u3a Upminster

Newsletter, November 2026

"learn, Laugh, Live"

UPMINSTER

We meet at

The New Windmill Hall, Upminster, RM14 2QH

on the third Tuesday of each month

Our next meeting will be

1:30pm, Tuesday 17th November

Doors open at 12.30pm, refreshments available at the interval (bring your own mug)

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Useful Links

London Region Events

https://lru3a.u3asite.uk/events/

Upminster u3a website

https://upminster.u3asite.uk/

Upminster u3a Committee Contact

https://upminster.u3asite.uk/contact/

For future news, articles, and feedback, please email

maupminstereditors@gmail.com

Deadline for submission is

Friday 27th November

Social Event

Christmas Party

Tuesday 15th December

See page 7 for details

Editorial

It's been a big month for Upminster u3a which has celebrated its 10 year anniversary. If you look below you will see the articles provided by a few of the early membership groups. We have received a proposal from one of the original members, suggesting that others who have also taken this 10 year journey may like to share some of the experiences that they have enjoyed thanks to their membership. With this in mind, I would like to invite those of you with any reminiscences of group activities, whether these began in the early years and are still running, or those which were once enjoyed but have since folded, to please share them.

Next month, we are intending to produce a Christmas themed newsletter. So if you have any Christmas anecdotes to share please do so.

Thank you

Alison

Please send any items of interest to: maupminstereditors@gmail.com

Mary & Alison

Happy 10th Birthday Uu3a!

At the October meeting in the Windmill Hall members were treated to a slice of birthday cake to mark our 10th anniversary. Many thanks must go to Bob, Pauline, Joy and Gill who missed most of the interesting talk on Glenn Miller in order to cut and wrap all the slices before the tea break.







Pamela Freer

Happy Birthday Books!

Not only is Upminster u3a celebrating its tenth anniversary, but so is the book group. Over the past 10 years we have read, discussed, argued over, liked (and sometimes disliked) over 100 books. We have read books of every variety - from Charles Dickens to Jeffrey Archer, Albert Camus to Val McDermid; Booker prize winners; the classics and the everyday best seller.

Now that the nights are drawing in, with winter on our doorstep, what better entertainment than settling down with a good book suggested by a new friend.

Our membership has never closed - not even in Covid (thank you, Zoom), so come and join us at the pub on the second Monday each month. For full details about the group, and our future reading list, please email courtneymoita@gmail.com.

Courtney

Medium Walking Group

We will be marking our Uu3a 10 years with a series of walks from that first year 2016/2017. The group will complete the very first walk which was 13th December 2016 in mid December. More walks will follow. Details as usual will be provided nearer the time.
I feel this is a momentous occasion and wanted to contribute to encourage other long standing groups to mark our 10 fabulous years! It has been truly great, the friends made, the memories - all the things we have learned and shared with everyone. THIS REALLY HAS TO BE CELEBRATED!



A welcome rest, sitting on 'our log' in the fantastic 'Issabella Plantation' Richmond Park. An annual pilgrimage for walkers to see the sublime azalea displays. (The last week of April).





Norman, group leader

Come Join Us

Group Update

If you have an idea for a new group, or any questions about our groups generally, please do get in touch with me. In the meantime, you can find full details of all our current groups, and how to contact the Group Leaders, on our website https://upminster.u3asite.uk/groups/

Denise Hill
Groups Coordinator
dhdh3210@gmail.com

Could you be a Group Leader?

It is fantastic that so many of our interest groups are incredibly popular. However, this high demand means that several of our current groups are completely full and have waiting lists or are unable to accept additional members.

To try to ensure that everyone gets a chance to participate, we are looking for enthusiastic people to help us expand. Could you be a Group Leader? You could start something new and launch a completely new group based on your own hobbies or interests, or maybe you could expand an existing favourite and start a second (or third, fourth, or fifth!) branch of a group that is currently full. We welcome joint group leaders, so you could share the load and run a group with a friend. If you would like to find out more about what is involved, please get in touch with me.
dhdh3210@gmail.com

New Group - Artificial Intelligence - launching in January

I am pleased to confirm that our new Artificial Intelligence (AI) group will commence meeting in January. The schedule is currently being finalised, but meetings are provisionally expected to take place on Mondays. The group will be led by Pauline Ashton who is very much looking forward to welcoming members to the sessions.

