



The University of the Third Age

MALDON AND DISTRICT

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
3 Petanque 10 am Maritime Wivenhoe	4 Table Tennis Snooker Luncheon Club Reading	5 Ten Pin Bowling Wine Group	6 Discussion Petanque 2 pm Continuing French Poetry	7 Botany Canasta	8	9
10 Petanque 10 am Handicrafts German Whist	11 Table Tennis Snooker	12 Ten Pin Bowling Bridge Spanish	13 Petanque 2 pm French Conversation Reading	14 Sing for Pleasure Mah Jong	15	16
17 Petanque 10 am Meeting 1.30 pm	18 Table Tennis Snooker Aviation Gardeners - Shoeburyness	19 Ten Pin Bowling Luncheon Club Clock Repairs	20 Petanque 2 pm Continuing French	21 Botany Canasta	22	23
24 Petanque 10 am Handicrafts Whist German	25 Table Tennis Snooker	26 Ten Pin Bowling Bridge Spanish Family History Writing for Fun	27 Petanque 2 pm French Conversation Music Appreciation	28 Sing for Pleasure Mah Jong	29	30
31 Petanque 10 am						

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

NEWSLETTER



Maldon Mud Holiday Camp

The Hi Di Hi Team

JULY 2009

VOLUME IX NO. 2

Reg. Charity No. 1086182

Web Site: www.maldonu3a.co.uk

FROM THE CHAIR



I must apologise to all members who attended last month's AGM for the poor quality of the sound system which, so I understand, resulted in some of you not being able to hear clearly enough during the question and answers session. Steps are being taken to try and rectify this problem by the operators of the system who have spent time at the hall trying to figure out why it happened.

I would like to confirm that at the AGM all members voted to agree the proposal that the subscriptions for the year 2010/2011 be increased to £19.00 for full membership and £7.50 for social membership.

All new members will be receiving an invitation to a coffee morning as soon as we organise a venue. These mornings are arranged so that new members have the opportunity of meeting the Executive committee and discussing what the aims of the U3A are in general terms.

Your committee is still working on trying to reduce the costs of supplying the newsletter to every member and are making progress in this area. As was suggested at the AGM we have tried the E-mail by PDF and have had a good response from those in the trial.

Alan Buck
E-mail: alan-buck@talktalk.net

Family History

Our next meeting will be on
Wednesday, **29th July**
2.30 pm .

Please bring your queries, researches and personal histories.

Frank Stokes

Strollers

Sunday 16th August -

STOCK. Approx 4 miles.
Meet in The Square for 10.30a.m start.

Lunch available.

For further information contact Gill Stone: 01621 853948

Swimming

We plan to meet on the following dates for the remainder of this year:
September: 3, 16, 30
October : 14, 28
November: 11, 25
December: 9

Venue: Blackwater Leisure Centre
Time: 9 am to 9.45 am

Cost: Normal pool entry

Please telephone me, if you intend to come, the day before, so that I know who to expect. See you there, everyone welcome
Gill Rowsell
01621 740619

