

SEPTEMBER 2026 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our latest u3a newsletter and a big welcome to all new members.

Well, what can I say about the weather, 1976 eat your heart out. Whilst the sun and heat are lovely it was certainly a bit much at times. Hopefully we are all looking forward to the change as we go back to a more normal environment.

Not really a lot to say this month as we have not met in August and I am looking forward to seeing you all again on the 2nd September. Membership remains very strong and this is encouraging especially with new members joining.

Our groups are continuing to expand with new groups now actively running and with the new monthly coffee meetings there is a lovely buzz at the moment with more members taking advantage of the activities on offer.

At the next meeting tickets will be available for various forthcoming events including the Christmas u3a meal at the Saxon Hall, always a grand affair.

The book stall is going well with a good turnover of books of all genres.

Not really much more to say other than keep safe, keep talking and see you all soon.

Regards

Ray Osborne
Chairman

Free online talks, workshops and courses

U3a members can access a wide range of free online talks, workshops and courses through their membership. Most sessions are led by fellow members, sharing their expertise, with additional talks from notable speakers and organisations. You can also sign up to a Monthly Events Newsletter.

Take a look online at: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/educational-events>

**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 November 2026 Newsletter is 15th October 2026**

FUTURE MONTHLY SPEAKERS

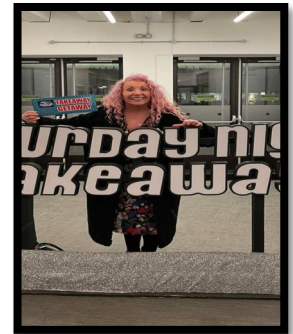


2nd September 2026

Our speaker for September will be Peter Gill with a talk entitled 'The Wit & Songs of Noel Coward'. Noel Coward was an actor, writer, composer, director, producer and of course singer. Peter reminds us of his talent and wonderful songs and wit with live music and visuals. Songs including Mrs Worthington and of course, Mad Dogs and Englishmen!

7th October 2026

Our speaker in October is Lindsey Barrell who will be giving a talk entitled 'As seen on TV'. A fabulously funny, heart-warming & interesting talk Lindsey tells us about how she appeared on 2 Primetime T.V. shows & won not 1 but 2 fabulous FREE holidays!



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 2nd September 2026

Wednesday 7th October 2026

Wednesday 4th November 2026

****No Meeting in December****

Meet & Greet Coffee Events for All Members @ WI Hall

Friday 18th September 2026 10.30am - 12.30pm

Friday 16th October 2026 2pm - 4pm

Friday 20th November 2026 10.30am - 12.30pm

Theatre Trips, Educational and Social Events

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

Thursday 11th February 2027 - Theatre Trip to see **Singin' in the Rain** at the Cliffs Pavilion at 2.30pm. Tickets on sale in September - £43.50

Thursday 29th April 2027 - Theatre Trip to see **Jesus Christ Superstar** at the Cliffs Pavilion at 2.30pm. Sign up in September - £58.00

We finally got to thank Jane Reeve, our out-going Secretary with a well-deserved gift and flowers on behalf of the Committee and all our members!



SECURITY

A couple of our members have nearly been caught out in a scam involving their bank accounts and we thought it would be a good idea to remind all our members to be extra vigilant when online or if receiving unexpected telephone calls.

There are several good websites to look at giving information of the latest scams to be aware of, and what you can do to protect yourself. One of the best is from the trusted 'Which' team and you can find out more here: [Scam Alerts service – sign up, it's free](#) - this is a free weekly newsletter (you don't have to be a member of Which) and is very informative.

There are many other options online - a website: <https://www.getsafeonline.org/> gives you lots of information, a monthly newsletter, a place to check a website and much, much more. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) is a part of GCHQ and is the UK's lead authority on cyber security and has many resources to use: <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/advice-guidance/you-your-family>

Please do take care and if in doubt, hang up, log out and double check anything that seems even slightly suspicious.

u3a Getaways

A collaboration between u3a and the UK Holiday Group, each trip takes the learning and fun of u3a on tour. On a u3a getaway you can scrub up your knowledge on a wide range of topics while exploring the UK and forming new connections. Join u3a members from around the country on a range of bespoke holidays exclusive to u3a members and their friends. This exciting partnership opens a new chapter in discovery, fun and shared experience. Look forward to a continually evolving collection of unique itineraries.

All details on this website: <https://www.justforgroups.com/u3a-getaways>

NOTICES

Sadly we have been informed of the death of Nigel Gordon who passed away in June 2026. Our condolences have been sent to his wife Amanda, and family.



