00	Ian Foster/Pam Foster
Walking	2 Fridays per month	Mid	Phil Kelly
SATURDAY			
Petanque (Boules)	2 nd & 4 th Saturday of month	10:00 - 12:00	Rosemarie Barrows
SUNDAY			
Sunday Lunch Club	Monthly, various dates	1:00 - 3:00	Carol Collins
Other Various Dates			
Garden Visits			Janet Arrowsmith
Theatre Trips			Claire Ham

GROUP VACANCIES - *At the moment the following groups from the above list are full but please let group Co-ordinators, Carole Edwards/Rae Hill know if you want to go on a waiting list*

BEER APPRECIATION
SUPPER CLUB
CANASTA

ALL PETANQUE GROUPS
BOTH SNOOKER GROUPS
SOLO

RUMMIKUB
SHORT MAT BOWLS
SUNDAY LUNCH

DISCUSSION
CRIBBAGE

Noticeboard

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS 2026/2027

The last monthly meeting to renew your membership is **MARCH 2026**. The annual subscription is £18. If you wish to renew and have not already done so, please arrange your payment, using one of the methods below, at the March Meeting or post to Val Stenson at the address below.

There are 3 ways to renew your membership:-

1. You can pay by debit or credit card – see Ian Foster at the March meeting.

2. By Bank Transfer using the following details:

Account Name: Ashingdon and Rochford u3a

Sort Code: 60-17-38

Account Number: 12122386

PLEASE ENSURE YOU PUT YOUR MEMBERSHIP NUMBER AND SURNAME IN THE REFERENCE.

3. By cheque made payable to **Ashingdon and Rochford u3a**.

PLEASE ENSURE YOU PUT YOUR MEMBERSHIP NUMBER ON THE BACK OF THE CHEQUE.

You can either hand the cheque to Val at the March meeting or send the cheque to:-

Val Stenson, Membership Secretary,

Please remember that the last date for renewal of membership is 31st March 2026. Any places not taken up by the renewal date will be offered to those on the waiting list.

Thank you

Val Stenson - Membership Secretary

Dates for your diary

Monday Health Walks

Rae, Anne and Richard invite any of our u3a members to join us on our weekly, Monday walks from Magnolia Park. We start walking at 10.am so meet at 9.45.am to allow time to put on boots etc., to enable a prompt departure at 10 am. Walk distance is about 2 to 3 miles at a pace to suit the ability of the slowest walker. Please use suitable foot wear for unmade sometimes muddy footpaths and bring suitable rainwear etc for our changeable weather.

Richard Paternoster

Walks with Phil

On **Friday 13 March** let's make a trip to Heybridge Basin where I hope that firm paths will reduce the likelihood of muddy walking. Let's meet at Ashingdon and East Hawkwell Community Hall by 9.45am ready to car share (which should include sharing the cost of petrol and car parking). Taking perhaps 45 minutes to get there, we will park in the Daisy Meadow car park. There we will do a very level circuit of perhaps two and half miles, walking back inland along the canal (Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation) as far as the footbridge, which we will use to emerge on the north side of the estuarial River Chelmer, with the wide estuary on our right, vistas to the open sea ahead, and a very naturalised bird inhabited gravel pit lake to our left. Arriving eventually back at Heybridge Basin we will cross the sea lock to tarry awhile in the Tiptree owned cafe with outdoor seating looking across to Northey Island. (It also has seating indoors if it is cold.) Expect to arrive back in Ashingdon by 1pm.

On **Friday 27 March** let's meet ready to walk by 9.45 at the southern dead end of Castle Lane in Hadleigh. There is usually room to park free of charge here but if not, park further back along Castle Lane or use the pay car park by the entrance to the Rare Breeds Centre. We will walk through the castle ruins gently downhill in the Leigh direction before eventually turning to walk at a lower level on the level in a westerly direction below the castle and on towards the designated Hadleigh Country park area. Eventually we will find suitable paths to take us gradually uphill towards the cafe located at the top. After a short stop there for tea or coffee it is a short walk on a level path at the high level towards our cars. Some definite up and down at reasonable gradients but I am hoping the grassy wide paths etc will not be muddy.

Please come on one or both of these walks if you are capable of walking for up to 90 minutes or so, with breaks, as your mental and physical health will benefit from the exercise and the company. Generally a very friendly group. There are no formalities, just turn up in time with sturdy footwear. But any concerns please text or phone me.