The group is open to everyone. Prior knowledge of AI is not required; whether you are a complete beginner or already exploring its practical uses, the group's objective is to enjoy exploring how this technology can enhance our daily lives and hobbies.
AI offers a wide range of useful applications for everyday tasks, including:

- Creative Writing & Correspondence: assisting with letters, articles, songwriting, and creative pieces.
- Photography & Media: editing and enhancing photographs.
- Research & Planning**:** sourcing recipes, planning holidays, and comparing commercial products.

Please keep an eye on our website, where the finalised schedule and venue will be posted as soon as they are confirmed. In the meantime, if you are interested in joining this new group, please email me dhdh3210@gmail.com and I will pass on your details to Pauline.

Board Games

Due to the venue not being available in December, there is no Board Games meeting that month. Meetings will resume in January. If you fancy a new group for the New Year, you can contact the group leader, Ann, via the website:

https://upminster.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/board-games/

500 Group



The last 500 meeting on Friday 9 October was successful and great fun. So far there are 6 of us and ideally the group needs at least 2 more players so that we can play in groups of 4 with partners. The game can be played with 3 people but not as much fun! Anyone who likes playing cards is welcome.
Contact Marilyn, the group leader, who runs the group at her home in Romford, contact details below. The next meeting will be held on Friday 20th November. Back to normal for December on Friday 11th December.

https://upminster.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/five-hundred/

Bananagrams

🍌 Bananagrams is Back!



Sharpen your spelling skills and prepare for some serious tile-tossing fun when **Bananagrams** returns on **Friday 27th November, from 2pm to 4pm**, in the back room of **The Windmill Pub** under the expert guidance of Mo Blackley who is leading the group this month.

Fancy lunch first? Arrive a little earlier and sample the pub's excellent menu before the battle of the bananas begins. The venue with parking is **completely free**, we simply ask that everyone buys a drink as a thank-you to our generous hosts. If you have your own Bananagrams set please bring it along.

Never played before? No problem at all. The rules are easy to pick up, and we're a very friendly bunch. Dictionaries, phones, tablets and any other word-finding helpers are positively encouraged!

We've booked Friday 11th December for our festive Bananagrams gathering, as Christmas Day gets in the way of our usual schedule! January, we'll gather on 8th January because New Year's Day has claimed the first Friday for itself.

Pauline

"Where else can grown adults get excited about making words from random letters?" 🍌😊

Dog Walking

The next dog walk (members without dogs are welcome) will be on 4th November , starting at 11am, meeting at Thames Chase Coffee Shop.
During the Autumn/Winter we will stick with Thames Chase as the coffee shop is warm and is easy to duck into if it starts raining!
In the future, we have decided that if there is heavy rain earlier in the morning we will cancel the walk, without messaging, so people will know immediately from what they see, rather than weather forecasts which can be a bit untrustworthy!
Members of the group are always welcome to message me to double-check. Looking forward to an enjoyable walk and chat on the 4th November.

Catherine

Coffee Mornings

The next month's dates are a bit higgledy-piggledy:
Tue Nov 17th + Monthly Meeting / **Tue Dec 1st** /**Tue Dec 15th** +Christmas Party and to take us to the end of the year **Tue Dec 29th**. All at Roomes Cafe usual time 11am .
Hope to see someone 😉

Angela ☕

Future Guest Speakers at Monthly Meeting, 2026

17 November	1. Paul Hounsell, professional speaker, **Truth Behind Nursery Rhymes.** 2. TBA
15 December	**Annual Christmas Party** - No speakers
19 January	1. Lucy Lewis , the first-ever bomb disposal woman in the British Army and now novelist with her book **'Lighting the Fuse'** has tales to tell of an unusual and exciting life. (Copies to buy will be available on the day.) 2. TBA

Information



🎄 Christmas Party 💃 🕺

This will take the place of the monthly meeting on **Tuesday 15th December**, 1:30 - 4:00. Doors open at 1:00. Food and drink will be available, plus live entertainment from 2:00 to 4:00.

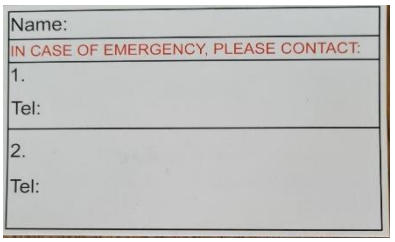
Tickets at £12.00 per person will be sold at the November monthly meeting, when the doors open at 12.30 p.m. As usual it will be one ticket per person, plus one for a friend who is unable to make the meeting. They will only be available to Uu3a members.