ANNUAL U3A CHRISTMAS LUNCH
Tuesday 1st December @ 12.30pm
Saxon Hall
Tickets: £39 - on sale from Sept

STARTERS

Spiced Carrot & Parsnip Soup Breaded Brie with a Plum & Port

Compote or

Prawn Cocktail with Smoked Salmon

MAINS

Traditional Roast Turkey with Roast Potatoes, Cranberry Stuffing,

Pigs in Blankets and Fresh Festive Vegetables or

Grilled Sea Bass with Buttered Asparagus, Roasted New Potatoes

and a White Wine Sauce or

Butternut Squash, Spinach, Leek and Goats Cheese Filo Parcel

with Ratatouille & Roasted New Potatoes

DESSERTS

Christmas Pudding served with Brandy Sauce

Baileys Creme Brulee served with a Shortbread Biscuit

White Chocolate & Raspberry Cheesecake

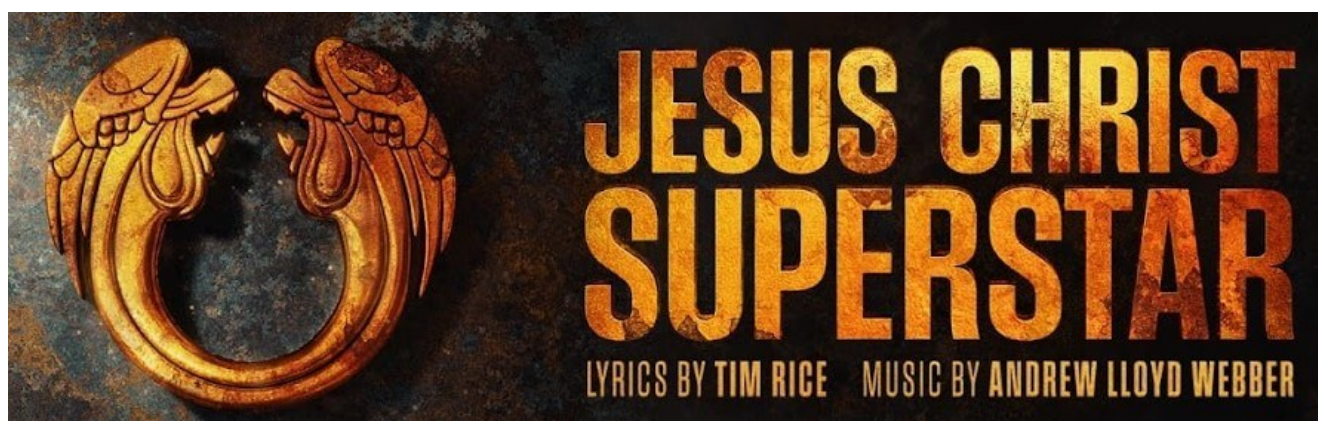
Followed by Tea or Coffee & Mince Pies

THEATRE TRIPS

at the Cliffs Pavilion



Wednesday 10th February 2027 at 2.30pm
Tickets: £48.00 on sale at September Meeting
Or email: debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk



Thursday 29th April 2027 at 2.30pm
Tickets: £58.00 Sign up at September Meeting
Or email: debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk

What a Swell Party it Was!

A real trip down memory lane for 46 u3a members who experienced the latest revival of High Society at the Cliffs in July with fabulous dancing and singing and beautiful costumes and set. We all left signing and reminiscing!

A trip to see Barnum at the beginning of July was also a great success. Amazing circus acts, tightrope walking and a colourful production was enjoyed by all.

The Fascinating History of the Cryptic Crossword.

On Thursday 6th August at the Mill Hall, we welcomed Open University and u3a tutor Angela Bell, who is a lifelong devotee of such puzzles, setting her own as group leader, and for some small publications.

We were joined by members from a few local u3a groups. We learned that the earliest known word puzzles date back to the days of Pompeii but the early cryptic crossword as we know it was compiled in New York in the 1930's and quickly became popular in the UK. Angela went on to explain that there are as many as 11 types of clue available, but because of time constraints she was able to explain the use of only 4, the common anagram, hidden words, deletions and reversals, before handing out an empty grid, we then worked in small groups to try and find the answers, with varying degrees of success!

