U3A Harwich Peninsula

November 2026



A big thank you to everyone who has sent in articles, photographs, information, etc.

Please forward articles etc for the December newsletter by around 5th December to Rita Rossini at Kramermarzulu@aol.com, as the newsletter will be going out before Christmas. Christmas themed articles and recipes would be very welcome, especially seasonal recipes and ideas for easily cook meals. It would also be very helpful to have group up-dates and plans for the Winter from Group Leaders in relation to their group activities. Images for the newsletter headers would also be appreciated.

Meetings

Speakers 2026 - Don't forget the meetings from January will be at the United Services Club, at the usual times.

Dec 8th "Lost Direction" Entertainment with songs from 50s,60s and 70s with a



Christmas flavour. Lost Direction is Mersea Islands own "Boy Band". Eight retired characters from different backgrounds, who sing to raise money for Mersea Lifeboat. Their repertoire is varied but tends towards humour.

12th Jan **Angela Taylor** Marie Curie Community Fundraiser

9th Feb **Andy Schooler** Local speaker talking about his Childhood in Scotland

9th March **Diane Bignell:**Diane is a qualified City Guide based in Elmstead Market. She will talk about Colchester's Roman Circus. It is an ancient Roman sports arena: a chariot-racing track with tiered seating , which would have provided seating for up to 6 tiers and over 8,000 people.

13th April **Andrew Babicz**: Great British Gardens: What makes a garden "Great"? is it the imposing house, the landscape or the plants? With

	the help of photographs from Sissinghurst, Kent and other stunning gardens, Andrew will tell you what he thinks makes them great.
11th May	**AGM**
8th June	**Andy Moore**: The Role of Colchester Zoo in conserving nature
13th July	**John Keen:** A local metal detectorist talking about and showing some of the treasures he has found.
14th September	**Derek Sands:** A local speaker with photos and history of ships that have used Harwich Harbour.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Several of us on the Committee will be "retiring" in May. It is very important for the survival of our U3A that members step forward to help run it. Each job on the Committee is quite small but needs to be done. By planning in advance, I hope that we can fill the vacancies and give volunteers time to understand the particular tasks involved. Our Committee works as a team and problems are shared. Please consider joining the Committee now; you will be made very welcome.

The members of the sub-committee who arrange speakers for the monthly meeting will also be stepping down – having been doing it for nearly 14 years. We have found that 2 or 3 people makes a good team, meeting about 4 times a year. Please volunteer to take on this role.

I know that people are not very keen to volunteer but it is actually quite rewarding to take part. Please contact me (07986 319827) or any other committee member if you would like more information.

Pauline Gronow

Dear Friends

It is now time for me to step down from your committee, having spent more years than I should have in various roles. Fresh ideas are essential to keep our u3a going forward.

The role of Secretary is not onerous and only takes a few hours each month to keep on top of the paperwork. If, like me, arthritis prevents you from taking Minutes, we have other members who can and indeed do this role.

We meet every three months, anything urgent in between this is dealt with via email or telephone to reach an agreement. All the meeting dates are arranged three

months in advance thus giving us all plenty of time to arrange our other appointments around them.

If you are thinking already “I can do this” then please come forward now. The committee can co-opt you on, ahead of our AGM in May, and it will give you time to settle into the role prior to the AGM.

Please contact any committee member if you would like more information, or to put your name forward to join our happy crew and keep the wheels firmly turning on our u3a bus.
Jean Curtis Secretary

Scams

Do be careful of any trader who can’t provide change for cash or doesn’t have a card machine. They may ask you to pay by bank transfer, so you would then provide your bank details on-line, which could be used illegally in some instances. I had this last week and was texted by the trader before I’d even got home, to chase the payment, which is a bit of a red flag! **Rita**

French Conversation Group

The Group meets once a month at a member's home It is usually on the third Monday in the afternoon. We are a friendly and relaxed group and usually have a general chat and also choose a topic to discuss, such as holidays ,hobbies or visiting a restaurant. There is presently a vacancy for one more person to join us .

