



The University of the Third Age

MALDON AND DISTRICT

NEWSLETTER

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1 Table Tennis Snooker Luncheon Club Gardeners—Stebbing	2 Swimming Meteorology Wine Group	3 Discussion Theatre—Evita Poetry Petanque 2 pm Country Dancing	4 Botany Canasta	5 Bird Watching Lee Valley Aviation Shuttleworth	6 Bird Watching Lee Valley Aviation Shuttleworth
7 Petanque 10 am	8 Table Tennis Snooker	9 Ten Pin Bowling Painting Bridge Spanish	10 Ballroom Dancing French Conversation Petanque 2 pm	11 3 day Maritime Trip to Poole Mah Jong Sing for Pleasure	12 3 day Maritime Trip to Poole Mah Jong Sing for Pleasure	13
14 Handicrafts German Whist Petanque 10 am Table Tennis Beg.	15 Table Tennis Snooker Aviation	16 Ten Pin Bowling Swimming Luncheon Club Clock Repairs	17 Ballroom Dancing Petanque 2 pm Country Dancing	18 Botany Canasta	19 Botany Canasta	20 Strollers
21 Meeting 1.30 pm Petanque 10 am	22 Table Tennis Snooker	23 Ten Pin Bowling Bridge Painting Family History Spanish Writing for Fun U3A Quiz Day	24 Social—Quiz Night Ballroom Dancing Computers—1—3 pm French Conversation Music Appreciation Petanque 2 pm	25 Mah Jong Sing for Pleasure MacMillan Coffee Morning	26	27
28 Handicraft Astronomy Local History German Whist Petanque 10 am Table Tennis Beg.	29 Table Tennis Snooker	30 Ten Pin Bowling Swimming				

I try my utmost to get the calendar correct each month, but I would advise you to always check with your co-ordinator as to the date of your next meeting.

Newsletter Editor: Mrs. Jan. Robertson, 6 Blenheim Close, Danbury, CM3 4NE Tel. 01245 225657 email Jan8085@aol.com



The BBQ chefs hard at work producing excellent food

AUGUST 2009

VOLUME 1X NO. 3

Reg. Charity No. 1086182

Web Site: www.maldon3a.co.uk

FROM THE CHAIR



We at last have a volunteer to learn how to use the A V Equipment so this, in time, will give a well earned break to our current supervisors. Thanks Fred....

All new members have been invited to attend a coffee morning on the 18th September at the Town Hall and if any other members have not met the committee they are welcome to attend. If you do wish to attend please let John Robson know with a quick phone call and he will confirm the time.

We have a new group that holds their first full meeting in September which will be known as the Meteorology Group. All of us have looked up at the sky and wondered what the weather will be at some time or other, and whilst we can tell if it is likely to rain or not, do we know what the Tropospheric Layer or the Van Allen Belt is? Or are we aware of just how a rain cloud is formed. This sounds like a very interesting group to join and I wish them all success in their venture.

Alan Buck

MONDAY TABLE TENNIS

We will be resuming play on Monday, September 14th @ the W.M.C.C. from 10am until 11.30am or 12 noon depending on the number of people participating. This group is for people who maybe haven't played for a long time or, indeed, are absolute beginners. There are no leagues, just an hour or so of good fun and exercise.

Ballroom Dancing

Will be up and running on Thursday afternoons as from Thursday 10th September prompt start at 2.45 - 4.15pm at West Maldon Community Centre. (Note we don't meet on the first Thursday of the month) Fee £10 for 4 weeks in advance so that we can book the hall.
Any queries ring Jo Robson.

Gardening

In July we had a return visit to Horkesley Hall. A lovely parkland setting with views down to the lake. The weather could have been kinder but we did not get wet. Have a look on the website for photos.

Tuesday, Aug. 18 2.,30 pm

Visit to South Shoebury Hall, Church Road, Shoeburyness SS3 9DN

1 acre walled garden close to the sea. Established garden, unusual trees and shrubs,
See you there.