Juli Fowles

LATEST NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS COORDINATOR

Hello Everyone

I'm pleased to report the Meet and Greet Sessions in the WI Hall in June and July were a success and by popular demand, I have arranged four more sessions, taking us up to December 2026. The first will be on Friday 18th September at 10.30am - 12.30pm in the WI Hall, just as before. There is no need to book, just drop in where a warm, convivial welcome awaits. It's an ideal opportunity for members, new and current, Group leaders and Committee to get to know each other. Please see the Dates for your Diary for future dates of the Meet and Greet Sessions.

Also pleased to announce that a new Knitting and Crochet group has started, calling themselves the Knitters who Natter. A new History Group, along with a new Strolling Group and The Old Grey-haired Whistle Test Music Group are due to start in September. There are further groups in both History and Strolling to follow and a new Walking Group is on the cards too.

My Groups board on display at the Main Meetings and at the Meet and Greet Sessions are currently advertising new ideas for groups. So far, there is interest in a Curry Night, Board Games, Lunch Group, Dog Walking, Breakfast Club and Art Appreciation, just not enough presently, to start a group. If you are interested in any of the 14 new ideas on display, please fill in the form on the groups table at the meetings or email me at:

groupscoordinator@rayleighu3a.co.uk

(cont.)

LATEST NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS COORDINATOR - continued

If you have an idea for a new group, please speak to me or email me.

Just a reminder, please remember to take your membership card with you to ALL u3a group meetings and events and please make sure your emergency contact details are filled in on the reverse. It is to your advantage, should anything untoward happen, the group leader has a named person to contact on your behalf.

Regards Barbara
Rayleigh u3a Groups Coordinator

GROUPS with VACANCIES as of the 18th Aug 2026

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

**If you are interested in any of these group vacancies, please contact:
groupscoordinator@rayleighu3a.co.uk**

ART (1st Thursday morning)

BADMINTON (each Monday and / or Tuesday afternoon)

BRIDGE (every Monday afternoon)

DRESSMAKING CIRCLE (3rd Wednesday afternoon)

FAMILY HISTORY GROUP 3 (4th Thursday afternoon)

PHOTOGRAPHY (Every two months day variable)

REAL ALE (3rd Wednesday lunchtime)

SERENDIPITY 6 (4th Wednesday)

TABLE TENNIS 1 (3rd Wednesday morning)

TABLE TENNIS 2 (1st Tuesday morning)

VISIT ESSEX CHURCHES (2nd Monday)

WINE APPRECIATION (2nd Tuesday evening)

NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS

GARDENING GROUP 2

This recently formed group continues to visit gardens on a regular basis and in July we wrestled at 8 Dene Court in Chelmsford. This is a small but perfectly planned garden, densely planted with a significant variety of different plants and opened occasionally as part of the National Gardens scheme.

The owner previous ran a nursery specialising in clematis and her knowledge was very much in evidence in her garden.

Paul Reeve



GARDENING GROUP Visit Little Burstead

In June the Gardening Group visited Brook Cottage and Ivy Cottage, which were a few doors apart. They were very different gardens with Ivy Cottage being a typical cottage garden with a variety of herbaceous and climbing plants in a 1 ½ acre garden. There was a lovely selection of mature trees providing tranquil spaces for a rest on a lovely day looking over a large lily pond, dry garden and dell.

Brook Cottage had traditional front and back gardens with a profusion of roses and classic blooms as well as a 3 ½ acre meadow and woodland.

A wonderful array of hot and cold drinks and homemade cakes were provided with plenty of seating to take in the garden views. Plants were on sale and members took advantage of these!

Val Whitehouse

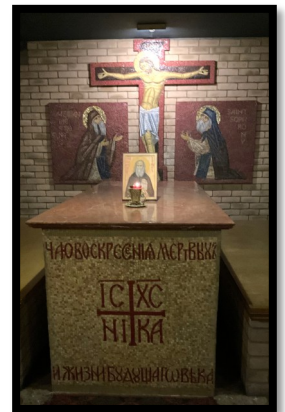


VISITING ESSEX CHURCHES

Rayleigh u3a Church Visiting Group have enjoyed two very different Church Visits in July and August. The first to St. John the Baptist Monastery in Tolleshunt Knights. The peaceful home of fifty Monks and Nuns who live in separate residential quarters.



Father Andrew showed us many beautiful mosaics on buildings, paintings adorning walls and ceilings painted by the Nuns and richly decorated interiors including the Crypt where the Founder St Sophrony is buried.