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.	Joyce Cotterell	01621 858287	Petanque (Boule)	Barbara Arnold	01621 853866
Committee	Paul Costa John Almond	01621 853893 Ex. Dir.	Photography	Mary Richardson	01621 857829
Newsletter Editor	Jan Robertson	01245 225657	Poetry	Jo Robson	01621 828236
WebMaster	John Bowen	01245 224677	Reading 1st Tuesday 2nd Thursday	Christine Elgin Sheila Epps	01621 858146 01621 850467
Social Committee	Dorothy Denmark	01245 223960	Scottish Dancing	Shirley Grummett	01621 853288
Astronomy	Molly Tring	01621 854732	Singles Dining	Sue Oram	01621 856899
Aviation	David Arnold Fred Lane	01621 853866 01621 816181	Sing for Pleasure	Sylvia Carpenter	01621 854905
Ballroom Dancing	Jo Robson	01621 828236	Snooker	John Williams	01621 828461
Bird Watching	Pat Clements	01245 223427	Spanish Conversation	Wilma Turner	01621 851510
Botany	Veronica Smith	01621 828176	Strollers	Gill Stone	01621 853948
Bridge	Sheila Epps	01621 850467	Swimmers	Gill Rowsell	01621 740619
Canasta	Marian Manning Margaret Dale	01621 828605 01268 765239	Table Tennis	Gordon Hardy Julie Doidge Beryl McDonell	01245 223012 01621 841205 01621 842093
Clock Repairs	Stanley Clements	01245 223427	Beginners	David Arnold	01621 853866
Computers	Jan Robertson	01245 225657	Ten Pin Bowling	Enid Hall Sheila Epps	01621 891618 01621 850467
Desk Top Pub.	Jan Robertson	01245 225657	Theatre Group	Molly Polden	01621 856507
Discussion	Ray Harman	01621 891736	Whist	Zandra Cardy	01621 828984
Family History	Frank Stokes	01245 223579	Wine Circle	Pat Sizer	01621 892201
Continuing French	Sylvia Carpenter	01621 854905	Writing for Fun		
French Conversation	Bill Stichbury	01621 855828			
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



Calling all Vegetable Growers
How about entering your produce in the
Purleigh Flower Show?

Saturday, August 22

Schedules available from Jan Robertson

On 01245 225657

There are also classes for Flowers, Pot Plants, Cakes, Jams,
Handicrafts etc.

Have A Go

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
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Deadline for next newsletter: Friday, 7th August Email: Jan8085@aol.com

Local & General History

On **Monday 27 July** we have Dr Jennifer Ward returning to speak to us – her talk this time is entitled “Women and Family in Medieval Essex”. This will be at the Maldon Little Ship Club starting at 2.00 pm. All members are welcome.

We don't have a meeting in August.

Mary Burd

Gardening

We had a lovely afternoon wandering round Glen Chantry's garden on June 26, so sorry that this will be our last visit. We wish Mr. & Mrs. Staines every happiness in their retirement.

Tues. July 21

Return visit to Horkesley Hall,
Little Horkesley, CO6 4DB at 2.30 pm.
See you there.

Tues. August 18

Visit to South Shoebury Hall, Church
Road, Shoeburyness SS3 9DN
at 2.30 pm

1 acre walled garden close to the sea.
Outstanding agapanthus varieties etc.

Heybridge U3A—Gardeners

Monday, August 10 at 2.30 pm
Moverons, Brightlingsea CO7 OSB
Ring Pat Yates on 01621 893866 for
information.

Bird Watching

There will be no Bird Watching Group
meet until 6th September

Botany

The group has got off to a flourishing start . It is proving quite popular with new members joining each week. The enthusiastic members have studied in depth so far the Families Ranunculaceae and Compositae, identified many previously unknown wild flowers, and even drawn specimens. They are showing great aptitude and delving deep into their collective memories for forgotten snippets that they learned some time ago and using their Floras with skill. We hope soon to have a field trip before Maldon Council cuts everything down. But, next week Graminae (grasses) !

If you are interested, please join us at WMCC between 10.00 and 12.00 am each 1st and 3rd Friday of the month. Contact first Veronica Smith on 01621 828176.

Absolutely no prior knowledge needed - honestly.

Astronomy:

There will be no meeting in July, but we should celebrate that its 40 years since the first men stepped onto the moon!
Molly

Painting Group

We will be having a summer break and meeting again on Wednesday, September 9th at 10 am.
Hope to see you all then.

Joyce Stokes

ASSOCIATION OF ESSEX U3As

AGM. MAY 2009.

Notes

Dear Members,

I would like to introduce myself. I am Beryl McDonell, a Maldon Committee Member and past chairman of this Association from 2001 to 2004.

After reading the above statement you will be wondering why I have put myself forward to once again serve in this capacity. I have done so, because at the above meeting no nominations had been received and therefore this association was about to fold.