Hoping to see you soon.

Phil Kelly

Serendipity

The Cartoon Museum Thursday 19.3.26

We will catch the 9.37 train from Rochford to London Liverpool Street and then the Central Line to Oxford Circus which is only a 5-minute walk to the museum. We are unable to have coffee at the museum but instead we will head for Harris and Hoole which is closeby. Our tour will begin around 12 noon.

We are proposing a visit to the **Natural History Museum** on Thursday 23rd April.

We will take the 09.37 train from Rochford to Liverpool Street arriving approximately at 10.28.

There will be time for a quick coffee and comfort break there.

We can then carry on to South Kensington via the Piccadilly Line.

It's approximately a five-minute, step free covered walk to the museum.

We have pre booked tickets for 12 midday.

We have places for a total of 16 people.

Please add your names if you wish to come at the March meeting. This is a free trip.

Ann & Jeff.

Coach Trip to Dover Castle Thursday 16.7.26

The coach is now booked for Dover Castle on the above date. To reserve your seat, please pay £22 before or by the June meeting, by card at the U3A meetings or bank transfer to the ARU3A Social Account 12133884 sort code 60-17-38 and importantly making sure the reference is marked DOVER and also your SURNAME for identification purposes. The coach capacity is 34 seats only and 14 seats remain available. To save disappointment, please place your name on the list ASAP.

Shelagh Nicholas - Trip Organiser for Serendipity

Trip to Household Cavalry Museum.

Thursday May 21st - Travel information TBA. Fully booked. All tickets have now been purchased.

For those who have booked, please pay £9.50 into the social account:

Sort code 60-17-38
Account 12133884

If you use this method, please insert Cavalry and your name or abbreviation into the reference.

Alternatively, please pay at the machine at the March meeting.

Please inform the Serendipity desk your method of payment also at the meeting or inform Rae or Anne.

Anne & Rae Hill - Serendipity Organising Group.

Boat trip to Rochester from Southend Pier head.

Date. Sunday August 16th - Time. 10.45 from the pier head.

Train departs 10.30 and arrives at 10.38 ready for prompt boarding. Arrives at Rochester 12.45.

Cost. £36.50 including pier entry and train to the pier head and back.

Duration 8.5 hours including 4 hours approximately ashore. There is a 15 to 20 minute walk from the quayside to Rochester.

This trip is unsuitable for wheelchair users and you must be able to climb one set of stairs unaided.

This trip allows you to step back in time to visit Dickens country, walk along the cobbled street of Rochester, visit the Castle or pop into the Cathedral.

The trip to Rochester will allow you to discover the historic relevance of the River Medway, sailing past Chatham dockyard and Upnor Castle.

If you would like to join this trip, please sign up at the Serendipity Desk at the March meeting and pay at the APRIL meeting or by bank transfer into the Social Account.

Sort: 60 17 38

Account 12133884. Please put your name and boat or abbreviation in the reference.

Anne Hill
Ann King
Serendipity Organising Group.

Everyone is welcome to join us - the more people the lower the price for all!

We are a friendly bunch, and you are very welcome to come alone or with friends.

On theatre days, I will be in the foyer early, so please come and see me so I know you have arrived. Also, if you have forgotten your tickets or have a last-minute issue, we have time to resolve it.

Please note, we cannot guarantee a particular performer will be on at the show we will be going to, but fingers crossed.

Bookings Closed For: Guys and Dolls & G4 Phantoms of the Popera

Tickets will be Ready for Collection at the March Meeting

Barnum – Wednesday 1st July 2026 2:30pm Cliffs Pavilion

Tickets - £44.50 (B Zone, Midweek Senior Special), £38.00 (C Zone)

Payment April 2026 Meeting



Step right up and enter the dazzling world of P.T. Barnum, where imagination and ambition know no bounds. Hand in hand with wife Charity, Barnum's life and career twists and turns as he schemes and dreams his way to headier heights.

This spectacular production features an extraordinary ensemble cast of over 20 actor-musicians, acrobats and amazing circus acts.

