

JUNE 2026 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to you all as we enter another year of Rayleigh u3a and look forward to the varied range of activities that are planned in the groups.

Following on from the AGM there have been several changes within the Committee and I am really pleased that, after the concerns of how to move forward without a Secretary, I can confirm that Shirley Page has stepped forward and has agreed to take up the position of Rayleigh u3a Secretary. Shirley was voted in, unanimously, at our last Committee meeting and I know that Jane has met Shirley and is handing over the baton to her. Shirley's husband Colin will also be joining the Committee, and we look forward to his input as we move forward.

I am sure you will all be glad to know that this secures the viability of our u3a for the next 3 years. Jane has now formally resigned from the role of Secretary as has her husband Paul who was the outgoing Groups Co-ordinator. We have seen both of them grow within u3a and they take with them the blessings of us all as we wish them all the best in their "retirement" from the u3a Committee. Barbara Whitehead was elected onto the Committee at the AGM and we welcome her into the role of the new Groups Co-ordinator and look forward to working alongside her.

Our speakers for the next year are looking to be varied and will provide a good source of entertainment over the coming months, a big thank you to Stuart for organising these. The book stall is doing very well under the leadership of Ray Lowe and his team and it is good to see that this is proving to continue to be a source of friendships and a discussion area for members who love reading.

Our last new members meeting was a great success and a thank you to all of you who attended to chat, drink coffee and enjoy Amanda's lovely cakes.

Very early I know, but we need to look ahead and the u3a Christmas meal has been booked and tickets will be on sale in the near future, do put the 1st Dec in your diaries, to be held again at Saxon Hall, where we look forward to greeting you all.

Until the next meeting, keep safe and keep talking to one another over a cup of coffee.
Best wishes, Ray Osborne
Chairman

**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.
Closing date for the September 2026 Newsletter is 15th August 2026**

FUTURE MONTHLY SPEAKERS

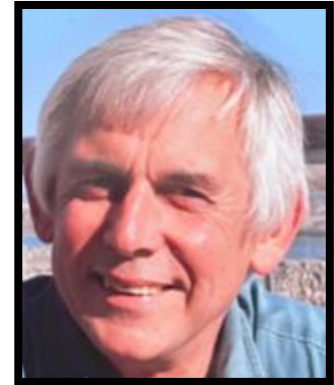


3rd June 2026

Our speaker for June will be Brian Carline with a talk entitled Soil, Sweat & Tears. A look at amusing aspects of gardening, ranging from looking at TV gardeners to the use of garden tools. The talk will appeal to those who are allergic to gardening to those who's garden is their life.

1st July 2026

Our speaker in July is Chris Levett who will be giving a talk entitled Riding the Rails - a historic and scenic rail journey through Europe. Travelling by Train through 6 countries covering 3000 miles, up 35,000ft of mountains and 27,000ft by cable car.



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 3rd June 2026

Wednesday 1st July 2026

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

Wednesday 2nd September 2026

Theatre Trips, Educational and Social Events

Thursday 2nd July 2026 - Theatre Trip to see **Barnum** at the Cliffs Pavilion at 2.30pm. Tickets all sold

Wednesday 29th July 2026 - Theatre Trip to see **High Society** at the Cliffs Pavilion at 2.30pm. Tickets all sold

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. Last few Tickets on sale in June - £46.00

Tuesday 1st December 2026—Rayleigh u3a Annual Christmas Lunch
12.30pm at Saxon Hall. Tickets on sale in September - £39 each

AGM UPDATE

You will have read in the Chairman's message that our AGM went smoothly with 127 members attending. We presented gifts and thanks to both Jane and Paul Reeve who were both stepping down. Barbara Whitehead was elected onto the Committee and she has taken over the role of Groups Coordinator from Paul. Our thanks were also extended to Jim Whitehouse for undertaking the audit on our Annual Accounts.



