

## APRIL 2026 NEWSLETTER

At last the sun is shining! Let's hope Spring is definitely here - this morning when I opened the curtains, the first tulip in my pots has appeared in bloom. My gardening is always a bit hit and miss so I was very happy!

At the February Meeting, we thanked Carol and Les Shrubsole and Stella Lutterloch for their years of running the book stall and presented them with a little gift each.

*Thank you all so much for the great gifts we received yesterday at the USA meeting. We had no idea this was going to happen. A lovely bunch of flowers for Carol and a top quality bottle of vodka for me. Carol and I were a bit overcome by it all.*

*We ran the book stall for over 15 years and loved every minute of it, chatting and socialising with all the people buying books. It was so much fun and we are so sad to stop doing it, but storing the books and our very hectic life style meant it was time to retire.*

*Thank you again for our lovely gifts. (Les & Carol)*

*Thank you so much for the beautiful flowers given to me by the Committee & Members. I am thrilled with them. Please convey my thanks to everyone. (Stella)*

Our thanks go to Ray Lowe who has taken over the task of organising the book stall with a team of volunteers - it is such a popular stall at our meetings!



May I take this opportunity on behalf of the Committee to wish you all a very Happy Easter!

Debbie Bamber  
Newsletter Editor



### **NOTICES**

Sadly we have been informed of the death of Molly Beard who passed away in February. Ian Haynes Leader of the Archaeology Group said - She was a lovely person and a very active, keen and well-liked member of the group who will be greatly missed by us all.

**Thank you to all the contributors to this edition of the Newsletter — do keep your articles and photos coming by email to: [debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk](mailto:debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk).  
Closing date for the June 2026 Newsletter is 15th May 2026**

# FUTURE MONTHLY SPEAKERS

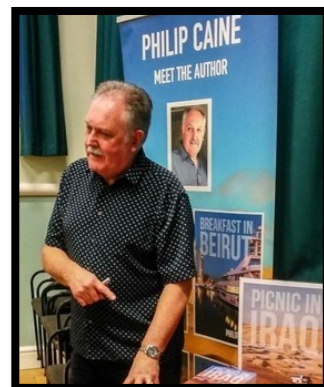


**1st April 2026**

Our speaker for April will be Chris Stanbury. At the age of 70 Chris embarked on a journey of a lifetime - a walk from the southwestern tip of England - Lands End - to the northernmost settlement in Scotland - John O'Groats - AND BACK AGAIN!! This talk is beautifully illustrated with stunning photographs and video clips, capturing the raw beauty and diverse landscapes of Britain.

**6th May 2026**

Our speaker in May is Philip Caine with a talk entitled From Barrow to Baghdad. Born in 1950, in Barrow-in-Furness, Philip's working life began in the hotel business. His career developed in the oil industry and 30 years were spent in places such as the North Sea, Algeria, Nigeria, Kazakhstan and Russia.



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### **Monthly Members Meetings at Mill Hall**

Doors open at 1.45pm, Speaker starts at 2.30pm & will end around 3.30pm

**Wednesday 1st April 2026**

**Wednesday 6th May 2026 - AGM**

**Wednesday 3rd June 2026**

**Wednesday 1st July 2026**

**\*\*No Meeting in August\*\***

### **Theatre Trips, Educational and Social Events**

**Thursday 28th May 2026** - Theatre Trip to see **The Ballad of Johnny & June** at the Cliffs Pavilion at 2.30pm. Tickets all sold but you can go on the waiting list.

**Thursday 2nd July 2026** - Theatre Trip to see **Barnum** at the Cliffs Pavilion at 2.30pm. Tickets on sale now - £42.00

**Wednesday 29th July 2026** - Theatre Trip to see **High Society** at the Cliffs Pavilion at 2.30pm. Tickets on sale now - £39.00

**Thursday 6th August - Talk for All** - 2pm at The Mill Hall Lounge. **Angela Bell and the fascinating history of the Cryptic Crossword.** Tickets on sale in May - £3 per member to include tea or coffee

**Wednesday 2nd September 2026** - Theatre Trip to see **Operation Mincemeat** at the Cliffs Pavilion at 2.30pm. Tickets on sale in May - £46.00

## FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

Well, after a rather wet start to the year it looks as though the weather is finally turning in our favour. Seeing life come back into nature is always amazing with the crocuses, snowdrops and daffodils signalling the end of winter.