Limited Availability

High Society – Wednesday 29th July 2026 2:30pm Cliffs Pavilion

Tickets - £46 No Concessions

Payment April 2026 Meeting

Hot on the heels of The King and I and Fiddler on the Roof, this year's most eagerly anticipated production delivers another glorious dose of Golden Age musical theatre escapism.

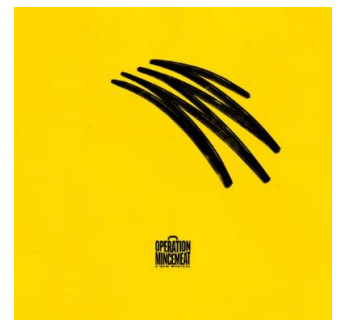
Helen George (Call the Midwife, The King and I) leads the 28-strong cast as glamorous socialite Tracy Lord in this lavish new production, where plans for the society wedding of the year descend into chaos as old and new flames vie for attention, and a sharp-eyed tabloid reporter hunts for scandal at the waterfront.



Operation Mincement – Wednesday 2th September 2026 14:30pm

Cliffs Pavilion Tickets £62 – Payment June 2026 Meeting

The Olivier Award-winning Best New Musical and the best-reviewed show in West End history. In 1943 and were losing the war and we about to gamble all our futures on a stolen corpse! A fast-paced, hilarious and unbelievable true story of the twisted secret mission that won us World War II. Bursting at the seams with chaos you couldn't invent, the question is: how did a dead body, a fake love letter, and - of all people - Ian Fleming come together to wrong-foot Hitler?



Please note: I understand this show is expensive, however having seen it in London I can personally recommend it. Limited number of tickets.

The Choir of Man – 18th September 2026 4:00pm
Cliffs Pavilion Tickets £42 – Payment July 2026 Meeting



The Choir of Man, the best pub in the world ... Come ready to drink in the excitement!

A wildly talented group of incredible instrumentalists, world-class wordsmiths, and sensational singers, this cast of nine (extra)ordinary guys serve it all... live! An uplifting celebration of community and friendship where everyone is welcome, don't miss this feel-good night of foot-stomping entertainment, so good you'll want to come back and see it again and again.

Claire Ham & Noreen Bishop

Group News

IT Group

The IT Group meets at 2pm on the 4th Friday of each month at the Life House Church in Ashingdon, opposite Ashingdon School. We really need more members to join us.

We are a discussion group who talk together about any subject that interests us, not just IT. None of us are experts but if one of us is having a problem with something then someone else may know how to solve it or know where to find help.

Anyone is welcome to join and if you have some knowledge of anything remotely techie and are willing to help others you will be particularly welcome. Our meetings are very informal, we never stick to any plan and usually discuss anything that takes our interest as we go along.

If you think you may be interested in joining us then please contact the Group Coordinators. If you would like to come to a meeting before deciding whether you would like to join the group then you are welcome. Whether you have extensive knowledge to share or just want to chat we will be very pleased to see you at our next meeting.

Robert Nickless

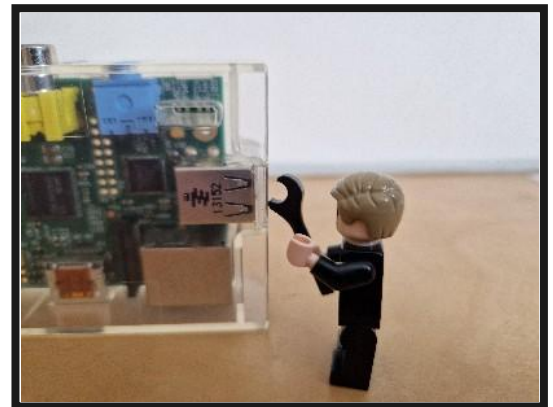
Table tennis group

To all members.

The table tennis group had a great meal at Saxon Hall. We have just taken on new members who have settled in very well.

I have available two places if anyone wishes to join us on a Wednesday evening.

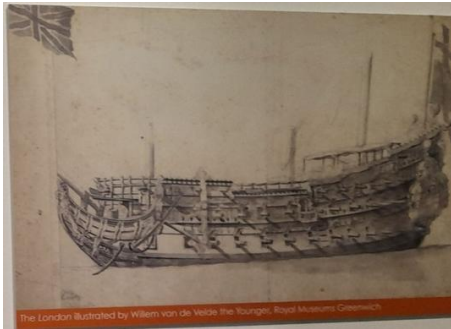
John Owen



Local History 2 - The London Shipwreck

We met at Southend Museum for our tour of the exhibition.