Social Committee

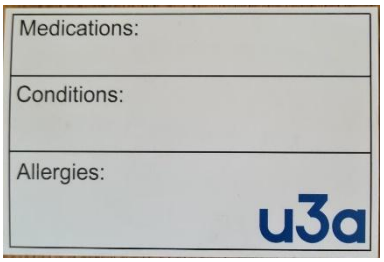
Membership

Our current membership rose by another 4 new members in October. Membership now stands at 701. We welcome Jeffrey Norris and Tina Cooke and 2 other new members not wishing to be named.

ICE cards reminder



All members will, at some point, have been issued with an In Case of Emergency (ICE) card. The card is the same size as a bank card/travel pass, so easy to store. We would ask that you complete this card and keep it with you when you attend any group activities, trips etc., so that Group Leaders and trip organisers know what your medical requirements may be, as well as who to contact should the need arise.



If you would like a new card for any reason, they will be available for you to collect at the monthly meeting.

Liz Short

Quiz

1/ How many keys are there on a piano keyboard?

a) 80
b) 100
c) 88
d) 62

2/ What are plants that lose their leaves in autumn called?

a) Coniferous
b) Deciduous
c) Carnivorous
d) Evergreen

3/ Which was the last country to join the EU in the year 2013?

a) Croatia
b) Bulgaria
c) Romania
d) Estonia

4/ How many Grand Slams did Rafael Nadal win before retiring in 2024?

a) 20
c) 32
c) 17
d) 22

5/ What was the first ever toy to be advertised on television?

a) Barbie
b) Mr Potato Head
c) Dominoes
d) Polly Pocket

6/ What spirit is used in making a Tom Collins?

a) Vodka
b) Rum
c) Gin
d) Whiskey

7/ Which of the following languages has the longest alphabet?

a) Greek
b) Russian
c) Latin
d) Arabic

8/ How many plays do people (generally) believe that Shakespeare wrote?

a) 29
b) 33
c) 37
d) 47

9/ Where was the earliest documented case of the Spanish flue?

a) USA
b) Belgium
c) Spain
d) Mexico

10/ Which gas planet is the largest planet in the Solar System?

a) Jupiter
b) Uranus
c) Saturn
d) Neptune

Cast your mind back



a/ Who painted these soup tins?





b/ Name the actor?

c/ Which character is he playing?

d/ This character can be found in which film franchise?

e/ What was: ‘just enough until it’s time to eat’ or ‘to give your kids a treat’?

Featured Articles

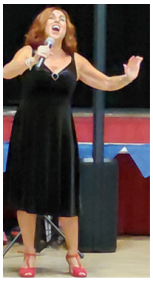
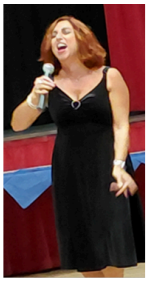


Songs From the Musicals – Social Event



When the weather is hot in September it is called an 'Indian Summer' and on the evening of the 29th it was hot on two fronts, one being the warm weather and the other our brilliant singer, Joanna Lee.

As the theme of our evening was 'Songs from The Musicals' Joanna started by belting out *Cabaret* from the musical of the same name, then followed it with such classics as *Any Dream Will Do* (Joseph & The Amazing Technicoloured Dreamcoat), *Dancing Cheek to Cheek* (Top Hat), *Que Sera Sera (*The Man Who Knew Too Much), and many others.



Also included were two medleys, one being Nancy's songs from *Oliver,* but it was when she did the songs from *The Jersey Boys,* that people began to get up and started dancing.

Joanna took the hint and moved from musicals to classics from such artists as Abba, Whitney Houston, Cyndi Lauper, Gloria Gaynor and Tina Turner but did not just stick to females as she included Buddy Holly, Chubby Checker, Queen and a couple from Elvis.

Following an epic version of Cilla Black's *You're My World* she took a short break to catch her breath but was soon belting out songs again. There was *Rock & Roll* and *The Twist* - glad no backs were put out! Next came synchronised dancing to *Uptown Girl,* and with some people not even bothering to get up from their seats to go on the dance floor, there was a raucous 'joining in' of *Sweet Caroline.*





After this, someone had the bright idea of forming a conga line and people were off!




To finish the evening Joanna went back to the musicals and sang the more popular and well-known version of *New York New York* to vast applause.

With thanks to Joanna for one of our most entertaining evenings and as ever, the volunteers who helped set up and clear away.