With Shirley Page speaking to us after the AGM offering to take on the role of Secretary and her husband Colin also joining the Committee, we are now fully 'staffed' with our Trustees so many thanks from us all.

A NOTE FROM OUR OUT-GOING GROUPS CO-ORDINATOR

Having now stepped down from the Groups Coordinator and Committee roles with Rayleigh u3a, I just wanted to pass on my thanks to all the Groups Leaders and fellow Committee Members for their support over the past four years.

It has been an absolute pleasure working with you all.

Paul Reeve

Photo of Paul and new Groups Co-ordinator Barbara Whitehead (Is it me or is Paul looking far too happy?!!)



NOTICES

Sadly we have been informed of the death of Corrine Scott who passed away late in 2025. Our belated condolences go out to her family and friends.

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

THEATRE TRIPS

at the Cliffs Pavilion



OPERATION MINCEMEAT

Wednesday 2nd September 2026 at 2.30pm

Tickets: £46.00

**** Last Tickets for sale at June Meeting ****



SINGIN' IN THE RAIN

Wednesday 10th February 2027 at 2.30pm

Tickets: £48.00

Interested? Sign up at the June and July Meetings

MORE DETAILS AT THE THEATRE TRIPS TABLE AT THE MONTHLY MEETING OR EMAIL: debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk

LATEST NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS COORDINATOR

Hello everyone - my name is Barbara and I'm the new Rayleigh u3a Groups Coordinator. I have taken over the role from Paul Reeve who has done a sterling job during his time in post, greatly increasing the number of groups available to our members, we owe him a big debt of gratitude. I plan to take this growth further but will need your help to do so. We need people to step forward to run new groups, so we have capacity for more members to enjoy the vast selection of activities we can offer. Please come and talk to me, or email me, there is always help/advice and support available. Similarly, if you have an idea for a new group, I'm here to listen.

There was a lot of interest shown at our May Members Meeting in Scrabble, Walking Group 5 and Ladies Coffee and Conversation Group 5, all of which are now full and in the case of the Walking Group, a waiting list already!!! Please check out our website or the Groups Board at the next meeting for vacancies and or new groups forming.

Communication is the key in all matters for the smooth running of any organisation so please, please, please, PLEASE let your group leader know if you WILL be attending the next group meeting/outing, and more importantly if you ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND. Our group leaders do a fantastic job and after all it's only common courtesy to do so.

Likewise, if a member fails to notify their group leader of any absence from a group for 3 consecutive meetings without extenuating circumstances, it's only fair to members on the waiting list, that they are removed from the group, allowing another member to take their place.

Barbara Whitehead, Groups Coordinator.

SPRING QUIZ

Another successful and fun evening, with a photo of the winning team below. Thanks to Jim and Val Whitehouse for organising the event.



NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS

VISIT INTERESTING PLACES IN ESSEX

Nineteen members of the Visiting Interesting Places in Essex Group visited Chelmsford Cathedral in April. After refreshments the group enjoyed a most interesting talk and guided tour.

The original church was built on the site in the early 1200's with the first recorded service in 1223. In 1420 the Church was dedicated to St Mary. In 1914 the Church became a Cathedral when the Diocese of Chelmsford was formed and the first bishop appointed. It was subsequently dedicated to St Mary, St Peter and St Cedd.

Chelmsford is the second smallest Anglican cathedral in the country, the smallest being Derby, but the Diocese of Chelmsford is the second largest in country, the largest being Leeds.

We enjoyed lunch afterwards at the nearby Middletons restaurant.



*The group standing in front of the beautiful 'Tree of Life' by Mark Cazalet, painted on thirty-five oak panels and installed in the North Transept in 2004 to mark the 1,350th anniversary of St Cedd at Bradwell.
Maureen & Peter Huntly*



GARDENING GROUP

Members of the Gardening Group visit Farmer Scott's Tulip fields in Brentwood for some beautiful Spring colour.