Tuesday, Sept. 1 2.30 pm

Visit to St. Helens, High Street, Stebbing CM6 3SE

1 acre garden, sloping down to hidden pond crossed by a Monet bridge

Heybridge U3A—Gardeners

Monday, Sept. 14 - 2.30 pm

Ulting Wick garden

Ring Pat Yates on 01621 893866 for information

CO-ORDINATORS

Chairman	Alan Buck	01245 227709	Mah-Jong	Molly Polden	01621 856507
Vice Chairman	Beryl McDonell	01621 842093	Maritime History	Malcolm Case	01245 329435
Secretary	Pamela Turnbull	01376 510084	Meteorology	Malcolm Case John Robson	01245 329435 01621 828236
Treasurer	Rosemary Case	01245 329435	Music Appreciation	Enid Hall John Skuse	01621 891618 01245 224059
Membership Sec.	John Robson	01621 828236	Painting	Joyce Stokes	01245 223579
Speaker Sec. Committee	Joyce Cotterell Paul Costa John Almond	01621 858287 01621 853893 Ex. Dir.	Petanque (Boule)	Barbara Arnold	01621 853866
Newsletter Editor	Jan Robertson	01245 225657	Poetry	Jo Robson	01621 828236
WebMaster	John Bowen	01245 224677	Reading 1st Tuesday	Christine Elgin	01621 858146
Social Committee	Dorothy Denmark	01245 223960	2nd Thursday	Sheila Epps	01621 850467
Astronomy	Molly Tring	01621 854732	Scottish Dancing	Shirley Grummett	01621 853288
Aviation	David Arnold Fred Lane	01621 853866 01621 816181	Singles Dining	Sue Oram	01621 856899
Ballroom Dancing	Jo Robson	01621 828236	Sing for Pleasure	Sylvia Carpenter	01621 854905
Bird Watching	Pat Clements	01245 223427	Snooker	John Williams	01621 828461
Botany	Veronica Smith	01621 828176	Spanish Conversation	Wilma Turner	01621 851510
Bridge	Sheila Epps	01621 850467	Strollers	Gill Stone	01621 853948
Canasta	Marian Manning Margaret Dale	01621 828605 01268 765239	Swimmers	Gill Rowsell	01621 740619
Clock Repairs	Stanley Clements	01245 223427	Table Tennis	Gordon Hardy Julie Doidge	01245 223012 01621 841205
Computers	Jan Robertson	01245 225657	Beginners	Beryl McDonell	01621 842093
Desk Top Pub.	Jan Robertson	01245 225657	Ten Pin Bowling	David Arnold	01621 853866
Discussion	Ray Harman	01621 891736	Theatre Group	Enid Hall Sheila Epps	01621 891618 01621 850467
Family History	Frank Stokes	01245 223579	Whist	Molly Polden	01621 856507
Continuing French	Sylvia Carpenter	01621 854905	Wine Circle	Zandra Cardy	01621 828984
French Conversation	Bill Stichbury	01621 855828	Writing for Fun	Pat Sizer	01621 892201
Gardeners	Jan Robertson	01245 225657			
German	Jenny Plumb	01245 226112			
Good Companions	Beryl McDonell	01621 842093			
Handicraft	Marian Manning	01621 828605			
Local History	Mary Burd Alfred Couldrey	01621 843020 01245 226259			
Luncheon Club	Mike Wood Paul Costa	01245 222839 01621 853893			

If for any reason you do not receive a posted newsletter within a week of the Meeting, (if you did not attend the Meeting) please contact John Robson on 01621 828236



Purleigh Flower Show

Saturday, August 22

2 - 4 pm

Flowers, Pot Plants, Vegetables, Cakes,
Jams, Handicrafts etc.