In contrast we were given an illustrated Talk by Mick Chapman, the Regiment Chapel Warden about the Regimental Chapel at Warley, built in 1857. Now a Grade II listed Garrison Church. Today it serves as a memorial site containing Regimental History, Heraldry and old Colours.

Both the Monastery and the Regimental Chapel are places dedicated to those who serve God, the Community and their Country.



Maureen Huntly

SIT AND SEW

The Sit and Sew group continues to meet on the 2nd Thursday of the month. All kinds of hand sewing are undertaken. Embroidery, hand sewing and English paper piecing to name just a few.

Members of the group are free to choose their own projects but help is on hand if needed. Ideas are shared - if someone has a problem there is usually someone who has a solution!

Our last meeting was on one of the hottest day of the year so far, but we still managed to have a very pleasant afternoon accompanied by refreshments and plenty of convivial conversation.



Lesley Lovett



This beautiful embroidery has been made by one of our members and is ready to be framed to take pride of place in her home. She has used a variety of stitches and techniques.

COACH TRIP TO BURGHLEY HOUSE

This year's coach trip combined members from four different groups and we travelled to the magnificent Burghley House. On arrival we enjoyed a coffee in the café before choosing to see the house or garden first.

The garden comprised many varied and exciting themes, the Sculpture Garden, the Garden of Surprises, the Hidden Valley, Tropical Borders, Cut Flower Garden and Capability Brown's Lake were amongst the many places to visit. The house had 18 magnificent state rooms containing priceless treasures.



The delicious lunch was in the Orangery Restaurant where we all met up again as a welcome break. During our journey home we organised a quiz to while away the time and the winners were Sue & Steve Wood who won a voucher for an Afternoon Tea for 2 at Squires.

Val & Jim Whitehouse

LONGER WALKS

We walked along a completely new pathway in June. As part of the King Charles III England Coast Path a new section of path has been opened this year, between South Farnbridge and Hullbridge. We set off from The Bull in Hockley and headed north towards the River Crouch, joining it just north of the Dome Caravan Park. We followed the pathway west towards Hullbridge, stopping en-route at the Riverview Café for a coffee. We then continued south back towards the Bull where we had a well earned lunch.

Our walk in July was postponed due to the hot weather, however, we persevered in August and had a walk from the Fox and Goose on the Ongar Road west of Writtle. We walked broadly in a southerly direction ending up in Mill Green. Here we had our obligatory coffee stop. We then headed in a northerly direction back towards the Ongar Road, and our lunch stop at the Fox and Goose. We managed to keep in the woods for about half of the route, but it was hot along the rest of it.

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

Peter Dixon



WAFFLING FOR MEN

Waffling along beside the seaside - May 2026—The Waffling Men of Rayleigh U3A signed up for a guided mystery tour of Southend, Adrian Fox and his assistant Rick, both experienced actors and members of the magic circle met us outside the Royal Hotel. During the next two hours we were entertained with part history, part spooky ghost tales and part magic show! An unusual combination, but great fun. We learnt about the witches that haunted some of the houses along Royal Terrace and one Waffler mysteriously received the witches mark and is still trying to remove it.

Intriguing facts include that Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton were once guests at the Royal Hotel and had many raucous parties. If you continue along the Royal Terrace you arrive at the funicular railway built in 1912, this lift is now free to use and makes more money from donations. A little further and you find the world's smallest museum. This telephone box has memorabilia and a sound commentary from Helen Mirren, a local to the area. Another item that causes a smile is the statue of Queen Victoria first erected in 1898 at the top of pier hill, and moved to its current position further along Royal Terrace in 1962. It was said because she was pointing at the gentlemen's toilets. The photo shows Victoria with a distorted arm pointing out to sea. The pointing finger and then the arm, has been broken several times over the years. The restorer became so frustrated that he used a casting of his own arm in concrete fastened to the original with a steel bar. It is unfortunate that he got the proportions wrong.



The coming of the railway bought a housing boom to Southend. Property was graded 1st 2nd or 3rd class, depending on how much sea could be seen from the property. Our tour was packed with fascinating facts about a city right on our doorstep, and the ghost stories added a wonderfully spooky twist. Adrian and Rick were excellent guides, funny, engaging, and full of energy, with some clever magic tricks thrown in for good measure.

Bob White

GARDENING GROUP

Keeway in Creeksea is a large, mature country garden with stunning views over the River Crouch. We were joined by our Group Coordinator who came to meet our members.

Formal terraces surround the house, then a stroll down some steps to sweeping lawns to mixed borders. There were beautiful roses in bloom along with other traditional perennials, a greenhouse full of seasonal vegetables, a cutting garden and vegetable patch.