I am willing to serve for one year, so within the next twelve months, we have not only to recruit two or three more people to serve on this committee, but, with the help of all our Essex Membership (*THAT'S YOU!*) we have to breathe new life into our Association.

Your Essex Representative (*THAT'S ME!*) will be, indeed, is asking you for suggestions which will bring together like minded Groups from our two dozen U3As, during the year 2009-10.

Because it takes time to turn ideas into reality please submit them as soon as possible.

I, with the four serving committee members, Secretary, Margaret May of Leigh, Treasurer, Jean Harris of Harlow, Mike Eldridge Doyle, the Southend Website Editor and new member Dorreen Linton of Blackwater look forward to hearing from you, as individuals or as members of a group.

YOUR ASSOCIATION NEEDS YOU. PLEASE DON'T LET US DOWN

Some ideas already mooted are Subject Groups inviting their respective National Coordinator for a grand discussion. Have a Dance Day. This conjures up so many possibilities from Line dancing to genteel waltzes.

One U3A inviting other History Groups to learn about their town. Games Competitions.

The introduction of a little known subject to inspire other members. Visit another U3A for an Away Day.

A few ideas. I am sure some of you will have even better ones

Please make it possible to keep our Essex Association alive

Please ring me with all your ideas on 01621 842 093.

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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 McDonell 01621 842093

## LUNCHEON CLUB VENUES -

**TUESDAY 4th August at The Chequers, Goldhanger**

Co-ordinator: Mike Wood Tel. 01245 222839

**WEDNESDAY 19th August at The Crown, Sandon at 12.30 pm**

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.



## METEOROLOGY GROUP

Malcolm Case and John Robson are planning to start a Meteorology Group, it will cover basic topics on meteorology, such as what factors make up the weather, how clouds and weather patterns are formed amongst many other topics. Visits to places of interest will be arranged where possible. If you would like to join please contact either Malcolm on 01245329435 or John on 01621828236.

Our inaugural meeting will be on Wednesday September 2<sup>nd</sup> starting at 2:00 pm in The Little ship Club, The Hythe, Maldon.

Malcolm Case

## LUNCH BY THE LOCK

**Friday, 21st August**

Heybridge Basin

12 noon onwards

Bring your own lunch and drinks  
plus any games you might like to play



## ABOUT HEART ATTACKS

There are other symptoms of an heart attack besides the pain on the left arm. One must also be aware of an intense pain on the chin, as well as nausea and lots of sweating, however these symptoms may also occur less frequently.

NOTE : There may be no pain in the chest during an heart attack. The majority of people (about 60%) who had an heart attack during their sleep, did not wake up. However, if it occurs, the chest pain may wake you up from your deep sleep. If that happens, IMMEDIATELY DISSOLVE TWO ASPIRINS IN YOUR MOUTH and swallow them with a drop of water. Afterwards, phone a neighbour or a family member who lives very close by and state "HEART ATTACK!!!" and that you have taken 2 ASPIRINS

Take a seat on a chair or sofa and wait for their arrival and ...  
DO NOT LIE DOWN

## Newsletter by PDF email.

Following a long discussion at last month's AGM about the cost of printing and posting the monthly newsletter, it was suggested that many members might like to receive their newsletter by email via a PDF file. I therefore thought it might be a good idea to send everyone on my U3A email address book a copy of the June newsletter and if you felt that you can read and/or print off your copy each month, please email me back and confirm **YES** that you would be happy to receive your newsletter by email each month.

I have received a very encouraging response from members who have signed up. However, I did not have everyone's up to date email address, so if you did not get an email from me on the 16th June, please respond to this request if you wish to receive your newsletter by PDF on Jan8085@aol.com As the newsletter costs over £7 to print and post per person each year, this would be a great saving to our funds.