Refreshments
Raffle

A fun afternoon, come and join us

BLACKWATER U3A

Contact:
Dorreen Linton, Chairman
01621 853428

SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS U3A

Contact
Heather Richardson Chairman
01245 320205

HEYBRIDGE U3A

Contact
Ruth Tyler, Chairman
01621 869865

NATIONAL OFFICE

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Web site www.u3a.org.uk
Resource Centre: email: resource.centre@u3a.org.uk

Deadline for next newsletter: Friday, 11th September

Local & General History

There is no meeting in August.

On Monday 28 September we have our outing to Copped Hall and Waltham Abbey. We leave the West Maldon Community Centre at 9 am and hope to be back by 5.30 pm depending on traffic. The cost is £24 which includes morning tea or coffee and cake at Copped Hall. There are currently places on this trip – please telephone me if you are interested in coming.

Mary Burd

Family History

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 26th August at 2.30 pm and will be held at 15 Peartree Lane, Bicknacre. Please bring your queries, researches and personal histories.
Frank Stokes

Spanish

Wanted—New Co-ordinator for the established Spanish group. You do not have to be an expert in Spanish. Please contact Wilma on 01621 851510 before the end of September.

Computers

We recommence on Thursday 24th September. **Time 1—3 pm.** (We have to fit in the ballroom dancing.)

Astronomy

There will be no meeting in August for Astronomy. I hope to arrange one for Sept 28th, but that may be the last. Any takers as a new co-ordinator for this interesting group?
Molly Tring

Weekenders

(Formerly Good Companions)
This group has been successfully running for the past eleven months during which time we have had several requests from members who would like to join us. Unfortunately, we do not feel that it would be viable to increase our number from the 20 people who currently belong. However we are very willing to help another such group get off the ground .

Therefore, with this in mind, we would like to cordially invite any interested person to join us at our next Monthly Coffee Morning on Saturday, September 5th at 10.30 am. To enable us to accommodate more people we will be meeting in the lounge of Fairfield house instead of in one of our member's houses. This is in Fambridge Road. There is very limited parking, but on Saturdays parking is allowed in the Plume School Grounds. If you feel that you would like to join us and are able to tell us in advance then that would be very helpful.
Beryl McDonell

Strollers.

Sunday 20th September

Wickham Bishops. Approx 4 miles

Meet in the far corner of the Village Hall Car Park for a 10.30 am start. A walk from the village, through woods down to Benton Hall, along the banks of the River Blackwater to the old church, returning to the village through orchards with far reaching views of Langford, Ulting and Witham.

For further information contact Ray Levitt on 01621 892495.

AVIATION GROUP

We had a good time on Sunday 28th June visiting the Norfolk & Suffolk Aviation Museum. The museum had a lot more to see than we had expected. 25000 recorded items. We could easily have spent more time there. Perhaps another visit in another year. Then on to the East Anglia Transport Museum which 'transported' us back in time. There was much hilarity riding on the old vehicles and the train, just as we remembered, not that long ago! Free trips on all the buses, trams etc made this great day out. Lovely weather too, and plenty of time to chat.

Our trip to the Lowestoft Seafront Air Festival on 24th July started three quarters of an hour late as we couldn't get into the car park. We made good time. The reserved parking close to the seafront was ideal. Starting with the Red Arrows, whose breathtaking display lasted 25 minutes, we then had wing walkers, helicopters, Spitfire flown by a lady pilot, various jets and even speedboats. The weather was OK at first but about two it poured.

An ominous black cloud rolled around behind us for ages. The commentator said it was like a Steven Spielberg special effect! The planes were grounded and then the skies opened into a real deluge. Black clouds, torrential rain, thunder and lightning all around us. We sat and tried to keep dry (unsuccessfully) or made for shelter as best we could. Finally we gave up went back to the coach early. We didn't get to see the Vulcan nor the Lancaster. Generally it was a pleasant day out but unfortunately spoilt by things outside our control. The display we did see was excellent. We have the DVD of the whole two days on order so that will be something to watch at one of our future meetings.