DO CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE FOR LOTS OF INFORMATION -
<https://rayleigh.u3asite.uk/>

SERENDIPITY 6

Members of Serendipity 6 visited the East Anglian Railway Museum at Chappel & Wakes Colne Station on a blustery day in March. A visit to Platform Two Café for a coffee sitting in a carriage set us up for a visit around the museum.

The whole site is the museum and showed various aspects of 175 years of railways in the East of England and beyond. Originally formed as the Stour Valley Railway Preservation Society in 1968, it was renamed in 1986 and became a Registered Museum in 1995.

We visited the station buildings, ticket office, waiting room, the goods shed, exhibition hall and restoration shed where volunteers were hard at work. Inside the Thompson Building we saw two automated model railway displays and were invited into the Braintree & Halstead Model Railway Club room where there were several layouts with model trains running amidst intricate scenery both in N and OO gauge. We then took a train ride on the branch line from Chappel & Wakes Colne, through Bures to Stowmarket and back.



A very pleasant lunch followed in the nearby Swan Inn which is situated next to the 1060 foot long magnificent viaduct which was completed in 1849 and crosses the River Colne. It consists of thirty two 30ft semi circular spans rising to a maximum height of 75ft. Over six million bricks were used in its construction made from clay excavated from the nearby village of Bures. It was a great day out!

Val Whitehouse

GARDENING GROUP VISIT BROOKFIELD

On a beautiful sunny day in mid-March 19 members of the Gardening Group visited Brookfields in Boreham, a peaceful oasis set in three and a half acres of garden and woodland. Linda & Bob have created the garden, originally a field, over the past 55 years.

The garden had a show of daffodils, fritillaries, crocus, grape hyacinth, bergenia, a variety of magnolias and a magnolia arch, violets, hellebores, tulips and a variety of species of trees. A woodland walk and a babbling brook, through a grassy area took us past the variety of plants in bloom.

We finished our visit with delightful homemade cakes and tea and coffee sitting out on the patio as the weather was so warm.

Val Whitehouse



SIT AND SEW GROUP

The Sit and Sew Group continues to meet on the second Thursday of the month. All sorts of hand sewing is undertaken by our members, from embroidery to cross stitch, and some of us have been enjoying English Paper Piecing.

This method uses templates usually made of thick paper. The shapes are hand stitched and when the work is finished, the papers are removed. The technique goes back hundreds of years. Our grandmothers (and occasionally grandfathers) used any paper they had to hand.

Some antique quilts that still have their papers inside reveal writing paper, letters and even household bills. Today we can buy beautiful fabrics but many years ago scraps of any old fabrics were used. It was one of the earliest forms of recycling!



This picture is "work in progress" and will eventually become a beautiful wall hanging made by one of our members.

Members of the group choose their own projects and help is on hand should it be needed. The repetitive rhythmic motion of hand stitching has significant therapeutic properties, as does a cup of tea and convivial conversation!

We could squeeze another member in, so please contact Barbara Whitehead if interested.
Lesley Lovett

GARDENING GROUP 2

By the time of publication, this new Gardening Group will have undertaken their first visit - to Beeleigh Abbey Gardens Open Day in Maldon on Friday, 22nd May.

We have some more ideas for visits etc in the pipeline and are able to welcome members to the group. Do speak to Barbara Whitehead for more information.

Paul Reeve

WAFLING FOR MEN

The group meets every 4th Wednesday in the month and various visits and activities are arranged by group members throughout the year.

On 25th March the group went along to watch Southend United for their evening match against Woking. Spurred on by a couple of beers and Pukka Pies, I am sure

our roars of encouragement helped them to a 1-1 draw.



Unfortunately the planned air rifle shooting at Belchamps in May was not able to go ahead, so instead the group met for a games of Pétanque at King Georges Playing Field.

After splitting into two teams and some tense moments over a couple of games, we held a 'nearest the conch' competition which was won by Ken Grace - the latest winner of the WfM Cup.