If you are unable to read a PDF file you can download for free from the following website <http://www.your-software.info/adobe-reader/>  
If you have any problems with the above, please give me a ring on 01245 225657

**You are under no obligation what so ever to receive your newsletter this way, it is entirely a personal request.**

Jan Robertson  
Newsletter Editor

## Local and General History

On Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 35 members of The Local and General History Group visited the Sir Alfred Munnings Museum at Dedham, Essex.

The members car shared to Dedham to allow everyone to enjoy wandering around the picturesque village at their own pace. They also enjoyed the coffee shops and later that morning, the local hostelrys for lunch.

We all gathered for a private showing at the museum after lunch. Munnings was a prolific painter who lived from 1878 until 1959. He lived at Castle House, where the museum is situated, from 1919 until his death. He is primarily remembered for his pictures of horses, but the museum shows that he could turn his hand to many things. There are examples of landscapes, portraits, sculptures and woodwork. There are over 600 works of art of his at the museum, and there are examples of everything he did, as well as things that show his personality (For example, all the chairs at his dining table were different styles because he just bought them one at a time.).

He painted many scenes of rural life in Suffolk before 1919, which he considered his best work, he also painted in Cornwall and Exmoor. He was elected President of The Royal Academy in 1944, and he was friends with the rich and famous throughout the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

We were also able to visit his studio in the grounds, where there were exhibits of his brushes, paints, smocks and the rest of the artistic paraphernalia that painters use.

The weather was kind once again, (the sun always shines on the righteous!) Mary's organisation was flawless as usual, and everyone had a very pleasant day seeing details of an artist many had heard of, but not many knew.



“My Wife, My Horse and Myself”  
Sir Alfred Munnings

## 2009 CALENDAR—Dates for your Diary

List of Events and Outings during the year.

|                |                                                         |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Fri. 24 July   | Lowestoft Airshow - Aviation                            |
| Mon 3 Aug      | Trip to Wivenhoe Barrier & Nottage Institute - Maritime |
| Thur. 20 Aug   | Globe Visit                                             |
| Fri 21 Aug.    | “Lunch by the Lock” Social                              |
| Thur. 28 Aug   | Globe Visit                                             |
| 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.

## Social News

In spite of a disappointing turnout the Hi di Hi Evening was very enjoyable and, as ever, those who were there joined in to contribute to its success. However, I know that some people were embarrassed or offended by some of the jokes towards the end of the evening. This turn of events was unexpected and inappropriate and I apologise to those of you who were upset by it. It won't happen again.

When you read this the Barbecue will also be behind us and the next event will be Lunch by the Lock on Friday 21 August at Heybridge Basin. Just cross over the lock in front of The Ship pub and go to the field to the right of the lock keeper's cottage. There are picnic tables there but bring food, drink, games etc from 12 noon.

**HI DE HI !!**  
**WOWEEEEEE !!**

“Didn’t we have a wonderful time, the day we went to Bangor?”  
No not Bangor!

***This was Maldon Mud Holiday Camp!!***

I am so sorry some of you missed this really fun evening.

This was the fifties holiday camp at its best! There were fun games to play, like shove halfpenny and crazy golf, and baby photos to identify, The Hula hoop twirled best for Christine, and Bernard had the knobbiest knees, I won the crazy golf, and Mave had the best 50s outfit, all full skirt and glamour, and Sylvia was the most attractive baby. I think us girls out sang the fellas just, but everyone sang along and enjoyed the wonderful music of the 50s played for us by Ray Spiller, interspersed by some hilarious jokes. Fred was helpless with laughter at some of them. We guessed the singers and the years, and in between all of this, many of us got up and danced, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Of course it was very annoying to have to run out in the middle to attend to the babies crying in chalets 16 and 35, and we never did find out who it was banging about in chalet 47??! but the fun went on as usual.

Like all good campers, we enjoyed our hot dogs and ice creams and were even allowed to take lollies and rock home at the end of the evening for being good?? And us winners were given really smart certificates to show off. (Didn’t get a free holiday for next year tho??)