Our next meeting will be at the Maldon Little Ship Club on Tuesday 18th. August at 2pm.

It is a shame that it is likely that our outing to the wonderful Shuttleworth Pageant Air Display on September 6th will not take place, as not enough members are interested to make a coach worthwhile.

All members of the U3A are welcome to our talks & our trips.

David Arnold 01621 853866

LUNCHEON CLUB VENUES -

TUESDAY 1st Sept at The Sun in Feering
Co-ordinator: Vaun Legerton Tel. 01621 840664

WEDNESDAY The Wednesday Lunch Club is taking a month off in September due to holidays, .We will meet again in October.
Co-ordinator: Paul Costa Tel. 01621 853893

Note: If you sign up for the lunches and then find you are unable to attend for any reason, can you please notify the Co-ordinator as soon as possible, as places have to be booked at the venues.

Macmillan Cancer Support

**FEEL GOOD! Be part of the World's BIGGEST
Coffee Morning!**

**Please join me on Friday 25 September
from 10 am to 12 noon at
11 Beaumont Way Maldon**

Mary Burd



Letter to the Editor

I began receiving the Newsletter via email when the idea was launched some months ago. I have found it very satisfactory to receive it this way, as I cannot get along to the monthly meetings regularly. As an added bonus I get it in colour. With today's ever increasing postage costs, it must be a worthwhile way for our group to maintain and better still reduce costs. There is also a reduction in the tasks in checking the attendance records to identify those who need a mailed copy, enveloping and mailing. Let's hope that more members give the emailed copy a try.
Ray Levitt

Thank you Ray,

We have had a very good response to our request, but I would urge those members who, at present, still get a posted copy, to consider an email PDF copy. Give it a trial for a couple of months. Just email me YES PLEASE.
email address: Jan8085@aol.com
Jan Robertson—Editor

**September Meeting
Wickham Bishops Village Hall at 1.30 pm**

**Speaker
'Songs from the Shows'
Simon Gilbert**

Back to the



Sixties

Thursday 22nd October

Town Hall

Tickets £7

doors open 7.00 for 7.30 start

featuring **Ray Durrant & Rita B**

singing **Brenda Lee & Connie Francis**

Jim 'Guitar' Tidmarsh does The Shadows & Duane Eddy

bring your own drinks and nibbles

Tickets available from:

Janet Buck
58 Augustine Way,
Bicknacre,
CM3 4ET
01245-227709

Enquiries:

Dorothy Denmark

01245-223960

Sixties Evening 22nd October

Please reserve me Ticket(s) @ £7. 00 each

I enclose my cheque for £..... made payable to 'Maldon & District U3A'

Name(s) of Member(s)

PhoneNo.....

Social news

It didn't rain at the Barbecue - well, not much anyway - and therefore it was a successful evening! Next year we will try to ensure that it does not take place on a Saturday.

The picnic will take place at Heybridge Basin on Friday 21 August. Come at any time after 12 noon. Bring food, drink and games - there's lots of space.

Next month we return to a more cerebral form of entertainment -

The Quiz!

Don't stay away because you think you are not bright enough. We don't set out to embarrass or humiliate people; our aim is to amuse and maybe even enlighten a little at the same time. Don't stay away because you haven't got a full team. We want teams of no more than six at a table and will be happy to help you find a suitable niche where your contribution will be appreciated. And don't stay away because you think it might be dull. What could be more stimulating than pitting your wits against the new - and therefore untested - compilers of this year's quiz? Bring drinks and nibbles, as usual.

Tickets are now on sale for the quiz (£3) and also for the

Sixties Evening on 22nd October only £7.

That will be another evening of nostalgia for members, most of whom I am convinced were real swingers back in the 1960s. A chance to get out your mini-skirts and Beatle suits, sit back, relax, and let it all hang out!

Again, bring drinks and nibbles.