Rayleigh u3a has seen several changes lately. The running of the book stall has now been taken over by Ray Lowe and his team - thank you all, and a huge thank you goes out to Les, Carol and Stella for the many years they have been bringing a vast selection of books for us to enjoy. But whilst the books are great, it is also a place where many conversations start and friendships are made - long may it continue.

The speakers over the last few months have been really good, especially the last one, Tony Harris, who brought Margaret Thatcher back to life with his anecdotes and tales - thank you Stuart for the selection of speakers. Tony will be back sometime next year as another character. Who will that be??? You'll need to keep coming to find out.

The various groups we have are growing and several have a waiting list - anyone on the waiting lists that fancy starting a new group please see Paul Reeve who will support you and give you all the assistance needed to get up and running.

The Mill Hall is still seeing improvements with the opening of the cafe and we all wish them well with this venture which is greatly appreciated.

Lastly, we have our AGM looming on the horizon in May and we are still in need of new committee members, especially we need a secretary, group co-ordinator and additional help with setting up the audio and visual systems. Again please see anyone on the committee and we can discuss the roles in greater depth with you.

May I wish you all a safe month until we meet again.  
Ray Osborne



## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Our new membership year starts on 1st April and your new Membership Cards will be ready to collect in the room to the left of the entrance to the Mill Hall at our meeting on Wednesday 1st April - thank you in advance to my lovely volunteers who hand out the cards for me, with over 450 members, it can be a mammoth task!

Once you have collected your card, please do ensure that you complete the reverse of the card with your 'In Case of Emergency' contact details - these can be so helpful if anything untoward happens meaning we can contact someone for you.

If you have yet to renew, you will be able to at the meeting—Jill Cann will be manning the Renewals table in the additional room. Cash or cheque payable to Rayleigh u3a please.

# The Nineteenth Annual General Meeting of Rayleigh u3a Wednesday 6th May 2026 @ 2pm at The Mill Hall, Rayleigh

## AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Approval of Minutes of the 18th Annual General Meeting (May 2025)
4. Chairman's Report
5. Approval of the Trustees Annual Report
6. Treasurer's Report & Approval of Accounts.
7. Appointment of Examiner of Accounts for 2026
8. Election of Officers and Committee Members
9. Any other Business
10. Closure of the Meeting.

## **Short Interval, followed by our Speaker**

All relevant papers can be found on our website: <https://rayleigh.u3asite.uk/> or hard copies are available at the Secretary's Noticeboard at the Monthly Meetings. We hope to see as many members at this meeting as possible. Thank you.

## USED STAMPS AND OLD COINS

I would like to thank everyone who has donated their used postage stamps. I have been asked if I could send them to the **Friends of Bone Cancer Research Trust**. This is a local charity based in Benfleet which makes it particularly appropriate.



Please can I ask that when cutting used stamps from envelopes that there is border of at least 1cm, avoiding damage to perforations otherwise the charity can't use the stamps.

Old, foreign, pre-euro, or pre-decimal coins can be donated to UK charities. These coins, including withdrawn currencies like pesetas or old £1 coins are sorted and exchanged for usable currency, and converted into funds for charity projects.

**The Cancer Charity Shop UK** in the High Street is willing to take the donations which will make it easy for me to donate the currency. This will be on-going, together with the stamp donations, so there will be plenty of time to have a sort-out!

*Thanks to Jill Cann for organising this - please bring your stamps and old coins to a Monthly Meeting where there will be containers to donate them available.*

# LATEST NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS COORDINATOR

We have members already looking to join the Bridge group so whether you are a seasoned veteran or looking to learn the game, do please contact me and we can get the group up and running.