This was a really great idea Wendy, and congratulations to all the “Yellow Shirts” for their efficient and friendly managing of this camp.

Thank you.

Annette

7. Despite packing carefully you will have at least one case that will weigh in just over the limit and the excess baggage charge will remind you of the debt of a small country.
8. You will board one aircraft and find an empty seat next to you. Just as boarding concludes the neighbour from hell will arrive: fat, noisy and guaranteed to spoil your flight.
9. During a beach holiday carefully chosen to find you good weather, it will rain throughout and your “de luxe” villa will have a leak – above the bed.
10. You will be on the first flight to permit the unrestricted use of mobile phones. The person in the seat next to you will celebrate this by making a series of loud, seemingly pointless calls throughout the flight, all starting – *I’m on the plane*. You will swear an oath never to travel again. Ever.

And now number 11: (Yes, 11, surely you could have predicted that?) Some visa or other will necessitate you getting a new photograph of yourself and you will not like it any better than you did the last one. It will make you look like an elderly convicted child molester, and remind you of the saying that if you really do look like your passport photo - then you are much too ill to travel.

No wonder some people suffer from hodophobia, and a hotel in Athens has a notice saying: *Visitors are expected to complain at the office between the hours of 9 and 11 am daily*. What is worse, when any of these things do happen, having had this judicious forewarning, you will now be able to look back and know that you could have so easily avoided it all.

Happy New Year - and happy travelling.

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Did you know?

You can travel to Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton Airports from Stansted by National Express Coach. You can also pick up a coach at Chelmsford Station to Stansted for free if you have a bus pass. www.nationalexpress.com

A much easier way to travel to the airports than driving down the M25 and finding a parking space—and then trying to find your car again in the car park.!

Crystal balls ...

Many U3A members are avid travellers. Writing for Fun member Patrick Forsyth takes a helpful look ahead to the new year

It is said that an optimist is someone who thinks the future is uncertain. Whoever said this could have had a prescient eye on the present day. Around the world travel is increasingly tarred with the “ecologically unfriendly” label, and many things large and small seem not to go quite as predicted. For goodness sake, there were commentators in the U.K who said Heathrow’s Terminal 5 would usher in a new age of convenience, yet there were quickly tens of thousands of lost suitcase owners who knew that was as far from the truth as their cases were from their destinations.

Meanwhile people continue to travel, for business and pleasure, and to put up with the highs and lows occurring along the way. I don’t want to be a Jonah, but I can’t help wondering what 2010 will bring. Some things can, sadly, be safely predicted; so here are my top ten hazards for the traveller in 2010:

1. Every flight check-in or passport queue you join will have another alongside it moving very much faster.
2. You will check into a hotel late at night in the pouring rain, jet lagged after a delayed flight and your “confirmed” reservation will have disappeared from the system, the hotel will be full and the receptionist will be a fully paid-up member of the Institute for Customer Disservice.
3. You will open a computer in some far flung hotel or Internet café and it will freeze, crash or vindictively delete the very email you need to read.
4. You will book something on the Internet, as we all increasingly must, the process will take as long as your scheduled flight and the system will crash sixty seconds before completion. Three times.
5. Security is now ubiquitous. During the year you will be stopped, your bag opened and something embarrassing held up as the uniformed security officer says pointedly, *And what is this?*
6. Despite double-checking the labels and offering prayers to the luggage god throughout the flight, at least one of your bags will fail to arrive at your destination with you (as happens to more than 10 million people every year). It will fail to catch up with you before your trip is over and your insurance company will say that cover for everything you felt had to be replaced is mysteriously “excluded”.



Mave won the Fancy Dress—50’s era



The Girl Helpers



Knobbly Knees competition

The Winner Bernard,



Golf Norman getting his eye in



Hoola Hoop Chris giving her all

WORCESTER GARDEN TRIP

It was drizzling rain as we gathered at Morrisons on Tuesday morning 9th June, with an ominous forecast for the days to come. But by the time our driver Paul delivered us safely to **Hidcote Manor Garden** in the picturesque north Cotswolds, it was brightening up. This National Trust garden, divided into numerous rooms, all immaculately tended and weed free, gave us plenty of inspiring ideas to recreate back home. The planting combinations in these rooms were created for maximum effect. Designed in 1948 by American Major Lawrence Johnston, the garden combined old roses, unusual plants & trees from around the world.