Looking even farther ahead, there's the Beetle Drive in November and then, my goodness, it's Christmas!

dd

Monday Table Tennis

We will be resuming play on Monday, September 14th @ the W.M.C.C. from 10am until 11.30 am or 12 noon depending on the number of people participating. This group is for people who maybe haven't played for a long time or, indeed, are absolute beginners. There are no leagues, just an hour or so of good fun and exercise.

Please bring your own bat. Bats can be purchased quite cheaply from the Sports Shop @ the top of the High Street. (No there is no commission for mentioning this!!!!)

We read recently that there is renewed interest in this activity, so as good U3A members we are doing our bit in its resurrection!

Barbara Arnold
Beryl McDonnell

LOCAL & GENERAL HISTORY - SECOND VISIT TO NEW HALL SCHOOL

Thirty members enjoyed a visit to New Hall near Chelmsford on 13 July. Now approached by an avenue of fine chestnut trees this gracious old building was once owned by Thomas Boleyn, grandfather to Anne and later by King Henry VIII who bought it for a mere £1000. Then it was known as Beaulieu Palace.

We were shown around by Tony Tuckwell an historian and retired Head of King Edward Grammar school. In the grounds we saw where Time Team excavated and found the original footings now re-laid as lawn except for a small area of Tudor flooring which remains exposed showing plumbing perhaps for Henry himself!

Later inside to see the present school chapel which houses Henry's magnificent coat of arms. So much history condensed by Tony who saw us on our way with a last stop at the Tudor arches now an entrance to the courtyard.

Our thanks to Mary for this second visit to New Hall on a pleasant sunny afternoon.

Sheila Devine





SAILING TASTER DAY – 17th JULY 09

When the five of us arrived at the Bradwell Outdoor Centre we had mixed feelings about the day ahead.

Although we were looking forward to a days sailing (a new experience for some of us!) our skipper, Phillip, confirmed our fears regarding the weather forecast. This was stated as "force 6 to gale 8 with thundery showers"!

However, we donned our oilskins and looked like true sailors as we proceeded to the jetty. We were then introduced to our craft for the day - the 33 foot Sigma yacht 'Brigantes'. Having clambered aboard, Phillip briefed us on the plans for the day. He suggested that we 'tack' up towards Maldon, against wind and tide, before the weather got too rough; moor up for lunch (this met with great approval) and then 'gybe' back to Bradwell. It should be noted that these were the first of many nautical terms that we were to learn during the day.

The wet suits proved extremely useful over the next couple of hours although, fortunately, due to spray rather than rain which was notable by its absence. In fact the weather turned out to be much better than expected and the only shower we had was whilst eating lunch below. The sun came out regularly and the sail back with the wind was extremely relaxing.

Our skipper was very informative and we all participated in sailing the boat. We also learned a lot of things about the finer points of wind and tide and the ways of adapting the yacht.

Overall, a most enjoyable day! Many thanks to John Robson for organizing the event.

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Susanne's new ride on mower



I know.. I'm too soft with her. She'll probably want gears on it next!!

### 2009 CALENDAR—Dates for your Diary

List of Events and Outings during the year.

- Thur. 20 Aug Globe Visit
  - Fri 21 Aug. "Lunch by the Lock" Social
  - Thurs. 3 Sept "Evita", Cliffs Pavilion, Southend, - Theatre
  - Sund. 6 Sept Shuttleworth Collection - Aviation
  - 11/13 Sept Trip to Poole/RNLI/Bournemouth etc. - Maritime
  - Wed. 23 Sept Brain of Essex U3As Quiz Day
  - Thurs. 24 Sept Quiz—Maldon Town Hall—Social
  - Mon. 28 Sept Visit to Copped Hall & Waltham Abbey—Local History
  - Thurs. 15 Oct Trip to Trinity House, Harwich - Maritime
  - Thurs. 22 Oct "Sixties Evening" Maldon Town Hall - Social
  - Sat. 21 Nov. Beetle Drive, Langford Village Hall - Social
  - Fri. 8 Jan Ceilidh— Social
- Further details of the above events available from your Co-ordinator or in the Newsletter.