Paul Reeve

SERENDIPITY 6

Serendipity 6 went to Chelmsford Cathedral for one of their popular Friday Lunchtime Concerts. We all enjoyed listening to Men2Sing, a popular contemporary male voice choir. The group of men provide support for each other and we could see how they enjoyed singing and entertaining us all. They sang a variety of well known songs from musicals and pop, ending with Stars from Les Miserables which was a highlight for us.

We followed the concert with a wonderful lunch at Il Palazzo on Duke Street. It was lovely to catch up with friends from this group formed in 2018.

Lesley & Dave Kilminster



WINE TASTING GROUP or THE OENOPHILES

'Wines of the Amazon with Jane and Paul' was how the latest Oenophiles meeting on 14th May was intriguingly entitled. 'That's interesting' thought the group as we pondered what lay ahead. Could this be some new world offering from Colombia or a deep red from the foothills of Machu Pichu, or maybe something new from Brazil. Now I've never had a Brazilian but us Oenophiles are nothing if not adventurous.

However, all became clear as we arrived chez Reeve, once we saw the Amazon delivery truck parked several doors away. Once Paul retrieved the wine from a different address than was requested (thankfully not thrown over a side gate as can be their want) we settled down to enjoying a variety of reds and whites from Chile, South Africa and France, accompanied by some wonderful food, the homemade baba ghanoush being particularly scrummy, especially for a man like me brought up on pies.

As ever, opinion on people's favourite wine varies and that is the point of this group. We don't pretend to be experts and there is no snobbery (although we may draw the line at half a dozen bottles of Blue Nun). It is all about having a good evening, liking what you like and enjoying some good conversation in the company of lovely people. It does have to be said that the conversation can dip in direct correlation to the amount of wine imbibed and last night's deep and meaningful involved what the ladies had bought during the recent photography trip, how does Stuart manage to keep his glasses on his head and Ray's tight ring in Turkey (we've all been there!)

As is the norm, we finished with a quiz, based on the company Amazon. A tight contest saw Carol and Stuart tie, with Stuart winning the tie break. A thoroughly splendid evening was had by all. Thanks to the group who made it so special and special thanks to Paul and Jane for being wonderful hosts, with a very clever play on a theme. Thanks, also to Jude and Ken who act as chauffeurs.

We do it all again next month with a selection of reds from Parcel Force!

Stuart Evans



LONGER WALKS GROUP

Our April walk was led by Dave. He took the group on a circular route from the Chequers pub in Goldhanger. A lovely crisp day, along the River Blackwater and through the surrounding countryside.

For May, we did a circular walk from the Ferry Boat Inn at North Fambridge. The route took us through the Blue House Farm nature reserve, adjacent to the River Crouch. It was a bit windy, and we managed to dodge the showers which were threatening all morning.

Thank you to everyone in the group for some lovely walks and your company.

Peter Dixon – Group Leader



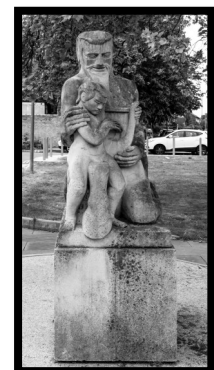
PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

Our latest outing was to Harlow Essex on 11th May. After coffee and a warmup in Costa Coffee, we set off to explore the many statues and murals. It started to rain, it did not dampen our enthusiasm, and we all managed to get some great photos.

We had an enjoyable morning and a delicious lunch too. The temperature outside was so cold, the ladies just had to pop into Sainsburys to buy a jumper in the sales (any excuse!).

If you were thinking about joining our friendly group, we would love to have you. We meet on the 2nd Monday of the month. Different locations are discussed with the group to make it interesting. You do not need a professional camera - just a phone camera will do. Having transport is essential. We take it in turns to car share.

Jim Whitehouse and Amanda Lowe



Apologies as due to lack of space, the Group Vacancies list has not been included. Do check our website or come and see Barbara Whitehead at the Groups board at the June or July Meetings for the latest updates.