Richard Flatt

Walking the South Downs Way

Walking the South Downs Way - Winchester to Amberle is considered to be the half way point of the 100 mile national trail between Winchester and Eastbourne. This section of the SDW is particularly steeped in history and archaeology with historic hill forts, long barrows and the remains of Roman infrastructure. It is a rare chalk grassland with some unique wild flowers and insects.

Starting at the Old Mill in Winchester and heading out through the city by the river Itchen I saw a grey heron standing elegantly at the water’s edge. I cannot think of another UK city where wildlife is so central and seemingly undisturbed. I felt its presence was a good omen for the trip.

I was soon heading out into the countryside but couldn’t shake the noise of the M3 motorway for many miles. As I approached Cheesefoot Head and the natural amphitheatre of Temple Valley where Gen. Eisenhower rallied the troops before the

WW2 - D Day invasion I encountered a different type of noise and saw tents being used for a different purpose. I had come across preparations for the annual Boomtown Music festival.



Dodging trucks, people and equipment for over a mile I was soon enjoying the silence of Gander Down before discovering the stunning Meon Valley where I stayed a couple of nights to explore. I was sorry to leave and looked back as I climbed Old Winchester Hill, an Iron Age hill fort with 360 degree views. The SDW is a series of challenging steep climbs and descents and that day was no exception as the path went steeply down from Butser Hill (the highest point of the entire walk) and up into the QE2 country park. From there it was more even walking along the tops eventually arriving at Harting Down which is said to have some of the best views of the entire trail. That section of walk ended in the cafe in Cocking. The final twelve miles to Amberley started with a more gentle rise and flatter walk which headed towards Stane Street, the Roman Road between Chichester (Noviomagus) and London, and not far from the large Roman Villa at Bignor.

There are other signs of Roman occupation here including a signpost they left behind !!It was a hot day so I was pleased to see the small village of Amberley, nestled in the Adur valley, come into sight after tackling what seemed like a never ending a series of hills and combes (dry valleys). I remembered that the Adur valley and the nearby Pulborough Brooks were so severely flooded earlier this year it featured on BBC news.

That day everywhere was super dry and bathed in afternoon sunshine. Job done: I was half way through this challenge having completed it in just 5 days. Walking mainly on chalk both when it’s both wet and dry is quite difficult, as both states are slippery, and I had the aching legs to prove it. I had done a lot of preparation for the walk by reading the handbook, studying the map book and watching two series of on-line videos but nothing can compare with day in - day out walking in this beautiful landscape. Next time I’ll pick up the trail at Amberley and over seven walking days finally arrive in Eastbourne. **Liz Smith**

Kite Flying

A new group may be forming to fly kites on the rugby field. I suggest we might begin meeting on 4th Thursday of each month 10am.

Weather permitting we meet on the rugby field behind the swimming pool. Parking at West End Road, next to recycling centre. We pick a space away from the goal posts and plenty of room when our backs are to the wind.

I have books if you want plans to build your own kite or use the Internet if you are more adventurous. A black plastic bag will fly if you attach strings in the correct places. Look up "bag kite, no sticks". Charity shops are well worth hunting for a starter kite.

Should it be wet we can gather at 27 Fronks Road CO12 3RJ. I learnt all my 4 line skills from the videos of international award winner, John Barresi. There are a number of other folk who show particular skills/tricks with 2 line kites. These seem to be advancing quickly with many new clever designs and competitions are driving the innovation skills. We'll always need time to exchange spares, help with repairs and construction problems. Wet days may even be welcome occasionally.

There's a joy to be had flying more traditional single line kites which often come in curious shapes and have their own box of tricks like parachuting teddy bears. Box kites, invented for carrying weather testing kit, long before satellites, are very stable and light to the touch and can be easily tethered if you need a rest or a coffee. Kites that spin round can be trickier to launch, benefit of flying in a group, but have a good pull. I have one called an Atom that is asymmetric and seems to dance in the sky.... until it suddenly plummets. By the seaside I've rarely used my single line kite that will adjust to fly in the barest breath of a breeze. I have seen videos of folk who fly windless kites, even indoors.