Your Social Committee

Training of HeroRATS and HeroDOGS - Stemm

Have you heard of APOPO? I hadn't and neither had several members of the STEMM group. APOPO is a Belgian non-governmental organization that trains animals, including HeroRATs and HeroDOGs, to detect landmines and tuberculosis, saving lives and supporting communities worldwide http://apopo.org .
APOPO has been active for 25 years. Currently it is operational in 10 countries, with the headquarters in Tanzania, with 104 HeroRATs and 434 staff.
The HeroRATS landmine detection work in Zimbabwe had to be closed as a result of the current USA administration significantly reducing international funding. Thankfully APOPO is still successfully active in South Sudan, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Angola and Senegal. The TB diagnosis operation is in Ethiopia and Tanzania, increasing the detection rate by 48%., particularly in children who produce less sputum than adults, so the sensitive smelling capacity of the HeroRATs is essential in detecting those who are infected with TB.

Emma Mortiboy, the Public Fundraising Officer, shared with us the work and stories of some of the HeroRATs and HeroDOGs with genuine passion. She stressed that no rats or dogs have ever been harmed in their work.

The Ottawa Treaty is the 1997 international agreement that bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. China, Russia and the USA are not signatories to this accord and are still laying landmines.

Why rats? The African giant pouched rat (*Cricetomys Ansorgei*) is endemic to Africa, weighing in around 1.8kg (4 lbs). They are too light to set off landlines whilst having a highly developed sense of smell. Rats do not bond with one trainer only, as do the dogs, so training and operations are easier to manage. It takes 6-10 months to train the rats to detect TNT. They are taught using reward based training, until they solely detect the target odour (in this case, TNT). When they detect a landmine, they either rub their ears or scratch the surface, for which they are rewarded. They have an average life span of 10 years and are retired to live in rat friendly burrows, provided with food, water and medical attention when needed. In order to improve the genetic stock, males from the wild are regularly introduced into the in-house/country breeding programmes. The medical and genetic records for every rat are kept. HeroRATs are neutered and there is no gender difference in detection efficacy.

Ronin is the HeroRAT Guiness Record holder who started work in Cambodia in August 2021. To date he has detected 109 landmines and 15 unexploded ordinance!

Moving on to HeroDOGs, many of whom are trained in Cambodia, and since 2024 are used in Ukraine where they have cleared 1 million square metres. This is the first time that APOPO has worked in an active war zone. The dogs are trained to sit 1 metre from the detected bomb, the rats then come in to find the ordinance's precise location. More than 2.5 million people have been freed from the threat of explosives.

Future research and innovation include the detection of PFAmicroplastics and oil discharge pollution. HeroRATS are also being trained to find wildlife contraband. In 2025, 8 RescueRATS, wearing backpacks, were deployed to Turkey to assist in locating survivors trapped beneath rubble after natural disasters.
I would like to extend our gratitude to Emma for introducing us to the incredible work being achieved by APOPO. Anyone reading this article, please consider going online and making a donation to support the four legged heroes with their future work.

Lyn Haynes authenticated by ***Emma Mortiboy***

The Competition - Story

Last month's Creative Writing title was 'The Competition' and as usual everybody's stories were about completely different things. Carol, who loves to include surprising twists, adopted a more humorous tone this time.

Sir Leslie Barrington Smith

"Why the hell did she leave me the house? I always knew my great aunt Araminta didn't like me - it was the incident with her damned cat; she never really forgave me you know, always held it against me. I'd apologised, even offered to bury it for her. I never dreamed the old harridan would do something as dreadful as this to me... leave me her house indeed!!"

"You could always sell it."

"Sell it!!?" He shouted, "Where would you find an idiot daft enough to buy it with all the bad publicity attached about it. The newspapers were full of it for weeks and weeks."

"But that was over thirty years ago, people soon move on to the next big story. Anyway she was never actually charged."

"Charged or not, we all knew it was her."

Araminta Barrington

It was rather funny how it all happened. I lived in a large four story Victorian house which always seemed to need renovation work. Joe the builder was doing some work at the back, which looked on to the sea. Paint, as always, was peeling off the window frames - attacked by the harsh sea winds. Joe commissioned his painter to do the repainting.