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QUIZ
Thursday, 24th September
Town Hall
6.30 for 7 pm
Tickets £3

Teams of not more than six people - bring drinks and nibbles.

Tickets available from:

Janet Buck
58 Augustine Way,
Bicknacre,
CM3 4ET
01245-227709

Enquiries:

Dorothy Denmark

01245-223960

.....
Quiz Thursday, 24th September

Please reserve me Ticket(s) @ £3.00 each

I enclose my cheque for £.... made payable to 'Maldon & District U3A'

Name(s) of Member(s)

PhoneNo.....

Barbecue

Our Barbecue has become an annual event and as usual we all gathered at Langford on July 11th.

When we arrived the chefs were already busy - wearing an array of fetching aprons - and tending their grills with great culinary skill.

The weather was uncertain so a forest of gazebos began to appear. Next year it might be an idea to have a competition as to how long it took to assemble the rods in the right order. One gazebo defied all attempts by its owners, much to the amusement of others sitting comfortably in their shelters!

When the cooking was finished we all collected our hamburgers, sausages, gammon and onions, and enjoyed them, washed down with our own various drinks. This was followed by delicious deserts provided by the ladies.

Despite a few showers, we all had a very enjoyable evening and owe a big 'Thank you' to all who made it possible.

Joyce Stokes



Which pesky pole ?



Jan & John tied their two gazebos together and made a long table



Another Gazebo



Waiting for the call for Dinner....



Still waiting Bottoms up



The ladies ladling the delicious fruit salad

Lots more photos on the website, have a look!!

Absolutely True Story

The first week in August I was in a shop that sold toys.

A mother and her daughter of about five were nearby.

Young Child: I like that Mummy, can I have it please?

Mother: It is lovely, isn't it. Not now dear, you will have to ask Father Christmas for it, won't you?

Young Child: Err.... No.... I'll ask Nana!

David Arnold

A note from a compassionate, loving and caring husband...

LOOK AFTER YOUR WIFE...

A couple of weeks ago, I was sitting on the patio, drinking beer and watching Susanne mow the lawn.

Julie from next door saw us and was so upset that she came over and yelled at me, "You lazy devil! Sitting there drinking beer while your poor wife pushes that ancient lawn mower around! Get up off your fat backside and give her a break!"

I thought 'Wretched women!' Took another swig from my stubby, wiped the cold foam from my lips, lifted my sunnies, stared directly at this nosey neighbour and told her in no uncertain terms to go away and mind her own business. I told her my wife had green fingers and that she really enjoyed gardening.

After a few days I felt really bad, so I went out and bought her a ride-on mower to show my sensitive side. I'm really proud of the deal I got and also very proud that my wife can now sit down while mowing the lawn. Yes guys, we **should** take good care of our wives... then maybe they'll take good care of us.

I've attached a picture overleaf...

Pandemic Flu

Symptoms of swine flu are a fever over 38 degrees and at least two others such as a sudden cough, tiredness, headache, sore throat, or aching muscles. If you have these then DON'T go straight to your GP, pharmacy, A&E, walk-in centre or Anti-Viral Collection Point.

Phone the National Pandemic Flu Service instead.

on 0800 1 513100 for assessment

They will give you advice, tell you how to get some antiviral medicine and tell you if you need to talk to your GP.

Stay home and phone – you will get sorted out, help prevent the spread of swine flu and ensure essential NHS services can continue.

Stay home and phone - it's the right thing to do

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## **Up date from Neighbourhood Watch**

Dc Guy Pearcy said: "In a significant number of night-time burglaries, the criminals gain entry to the property through an insecure uPVC door.

The all too common scenario is that members of the public retire to bed with a shut front door and the handle pulled up which engages the five or so extra locks along the sides and top and bottom of the door. However, unless the key is then used to lock the door, engaging these extra locks into place, then the door is NOT fully secure. Unfortunately, this simple act of not locking the door from inside can leave your property vulnerable to criminals.