A pleasant tea/ coffee and homemade cake under the parasols completed a very enjoyable visit.

Val Whitehouse



SERENDIPITY 6

On a beautiful warm day in July, Serendipity 6 visited Great Lodge in Gt Bardfield, which is a Grade I Listed Estate with a brick and tiled barn, which was originally given to Anne of Cleves by Henry VIII when their marriage was annulled.

The group were welcomed with refreshments, and a talk about the history of the estate, a tour of the vineyards, walled garden and picturesque tranquil grounds. A herd of alpacas are also resident, of which their wool is sold in the shop.

The group were guided through a vineyard which was planted in 1989, and is now more than a hectare in size. With the sandy soil, combined with the dry and sunny East Anglia climate, the grapes have led to award winning still and sparkling wines, and can be purchased at the shop, where you can taste before you buy, which was very tempting for some of our group!

After a very interesting tour, a much welcomed Ploughmans Lunch was served, and a good day was had by all.

Jenny & Malcolm Perry



INTERESTING IN JOINING SERENDIPITY 6?

Serendipity 6 are an active group looking for members to join them on visits to a variety of places on the 4th Wednesday of each month.

The group have visited the East Anglian Railway, Chelmsford Cathedral for a lunchtime concert, Great Lodge, the V & A Storehouse, a London crime walk, The Dogs Trust, Epping & Ongar Railway, Southend RNLI, Cramphorn Theatre tour behind the scenes, Creeksea Place, London Docklands Museum and Shoebury Garrison as an example.

This friendly group travels to a variety of places so own transport is a prerequisite. Please email the Group Coordinator - Barbara: groupscoordinator@rayleighu3a.co.uk or see her at u3a monthly meetings.



PETANQUE

Paul Reeve was determined to play with his injury and a good session was had by all.

The heat didn't put us off!

Alan Jilley

V.I.P.E Members Visit St. Nicholas Church

Members of the Visiting Interesting Places in Essex Group enjoyed an interesting talk about the Grade II listed St. Nicholas Church in Rawreth. The list of rectors can be traced back to the reign of Edward II (1327-1377) but the oldest part of the current church building is the 15th Century west tower built around 1450. Little is known of the earliest church, but the 2 bells housed in the present tower were made by John of Hadham in around 1320.

The church of 1450 was replaced at a cost of £400 in 1823 but met with unfavorable views, being described as 'hideous'. The architect of this building was Thomas Hopper who was the County Surveyor and was also responsible for Chelmsford prison amongst other local buildings of note. The church was built on the original defective foundations and by 1870 was showing signs of distress. It was demolished in 1881.

The present church was designed by the architect Rev. Geldhart, Rector of Little Braxted, his other work includes churches in Great Braxted and Tolleshunt Major. The church was substantially rebuilt and refurnished in the early 1880's, however a few years after the restoration an earthquake caused considerable damage then there was blast damage in WWII.

There was a massive restoration in 1986-90 costing £75,000. However, more work had to be done after this as the sanctuary floor began to break up, due to the old insecure foundations and other work is still ongoing. The 75ft high tower to the bells is now restricted as it requires a climb up 25 steep spiral stairs set in the south wall to the lower platform. From there a further climb up a long aluminum ladder takes you to the belfry where the ancient bells are hung. A further short ladder takes you to the flat roof surrounded by stone battlements where we were informed there are panoramic views of the parish covering Wickford, Rayleigh and the River Crouch and beyond!! A beautiful church with a chequered history.

Val Whitehouse



INTERESTED IN PHOTOGRAPHY?

Our Photography Group are an active group looking for members to join them on their bi-monthly days out (usually a Monday) to visit to a variety of places to spend the day taking photographs. There will be the opportunity for refreshments too!

You don't have to have a fancy camera – the one on your phone will probably suffice – but do speak to one of the Group Leaders – Jim Whitehouse or Amanda Lowe for more information. This friendly group travels to a variety of places so own transport is a prerequisite.

Please email the Group Coordinator - Barbara: groupscoordinator@rayleighu3a.co.uk or see her at u3a monthly meetings.

WAFFLING FOR MEN

The group activity in June was air rifle shooting, kindly organised by Pistol Pete Dixon, which took place at the Belchamps Scout Centre in Hawkwell.

Following some practice and a series of interesting competitions, the two most accurate amongst us held a shoot-off which was won by Ken(tucky) Grace with Alan Jilley just a few points behind. Congrats to Ken - the latest recipient of the WfM Cup.