He constructed a series of complicated scaffolding poles in order to reach the windows at the top of the house and set to work. He was rather a slender young man and on that day, a particularly strong gusty wind blew in from the sea. Unfortunately, it ousted the poor man quite off the top of the scaffolding and he landed in a heap on my marble patio. Hearing a thump, I'd rushed out to see the painter's head twisted at an uncomfortable angle. Joe confirmed a broken neck and no pulse, so there wasn't any point in calling an ambulance. He also advised not calling the police either, as he was not insured and would lose his business. He asked if I was insured for work on my property because if not, he said I would be liable for any damages. In the end, since we could not help the dear man, we put him up in the attic. If asked we would say he had never arrived. Although I felt a little uneasy, life continued, Joe carried on with the work and I went off to my various meetings in the village, bridge club, church meetings, women's institute etc.

Some days later having been troubled with rats, I made up some rat poison sandwiches and left them in the fridge, quite unaware that Joe helped himself to food whilst I was out. On my return from a church warden meeting, I was surprised to find Joe curled up on my sofa - stone dead. Worried about the insurance aspect Joe had spoken of, and my lack of it, I thought I'd just put Joe up in the attic with the painter. It was a bit of a struggle to get him up there, but I was fairly young and fit then, and there was a lift in the house. Nothing happened for a few years, but then someone Joe owed money started looking for him and I had a visit from the police.

The constable who came was a lovely man, although somewhat overweight. Now I'm not medically qualified at all but I didn't think he looked very well from the start. Anyway he had instructions to search the house as Joe was last known to be working for me. The constable searched each floor of the house. My lift was out of action at the time and the constable's face became more florid as he climbed more stairs. Perspiring profusely, he reached the top of the house and wanted to look in the attic, which worried me a bit. He climbed the steep attic stairs breathing heavily, pushed the attic door open and stepped inside. I heard a crash and followed, to find him lying face down, collapsed on the attic floor. I believe it was a heart attack. I tried to resuscitate him but to no avail. It was quite fortunate for me he was already in the attic, although it was now becoming rather overcrowded. I decided best not to inform anyone since it was awkward - having so many bodies in my attic.

I fully expected another visit from the police. This did not happen. I later learned the constable was under suspicion for certain misdemeanours, it was assumed he had run off or even done away with himself. Several years passed, then I heard of an article written by Sir Leslie Barrington Smith regarding the strange disappearances at 'Sea Wind House', my own house! My own great nephew!

This led to a terrible investigation, newspaper journalists everywhere. It was a bad time. Of course the bodies, if not their spirits, had long gone. I'd had the lift fixed and transported each gentleman in an old pram, wheeling it along the ancient smugglers' passage leading from the house to the sea.

When the investigation was over, I wanted to sell the house and move to a gated retirement home. Sadly that was not to be, due to the outrageous stories in the newspapers, the house was now impossible to sell. In addition, the spirits of the painter and the builder did not get along at all, plus neither of them liked the policeman. All three constantly argued and bickered; the last chapter of my life was not as peaceful as I had hoped and planned. I blamed Leslie for stirring up trouble, he'd been a horrible child – killed my cat. His parents doted on him, scrimped and saved to send him to public school. He married the daughter of a rich publishing magnate and then stopped speaking to his parents. I shall leave the horrid little toe rag my unsaleable haunted house, serves him right.

.-.-.-.-.-.-.COMPETITION.-.-.-.-.-.-.

Win this amazing late Victorian large house fully furnished. The sea is two minutes away and the house enjoys its own private beach. Take a spirited gamble, this could be your forever home!

Carole Turnbull

Short walks – Leamouth Peninsular

On a perfect day for walking we got trains to Canning Town. This area was largely covered by boggy marshland until the 19th century, when there was rapid industrial development of the Leamouth Peninsula with shipbuilders, docks, chemical, iron and glassworks. Thousands of workers came to live here and speculators built row upon row of terraced houses to accommodate them. Nowadays, these have mostly disappeared and we now have the towers of London City Island . This is a recent development changing this part of London forever, billing itself as 'A twelve acre micro Manhattan'.

We entered Bow Creek Ecological Park. The last part of the River Lea is known as Bow Creek. It's a pretty, secluded spot, with only a few people using the park. We walked by the side of the creek with its extensive mudflats and flowers, a good place for birdwatching. Although industry has now left, you can still see ghostly signs on old buildings especially as you get nearer the river and Trinity Bouy Wharf. There are information boards detailing the incredible history of the area.