If the uPVC door has not been fully locked, an experienced criminal can use an implement to force the door open and gain entry to the property. Sometimes it can take less than ten seconds for the burglar to get into the property.

Do not leave house and car keys easily accessible, eg on the hall table by the front door near the letterbox or in the kitchen visible through a window. Always keep your keys (car and house keys) somewhere safe and out of sight. Take your house and car keys upstairs when you go to bed.

## **Is this a blog?**

Why is it that we can pour out our life story to a total stranger whilst standing in a queue waiting for a bus or even the checkout, and yet when it comes to sorting out our innermost feelings we find it difficult to share them with our nearest and dearest?

It is probably sod's law that the moment the kids break up from school, so the weather changes, and if you've been nurturing tomatoes in the garden for months, its not until the day before you go away they all start to ripen. Likewise, the fruit trees will be ready for picking and the wasps, or birds, will get the lot whilst you're away.

I am a great optimist, and although a septuagenarian, have not yet planned my own funeral service. I would like to be able to come back in say fifty years time, when today's twenty year olds are entering their autumn years and see how they feel then. I wonder if like the Eskimos of old, who put their elderly out for the polar bears (or perhaps the polar bears will all be gone by then), voluntary euthanasia will channel the over 70's in the direction of new world-wide Dignitas companies. If so it will be a solution to the forthcoming pension problem but as always new catastrophes will be looming on the horizon.

Is a blog just one person sharing their thoughts? Perhaps 'global warming' is just one of those 'cycle' things!

by Member of Writing for Fun Group

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Association of Essex U3As Quiz Day

Brain of Essex

The Shire Hall, Chelmsford

September 23

Doors open 12.30 pm

Quiz starts 1.15 pm

Tables of Eight

If you would like to partake please let me know as soon as possible. so that you can sit the TEST!

Beryl McDonnell 01621 842093

MARITIME GROUP

Visit to Wivenhoe tidal flood barrier and Nottage Maritime Institute

We left Maldon on Monday, 3rd August on a bright and sunny morning to visit Wivenhoe. John Robson and Malcolm Case 'navigated' our coach safely through the narrow streets to the quayside area where we had time for a pleasant amble.

We then met John Claydon of the Environment Agency at the tidal flood barrier. He explained the barrier had been built in 1993, costing £16 million, to protect Colchester from high tides in the River Colne. The barrier is 8 metres high and 130 metres long, with a navigational opening of 30 meters. 13 sluices ensure the tidal flow is unchanged except when the barrier is closed. When the barrier gate is shut it protects against tides of up to 5.5 metres (above Newlyn Datum). The barrier is closed when the tide rises to 3.1m. To set these figures in context, the height of the tide that caused the 1953 floods was 4 metres at Wivenhoe.

The use of Wivenhoe port declined as ships became larger and local industry waned. The last of the shipbuilding yards closed in the 1980's. The port is now used by fishermen, yachtsmen and the odd commercial gravel boat. There has been a lot of recent residential development in the area and the barrier protects these properties from high tides and tidal surges.

The barrier is not constantly manned and its operation is governed by tide and weather predictions. We were shown the engine room and control systems operating the hydraulic gates. An extra treat for the U3A – the barrier was closed and re-opened and we were able to stand on the gates and 'ride' to the centre of the river! See photo below

After a buffet lunch we visited the Nottage Maritime Institute where Mike Downs, the Warden, explained that the Institute was founded in 1896 after a trust fund was left by Captain Charles Nottage to establish a learning centre for sailors to improve their skills of navigation and seamanship. The Institute offers various RYA and general maritime courses to professional and amateur sailors and has a museum of local maritime history, together with an extensive library. A boat building course is available and we were able to see the timber dinghies at various stages of construction in larch and green oak. These boats take approximately 450 hours to construct.

Philip and Avril Ellis