Our second Rummikub Group meets on the 4th Friday morning each month at Rayleigh Conservative Club still has some places available if you are interested in joining. Thank you to all those who responded regarding our call for a couple of more games for the group.

There are also spaces available to join our Coffee & Conversation for Ladies Group 5 which also meets on the 4th Friday morning in the month in Rayleigh town centre. All our Coffee & Conversation groups are hugely successful, so don't miss your opportunity to join a group while vacancy exists.

Please check elsewhere on our website for the most up-to-date list of other groups which presently have vacancies.

If you are interested or would like more information about any of our groups, then please contact me via the Contacts page or come and see me at the Monthly Members Meetings.

Finally, the same polite request I make in every newsletter...our Group Leaders do a fabulous job in organising the groups our members attend and so expect ALL members in their groups to always let them know if you are going to attend each meeting OR NOT.

In fairness to others who may be on the waiting list to join groups, if a member has not been in contact with the Group Leader for THREE CONSECUTIVE MEETINGS, unless there are particular extenuating circumstances, it is not unreasonable that they be removed from the group and will then go on the waiting list should they then wish to join again.

Paul Reeve, Group Coordinator

## VOLUNTEERS AT MEETINGS

At our monthly meeting, Rayleigh u3a relies on volunteers to make it the friendly and welcome place that we are proud of. Various duties include:

- ◆ Welcoming prospective and new members at the door and helping them to complete forms and show them around the meeting room, looking at what is on offer.
- ◆ Selling tickets, handing out Membership Cards
- ◆ Serving coffee/tea at events

If you can help with any of the above, we would be most grateful.

If you may like to join the friendly team, please let Amanda Lowe know. Thank you!

# GROUPS WITH VACANCIES AS AT MARCH 2026

Please note that vacancy levels can change, so please treat this list as indicative.

- ART** (1<sup>st</sup> Thursday morning)
- BADMINTON** (each Monday and / or Tuesday afternoon)
- BRIDGE** (new group to be started)
- CANASTA** (2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday evening)
- CERAMICS** (1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday morning)
- COFFEE & CONVERSATION FOR LADIES 5** (4<sup>th</sup> Friday morning)
- DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY** (2<sup>nd</sup> Monday morning)
- DOLLS HOUSE RENOVATION** (new group to be started)
- DRESSMAKING CIRCLE** (3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday afternoon)
- FAMILY HISTORY 2** (4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday)
- REAL ALE** (3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday lunchtime)
- TABLE TENNIS 1** (3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday morning)
- TABLE TENNIS 2** (1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday morning)
- VISIT ESSEX CHURCHES** (2<sup>nd</sup> Monday)
- WALKING GROUP 5** (2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday morning)
- WINE APPRECIATION** (2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday evening)

Contact Paul Reeve on [paulreeve@rayleighu3a.co.uk](mailto:paulreeve@rayleighu3a.co.uk) for info or register interest.

## Talks for All—12th March 2026 'My Circumnavigation and how it turned me Green.'

On 12th March we welcomed environmental activist, and 2024 Green Party Parliamentary Candidate for North West Essex Constituency, Edward Gildea.

In 2018 Edward was a crew member on a Clipper Round The World Yacht Race.

"03.30 is a tough wakeup call, yet the reward of watching the sun rise, thousands of miles from land, remote seabirds chasing the wind uplift from your sails is second to none."

He spoke at length, accompanied by some wonderful photographs and film footage, and even self-penned poetry inspired by the natural world he observed. Yet despite the beauty he saw, he also witnessed melting glaciers and icebergs, and corals bleached by rising water temperatures, and all this, he said, as well as the birth of two grandsons, made him more determined that we have a fragile earth, worth fighting for.

I think all those present agreed that he was a very warm and engaging speaker, and he was very keen to answer questions and engage in comments after his talk.