We left Hidcote thinking it couldn't get any better, but we were wrong. A short drive brought us to **Kiftsgate Court**. In its stunning position overlooking a semi-circular pond, with a backdrop of the beautiful Cotswold countryside beyond, this garden was a delight. Plants collected from throughout the world graced the upper terraces in harmonious colour schemes. These interconnecting rooms, created by 3 generations of women had a softer, relaxing feel. Magnificent peonies, mixed borders, fountains, statues and a rose garden which included their own amazingly rampant *Rosa filipes* 'Kiftsgate'. Masses of tiny buds scrambling right to the top of the trees, were not quite ready to burst into bloom. A steep descent through shrubs and trees led down to the pond and sheltered lower gardens. Having partaken of cream tea in their tea rooms (*please see Dave C for details of where to get the best cakes*) we headed for Worcester and our hotel on the edge of the canal. Fownes was a former Glove Factory, so the stark Victorian mill style building outside, belied the comfortably converted hotel interior, serving good food.

Day 2 saw us off to **Hampton Court Gardens** (no not THAT one!) in Herefordshire. 1,000 acres set around the early 15th century castle founded by King Henry. The weather didn't co-operate today though, so Jan organised tours of the castle to dry off, which was a super bonus. Interior mainly made over in Victorian style, had been appropriately refurbished more recently by American millionaire owner. Formal gardens, kitchen garden, maze and sunken water garden complete with waterfall, were enclosed in rolling parkland. How glad we were that the weather cleared up for the afternoon at **Westonbury Mill Water Gardens**. What a unique place - 3 acres of watery wonderland designed and created by owner Richard Pim. Bridges over streams, ponds, bog gardens, a water-spouting tower and an amazing folly built with walls of wine bottles! This garden was featured by Monty Don on Gardeners World and in the Daily Telegraph. We lunched in their award winning tea rooms in 2 shifts, and wandered happily through this relaxing garden.

Thursday morning we visited the lovely **Spetchley Park Gardens**, only 3 miles from Worcester. This largely unaltered Victorian Paradise, owned by the Berkeley family for over 400 years, had been created by successive generations of the family. Superb roses and more of those enormous peonies which seem to thrive in all the gardens here, along with a wide variety of plants, made up the borders running around the outside of the walled gardens. Within the walls were the kitchen garden and millennium gardens, and beyond it fountains, statues, formal hedged planting and lawns. We wandered down to the lake, or just sat in the courtyard and had lunch or tea and cake - WOT us!

The afternoon was free to explore Worcester, so while the shop-a-holics did their thing, others took a guided tour from the Guildhall via the Cathedral to the archway spire (2nd tallest in UK). Peregrin Falcons had chosen the gantry below the spire to breed and the RSPB had set up telescopes to view the fledglings. It was a super tour, which gave a real insight into this ancient city, its history and hidden 'treasures'. Mike had devised a gardening quiz to occupy us on the coach, and that evening the joint winners were presented with their prizes of plants. The evening was rounded off with a showing of the film 'Mamma Mia'.

On our final morning we visited **Coughton Court** near Alcester. Home of the Throckmorton family for 600 years, the castle was full of the treasures of this Catholic family, who had close connections with the Gunpowder plot. The grounds with its 2 churches, was created and is still maintained by the family, and had a lake, riverside walk, orchards, formal gardens and vegetables. The award winning walled gardens were stunning. After enjoying lunch in the courtyard, it was sadly time to journey back to Maldon.

Thanks to Jan and Mike for organising such a relaxing trip, with every garden spectacularly different. Mave S.