In July, we arranged a group visit to the Hornchurch Aerodrome Historic Trust.

What a fabulous collection of artefacts - not only about the aerodrome itself but also stories of the brave airmen who flew from Hornchurch as well as insights as to how the civilian population dealt with the Second World War.

The number of items on display is immense and certainly the couple of hours we spent there was not enough. Most members intend to re-visit again in the future.



By the time of this newsletter publication, a visit to the Garons Crazy Golf Course will have taken place and in September and October we will be on the Pétanque terrain in Rayleigh and Greyhound Racing at Romford Stadium respectively.

Paul Reeve

SERENDIPITY 5



With the golf season reaching a climax with the Open Championship on the telly, Serendipity 5 thought it time to broaden their horizons. So it was with some trepidation that we visited Garons golf course in July. Getting our priorities right we first visited the clubhouse for coffee and booked a table for lunch.



We paid our fees, selected our tools and made our way onto the course, where we were divided into groups of threes and fours. The course looked quite frightening to start, and isn't called crazy golf for nothing. Some of the holes are quite tricky and the greens very fast after the hot weather, but we prevailed with a number of people getting a holes in one.



However after a strenuous morning we made our way back to the clubhouse for a delightful lunch. We were intending to ride the open top bus along the prom, but after our strenuous efforts on the golf course we thought that would be for another day.

Bob White

WALKING GROUP 3

Disappointingly, Walking Group 3 had to abandon the Potash & surrounding areas July walk because of the extreme heat, so on Tuesday 11th August as the weather was not so hot we managed it.

We set off from Potash Garden Centre tea rooms and took the path towards Gusted Hall & through the woods. Unfortunately the lake which was full 6 weeks ago, has now dried up.

We carried on up to the Lawns function house & through their front field onto the High Rd.

Lunching at the tea rooms was very welcome!

Anita Waite



CREATIVE WRITING GROUP

Here is a short story from Sheila Loveridge for your enjoyment.

Yesterday - June 2026

Yesterday was not a good day. I should have realised first thing when I went swimming that the day was not with me. There were only 3 other people in my lane but they were all slow and not one of them would let me pass. I was unable to swim a complete length and after 15 minutes gave up and got out of the pool.

It was the day of the walking group and I was leaving at 9am. The weather forecast was not good, torrential rain, but ever the optimist, I thought it may just be a few showers. A couple of people had cancelled due to the weather but there were still a few who were attending. We had arranged a 7 mile circular walk around Bradwell. The first part of the walk was along the river bank and then we would cross over fields to the road and walk into the high street, stopping at the pub for a drink before making our way back to the cars. I had a map of the route which I quickly passed to another member as I am not known for my map reading skills and have led the group astray in the past.

We met in the car park, 7 walkers and a dog. It was cloudy but dry so after a look in the old chapel, we set off across the field to the river bank. I think the rain held off for about 30 mins but then the heavens opened. It was not showers but non stop torrential rain. The rain was heavy and relentless. After a while I joked that at least we had reached the saturation point and we could not get any wetter.

There was no shelter just miles of river bank, we plodded on. My waterproof mac was no longer waterproof and we were all soaked through. And the rain poured down. Once we had passed the power station we left the riverbank and followed a footpath. The map was consulted and we continued until we came to a road. My immediate thought was to turn left but the map reader said to turn right. I was so glad that I had passed the responsibility over to someone else. And the rain poured down. We followed the road into the village and eventually came to a pub. By this time not only were we soaked through but previously waterproof footwear was also leaking as our feet squelched inside of our boots. And the rain poured down.

Luckily the pub landlord was friendly and was happy for the dog to come inside with us. We disrobed our dripping coats onto a coat rack and ordered drinks and food. You could not have imagined a more disheveled group of people. All agreed that it would have been a lovely walk if it had not been raining but perhaps we should have cancelled.

Whilst waiting for our food and drinks to arrive someone googled how much further we needed to walk back to the cars, another mile and a half. And the rain poured down. Suitably refreshed we got back into our dripping coats and set off once more. And the rain poured down. The road was endless but eventually the car park was in sight and it was a great relief to be back where we started. And the rain poured down.

Finally got home about 2.30, cold, wet and feeling exhausted. A cup of coffee and some dry clothes helped and I curled up on the sofa with a book as I was too tired to do anything else. Not a good day yesterday but in the words of Sir Thomas Moore - tomorrow will be a better day.