A simple childhood joy to the complex patterns of John Barresi and others flying in teams. I haven't seen a U3A team flying yet but who knows.... I enjoy the photos most months from Cornwall U3A Kite group.

Let me know if you too would like to explore this ancient art. Contact via the Harwich U3A website.

This link will take you to the 16 video tutorials by John Barresi on YouTube:-

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSuS-sRtr5k8bkMIgL7EprEYfsgF-N6z1&si=ibmP7iWvymjGBrXE

He deals with how to wind and unwind the string but skip on to more interesting tricks.

Geoff Catchpole

Astronomy

Membership of the Astronomy group changes very slowly. Perhaps the subject makes folk very patient. In 2018 we made a trip to the Science Museum in Kensington, London. Very memorable were the wall with a moving image of the

surface if the sun. Using virtual reality to join Tim Peake on a space walk to repair the International Space Station was a new experience for most of us. Moving seats in the cinema was new then too.

Very topical then and now was the full size model of Bepi Colombo, see photo. It had been the subject of a recent meeting as it had just launched from earth and was on its 8 year journey to study Mercury.

This week, mid November 2026, it arrived.

Link for more info:- Bepi Colombo spacecraft arriving at Mercury after eight years - BBC News https://share.google/xFtXpn8JzHRvusaxC

One of our next meeting will look at the new discoveries of this hot & cold planet visible currently in the morning sky before dawn. If you wish to join us please contact Stuart through the U3A website.

Happy Christmas all,

Geoff Catchpole

The Six's and Seven's Walking Group

The six's and seven's walking group has been a bit depleted for the past two months but we have still enjoyed two great walks. In October we walked from Stutton village hall to the river, along the sea wall to Lower Holbrook, through a reedbed to Holbrook mill , returning via Alton Water. The reservoir was quite low after the drought but still made a good lunch stop!



In November we started out in temperatures of 3 degrees from Eight Ash Green cricket field. It was absolutely beautiful, though, and once we got going we soon warmed up. We dropped down to the river Colne past some interesting cattle and sheep and then climbed to Fordham church for coffee. Our path through the woods had been blocked off so we walked along a small road towards Hillhouse woods, which are beautiful at any time of year, but the colours in the sunshine were fabulous.



Lunch in West Bergholt old churchyard, back to the river at Cook's mill, and up the road to the cars to complete our walk.

Sheila Allen

Harwich Parkeston Quay to Esbjerg

(EXTRACT FROM 100 YEARS OF PARKESTON QUAY AND ITS SHIPS BY PHILIP J. CONE)

By 1977 annual passenger figures reached 300,000. It was to Aalborg Vaerft for the next ship on the route. After being named ***Dana Anglia*** on 4th May, 1978, by the Danish-born Duchess of Gloucester at the Pool of London. From London the new ship sailed to Parkeston Quay arriving on 6th May,1978, then onto Copenhagen, Oslo and Esbjerg. At £23 million and 14,400 tons, *M.V Dana Anglia* provided passenger accommodation for 1,249 passengers. Apart from 13 cabin de-luxes on the boat deck, all cabins were of standard design with private shower and toilet with two or four berths. The principle public rooms were situated on the restaurant deck, including the Compass Discotheque, Scandia Coffee Lounge, Admiral Pub, Tivoli Restaurant, Codan Restaurant, Belleview Night Club and Shopping Arcade. An observation lounge was situated above the bridge for the sun worshipper.

Two 18-cylinder Pielstick engines produced a service speed of 21.5 knots. The advanced hull form with no parallel mid-body helped reduce fuel consumption. The voyage time was increased to 19 hours, also to reduce fuel consumption. The service now became daily.