*Juli Fowles*

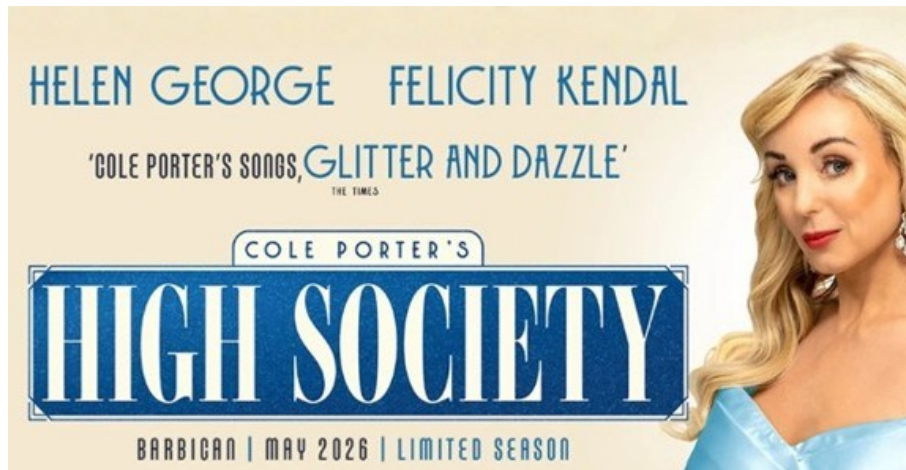
# THEATRE TRIPS

## at the Cliffs Pavilion



## BARNUM

Thursday 2nd July 2026 at 2.30pm  
Tickets: £42.00



## HIGH SOCIETY

Wednesday 29th July 2026 at 2.30pm  
Tickets: £39.00

**SIGN UP AT THE THEATRE TRIPS TABLE AT THE APRIL MONTHLY MEETING OR EMAIL: [debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk](mailto:debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk)**

## Talks for All

### Angela Bell & the Fascinating History of the Cryptic Crossword

Are you a Cruciverbalist?

Would you like to be?

Or are you completely daunted  
by Cryptic Crosswords?

In this engaging & interactive presentation & workshop you will work in small groups with O.U. & u3a tutor Angela Bell & learn not only how to decipher the clues but also how crosswords played a key role in recruiting code breakers at Bletchley Park in WWII.

**Thursday 6th August 2.00pm**

Doors Open 1.45pm for refreshments

Mill Hall, Rayleigh **Tickets £3.00**

Tickets available at May, June & July Meetings

# NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS

## WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

The Wine Appreciation Group had its first meeting of 2026 in February after its winter break and tried several wines from the New World (New Zealand and Chile) and the old (France and Greece). The aim of the group is to give members an opportunity to "try before they buy" over a range of different wines that they might not otherwise purchase and develop their knowledge of wine in general. Over time everybody finds new wines to add to their shopping list.

We currently charge £8 a meeting to cover the cost of up to 8 wines which is a cheap way of finding out whether you like a particular wine before splashing out on buying it. We currently have several vacancies so if this sounds like something you would be of interested in please contact Paul Reeves for more information.

*Bob Keeley*



## WALKING GROUP 3

Walking group 3 visited Little Wakering on 10th March.

We walked along the Little Wakering Creek & covered some of King Charles III coastal path. We walked back through St Mary the Virgin churchyard to The Castle Inn where we stopped for lunch. Unfortunately the church closed for worship in 2017 due to an unfunded badly damaged roof.

*Anita Waite*



## KNIT & CROCHET

Some of the latest projects from our busy creative group!

## **BOOK GROUP 4**

In February, Viv Smith stepped down as leader of the group, after many years. She was the link between the group members and librarians, making sure that we had a variety of books to expand our reading, and always initiated some lively discussions.

Viv was very moved and surprised to receive a colourful bouquet of flowers from the group as a token of appreciation for her running the group for so long.