The London was an English warship built at Chatham in 1656. She was built to carry 64 guns, and was in service for nine years before she sank.



The London sank in the Thames Estuary in 1665 whilst preparing for the second Anglo-Dutch War which had been declared by Charles II a few days earlier. On 7th March 1665, the London left Chatham and sailed down the Medway. She was also carrying a number of the sailors' wives and family who were allowed aboard to say their goodbyes. Tragically the ship was torn apart by an internal explosion probably caused by an accident in the gunpowder magazine. Only 24 of the people on board survived with over 300 losing their lives.

Over 700 objects were recovered through excavation and the exhibition focuses on the conservation processes these objects underwent after being raised from the seabed where they had lain for over 300 years. Two of the main objects were a wooden gun carriage and a Dutch 24-Pounder Brass Gun.



We had a very interesting talk from one of the museum staff.

Carol Collins

Cards and Papercraft

This month Maureen Hickey showed us how to make beautiful cards using embossing folders and butterfly dies. Photos of Maureen's samples and the lovely cards created. We all really enjoyed the afternoon and found the extra half hour helpful!



Thank you to Steve Ham for setting up the tables for us!

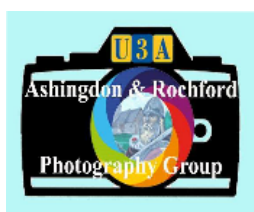
Wendy Paternoster

U3A Line Dance Social

On Wednesday 4th February an afternoon of Line Dancing was organised by Jill Nettleship and held at Ashington Memorial Hall. Over 40 people joined in the dancing, and enjoyed tea, coffee and cakes at half time.



Ray Hill



U3A Photo Group
Feb 2026
Sunshine, Daffodils
& VW-Intrudicus



Bright Notes-Sunshine, Daffodils and Volkswagena intrudicus???

Sorry we missed the last edition — a surprise mini-break whisked me away, and in the excitement I completely forgot to put the newsletter together. Is it too late to wish everyone a happy 2026...? I'm going to chance it anyway.

After what feels like endless millimetres of rain (no need to measure — my garden is very soggy, I think many others are the same!), the couple of sunny days we've enjoyed this month have been a welcome shock. Suddenly the world looks a little less soggy, and everywhere you turn there's a burst of yellow reminding us that spring is edging ever closer.

Not just daffodils to trumpet the beginning of Spring, either — the mimosa has joined the chorus, all soft, fluffy gold against blue sky. Between the two, it's as if someone has turned the saturation dial firmly to "cheerful". For the photographers among us, this is the annual signal that hibernation is nearly over. Soon we'll be venturing outside more often, cameras in hand, ready to capture the small delights that return with the light: the first blossoms, the lengthening days, and the flowers that insist on blooming even when the weather still thinks it's mid-winter.

*This month's collage celebrates exactly that — a riot of yellow from both daffodil and mimosa. And if you look closely, nestled rather cheekily between the blooms, you may spot a rare species indeed: **Volkswagena intrudicus**. In some places this yellow interloper is well known for its cheeky auto-motive habit of photobombing innocent spring scenes.*

How it managed to sneak into our floral display remains a mystery for the botanists among us. Perhaps it's attracted to bright colours. Perhaps it simply wanted its moment in the sun.

As we tiptoe toward spring proper, here's to more colour, more light, and more excuses to get outside with our cameras. The season of yellow is upon us, and it's looking rather lovely!



U3A Photo Group Sunshine, Daffodils, Mimosa & Volkswagena Intrudicus



Roger Young

Committee Members Contact Details

Chair	Marion Cain
Vice Chair	Rae Hill
Secretary	Katherine Lake
Treasurer	Ian Foster
Membership Sec.	Val Stenson
Joint Group Coordinator	Carole Edwards
Joint Group Coordinator	Rae Hill
Committee member	Anne Hill
Committee member	Barbara Hine
Committee member	David Hine
Committee member	Noreen Bishop
Committee Member	Carol Collins
Committee member	Terry Lake
Committee Member	Chris Campbell
Committee Member/ Beacon Admin	Pam Foster
ExOfficio/Minutes Sec & Webmaster	Janet Berry