M.V. Winston Churchill transferred to the Tyne services coming to Harwich only when either of the regular pair of ships were in dry dock or when on charter to M.O.D. M.V. Winston Churchill laid up at Esbjerg for sale at the end of 1983 summer season.

Pauline Gronow

Autumn

The bright orange leaves
Blow
slowly in the august breeze.

Scraping
the yellow,
sunburnt floor
filled with dark brown conkers
and past ancient oaks
creaking in the wind

past the happy families
frolicking
at the park,
Sipping on pumpkin spiced lattes
August hangs honey thick and
slow
a haze of heat on sun kissed skin
flying ants
brewing up the light
as if summer might never thin
and winter might never darken
our door
kids go out to play
enjoying the last embers of light
laying in the golden fields
watching the glittering amber leaves
floating down from the trees
like a crimson sword
embedded
in a sea of white
Enjoying their time away
Before school work
Takes them again
These leaves on the ground
Each one a page in a book
A book that says they lived
A book that never ends showing a childhood never ending story
The leaves are now falling
One by one
The sunny autumn days
Will soon be gone
And we'll be back in our homes
As the days get shorter and the nights get longer
Sipping a piping hot chocolate
And savouring a delicious hearty stew

Watching snow fall slowly
But that's not here yet
So go outside with your family
And enjoy the last warmth
This year has left to give

By Blake Pursglove (Rita's grandson)

Essex and Herts Air Ambulance

Essex and Herts Air Ambulance are looking for a local volunteer to take on the Harwich collection tin round. This involves visiting local businesses and premises where the collection tins are displayed. This is a fairly flexible role that would take about 2 hours a month, and the role would suit someone who likes getting out in the local community, supporting a worthwhile cause. The collection tins play a valuable role in raising funds for helicopter rescues and rapid response units.

Please contact Jane Morton or Vicky McGowan on 0345 2417 690 if you would like to help.

Jane Morton

Volunteer Manager

The Wuthering Waiter

I sometimes have to travel with work, and usually stay in chain hotels or motel type accommodation. It's always interesting to get something different. The seaside hotel in Yorkshire was quite old-fashioned and evidently catered for coach trips, and I had to squeeze my car in behind an enormous coach in a tiny car park.

I thought I might have disliked the seaside hotel, but it had its own charm, though I wouldn't necessarily be in a hurry to go back. The town, on the Yorkshire coast was a little seedy, and past its sell by date as it were, but I'd never visited before, and had always been curious to see the place. The company had booked me in for one night only, so I'd booked an additional night for myself, as it was a long journey home after a day's work. I'd asked to keep the same room if possible, and the manger showed me up to a large double bedroom. She proudly opened a further door to show me a small room with bunk beds, so I had lots of choice, but I wasn't exactly tempted by the bunk beds.

When I'd unloaded, and found my way to the dining room, ten minutes after opening time of six thirty, it was packed with elderlies from the coach. The weird thing was that there was scarcely any conversation; just the clattering of cutlery and the

movement of hands and elbows. It turned out it was the final full day of the coach stay, and maybe they'd run out of conversation. It was quite eerie really.

But the waiters made up for it. The men all wore back, and the stern looking waitress had a black dress and white frilly apron. I didn't know they made them any more; the pinnies I mean, not the waitresses. The waiter at my evening meal was brisk, chatty and pleasant, but I could hear his colleague waiting on the elderlies on nearby tables.

'Do'st want more watter?' he asked as a general query to a table of six. They nodded and he returned with a brimming jug.

'Th'art great ones for watter' he pontificated. He'd probably discovered they weren't a tipping table. None of the coach tourers seemed to want anything but watter. None of them were prepared to respond to the ebullient waiter, so they kept their heads well down. There was much banter as he went round the tables, and I could see he was entertaining himself to the limit of the known boundaries of the universe, or the seaside hotel.

I had a personal encounter with the wuthering waiter as I called him, the next morning, at breakfast.