*Juli Fowles*



## **WAFLING FOR MEN GROUP**

The group meet every 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday in the month. In February, the group enjoyed playing pool together along with a snack lunch at the Snooker Hall above Rayleigh Lanes Indoor Market. The group played in pairs and at the knockout stage, Kevin Bailey beat Clifford Churchill, and lifted the WfM Cup to celebrate his victory.



By the time you read this newsletter our trip to see Southend United play on the evening of 25<sup>th</sup> March which I organised will have taken place. Hopefully a positive result versus Woking will make the evening even more enjoyable.

Our activity for April will be Air Rifle shooting at Belchamps in Hawkwell – thanks to Pete Dixon who will be running this for the group.

*Paul Reeve*

## **BADMINTON GROUP**

Our Badminton group meets every Monday and Tuesday afternoon from 16.00 to 17.00 at Rayleigh Leisure Centre.

There are vacancies for either day so why not go along and give it a try.

Contact Paul Reeve, our Group Coordinator for more information.



## **SERENDIPITY 6**

Members of Serendipity 6 enjoyed a lovely lunch at The Med which also gave us time to catch up and have a chat.



*Val Whitehouse*

## **LONGER WALKS GROUP**

We have so far completed 3 walks this year, all under very different weather conditions. Our January walk was a circular chilly crisp walk from the Shepherd and Dog in Crays Hill. Lovely blue skies but everyone was wrapped up warm.

By contrast our February walk was in some really miserable weather. We walked from Rayleigh Weir, over Thundersley Common, Bread and Cheese Hill, Thundersley Glen, and into Hadleigh Country Park, where we stopped for a coffee. We then returned to Rayleigh via West Wood and Little Havens Nature Reserve. There were a lot of ups and downs, and the ground was muddy and slippery underfoot, so it was a bit of a challenge.

For March we walked from Shaw Farm in South Woodham Ferrers, up towards Radar Hill, across to Woodham Ferrers, and over to RHS Hyde Hall, where we stopped for a coffee. We sat outside in the sun which was lovely. We then continued on back to Shaw Farm, enjoying seeing the Alpaca's on route. Such a different walk from February.

Thank you to everyone in the group. Its lovely to get out in the fresh air together, enjoying the countryside and each others company.

*Peter Dixon*



## **PETANQUE**

Here are some photos taken of our Petanque session in January as the weather was reasonably kind to us and good fun was had by all. We have demonstrated that we are a hardy lot in continuing to play during the winter season!

*Geoff King*

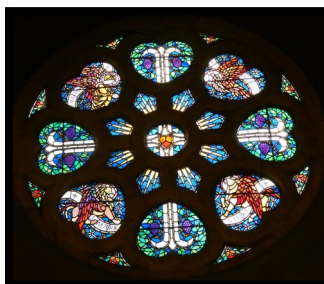
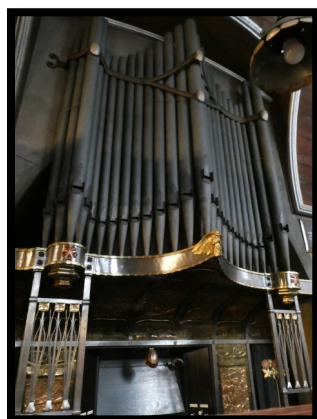


## **DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP**

The photographic group had a lovely morning at St Mary the Virgin Church in Great Warley, Brentwood. It is a Grade I listed building so gave us many lovely photographic views.

If you are interested in photography, even if you only have a camera on your phone, and have your own transport, the Group would welcome new members. If you may be interested, please contact Paul Reeve, Group Coordinator.

*Amanda Lowe*



## **AND LASTLY.....**

Just a reminder that our u3a is run by volunteers and without help, and a steady stream of new recruits to our team, the onus on them can become quite a burden when it should be fun and rewarding (which it mostly is!).

Please do give some serious thought to how you can support our u3a - by volunteering to help, by starting a new group or by taking on a Committee role - every little offer can have a big impact and would be very welcome. Do speak to a Committee member for more info. Thank you x