'Numbah fowerteen?' he queried as he approached with his order pad.

'Er, it's room 21', I said, slightly confused.

'Noombah fowerteen,' he said, gesturing to a small number plate on the table. Well. What's the point of that I thought to myself, but never mind.

'They'res porridge over theyre, and grapefruit he gestured. 'Would ee like the brakefust?'

I wasn't too sure about the prospective quality of the said breakfasts; 'I'll have poached eggs on toast,' I said cautiously.

'Dost tha want browun or whiate to-ast?' he asked.

'Oh, brown please.'

'Woudst tha like a rack of browun or whiate to-ast?' he enquired earnestly.

'Er, brown please,' I said, and he whisked away.

There was a hugh cast iron porridge pot on the side, which I didn't investigate, and I got some grapefruit. The minute I'd finished the grapefruit and returned the spoon to the bowl it was whisked away, and two poached eggs placed in front of me on my piece of brahun to-ast . I prodded them with my fork. They were obviously pre-cooked and rock hard. The coffee was good however, and the to-ast was fine.

A middle aged couple came to sit at the adjacent table and the wuthering waiter approached. I tried to keep the smile of amusement off my face.

‘Woulds’t tha layke tay or coffee?’ he asked, beaming.

‘I’ll have coffee’ the woman said, but could you make it a little less strong please’. She’d obviously tried it the night before.

‘It comes aht a the doofah in the kitchen ,’ he explained, but I’ll bring thee a pot of hot watter as well.’ He liked his watter.

She seemed re-assured, and they ordered a full breakfast which looked terrible it when it came. I just drank the rest of my coffee and fled, before they started loading up the coach. I wanted to be able to get my car out.

At the next evening meal, after I‘d returned from work, I noticed the constant background music of fifties music: it was quiet as the cutlery clattering coach party had gone. Jim Reeves was making a come-back , along with Shake, Rattle and Roll’, by Bill Haley and the Comets, then the song ‘Roses and Red, Violets are Blue started playing. The wuthering waiter loved it, and was crooning happily away in the corner, in an off key rather rusty voice, corner, singing, ‘ Roses are red my love, violets are bloo hoo’. It all added to the atmosphere. The songs must have been geared to the age range of the coach tours, as there seemed to be little after the early sixties. A brand new seaside entertainment centre had been built opposite the hotel, and when I’d looked at the programme for the season that was all vintage stuff too.

It all worried me a bit, as I’d flown with the same holiday company as the hotel coach party, to Jersey a week or so before, and wondered if I would inadvertently become part of this miserable throng of eaters who never spoke to each other in the restaurant. I decided not to go with that particular holiday company again. It seemed a sad and miserable, futureless fate, and the food was not always the best. At least in Jersey the food had been superb.

But I enjoyed the journey back through Yorkshire, which is my favourite county, besides Cornwall. The tiny villages were untouched by land-grabbing developers, and most of the picturesque houses were built in the local stone, so nothing much had changed during the fifty years I’d been visiting. There were few cars on the road, and the garages were owned by a small company I’d never heard of before. Sadly, it wasn’t long before I saw the twin cooling towers of the Drax power station in the far distance, and realised that the A1 and the motorways were not too far off.

The rest of the journey was predictable, except for a stop at a big service station near Peterborough, which was packed. It was disconcerting to find that the corridor to the toilets was filled with fancily dressed trans women, big burly chaps, most of them, and I hoped they weren’t all going for the Ladies toilets. Fortunately this proved not to be the case, but I was even more puzzled coming back into the main

corridor to see a crowd of boys all dressed with red woolly hats red and white stripy T shirts, and big round glasses. There were dozens of them. This turned out to be a themed coach trip related to the popular ‘Where’s Wally?’ books. My son Mark had loved those books when he was younger. But you had to wonder where they had been and where they were going.

I must say I was glad to get home after a five hour drive.

Rita Rossini

From my book The Dog Who Preferred Butter under my previous name Marguerite Kramer

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