The Corporation of Trinity House was given a charter by Henry VIII, authorising it to assist sailors, primarily through the provision of buoys, lighthouses and lightships. The wharf has London's only lighthouse. It was built in the 1890s and was used to test new technology and train lighthouse keepers. Michael Farraday had his workshop nearby. Today there's a mix of old and new buildings, with studios and workshops occupied by ceramicists, blacksmiths, textile designers and artists. There are some very interesting sculptures to view.

After a welcome coffee, we walked back through East India Dock Basin, which is now a bird reserve. The area has wonderful views of the river and is certainly well worth a visit.



Helen Stewart

Coach Trip - Capel Manor Gardens and Copped Hall

In September we visited two local attractions . Our morning stop was at Capel Manor Gardens in Enfield, where we had the choice to either roam at our own pace or take a guided tour.
Capel Manor is an environmental training college. This includes animal care as well as horticulture environmental studies. The college campus covers 30 acres, much of which is divided into small gardens designed and maintained by both past and present students. These range from Which? Trial Gardens, to a Legacy Rose Garden. A late September visit could have been disappointing, particularly after such a dry summer, but there was still a lot of beautiful planting to enjoy.
The first picture shows the Georgian Manor House from which the college got its name. Although not usually open to visitors, one of our groups had an unexpected glimpse of the interior when our guide took us in to escape a brief rain shower.



The photo below shows some of the brickwork from the Old Manor House Garden. Although very popular for wedding photos, it is entirely fake; the bricks are real but there was no old house here to fall into ruin.



There is a mini zoo, where exotic animals such as meerkats and lemurs can be found, alongside more usual farm animals. The gardens are open daily from March to October. There is ample free parking, plus a cafeteria where visitors can buy refreshments at very reasonable prices.
After a short journey, our next stop was at Copped Hall where we were welcomed by our enthusiastic guides who split us into groups and took us on a 3 hour tour of the mansion and gardens. It was a beautiful afternoon in a glorious setting. The Hall is perched on a ridge overlooking landscaped parkland with lovely views of the surrounding countryside. I now realise that I have seen it in the distance many times as I drive along the M25.
It is a Georgian mansion that is still under restoration, built upon a site of ancient human habitation. Many important buildings from the Medieval, Tudor and Elizabethan eras were demolished prior to the present mansion which was built and enlarged by the Victorians. From 1986 to 1995 there was a successful campaign by a committee of local Conservation Societies to stop it being aggressively developed. Three of those individuals set up the Copped Hall Trust which finally purchased them in 1995, thus saving them. The aim of the Trust is to restore the Mansion and its gardens for educational, culture and community benefit. It is only open for advertised events and private viewings.
There were three floors to discover but only one room had been restored to its original spec, with fully plastered and painted walls. As for the rest, the stone work has been left bare with furnishings added, making these rooms a lot more atmospheric, especially where bits of ivy are left clinging to the walls. Half way through our tour we were offered beautiful homemade cake with tea or coffee which was a welcome break. Those who had toured the Mansion were then shown the large walled garden and a site of ancient ruins still under excavation. All in all a long but very enjoyable day was had.

Pamela Freer and Shirley Boelrijk

Rainham Hall – Pins, Needles & Hooks Outing

Three members of the Pins, Needle & Hooks group went back in time as they spent an enjoyable afternoon at Rainham Hall attending a Jane Austin themed event on 11th October..
The preparation began a few weeks earlier as discussions about costumes took place, with skilful repurposing dresses and hats to create authentic costumes which on the day blended in with the crowd!
Upon entry we were issued with a 'dance card' and were then able to take part in 'gentle' regency dancing, which was great fun, but not as 'gentle' as advertised, especially when we forgot the steps! This resulted in lots of laughter!



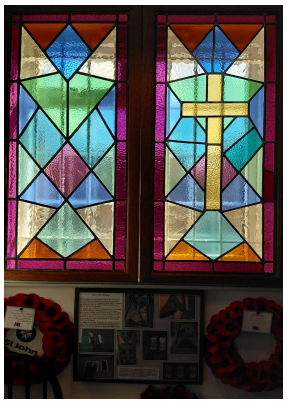
We took part in flower posy arranging, period card games, pomander making, calligraphy and simple sewing.
Bonnets and Georgian clothing had been provided to try on, plus lovely cream teas could be purchased.
A local National Trust house, with an interesting history. There is a brand new exhibition about the process of filming the recent UK film *Sense and Sensibility*. Well worth a visit!





Mary Sales

Visits to Places of Interest – RAF Hornchurch Heritage Centre



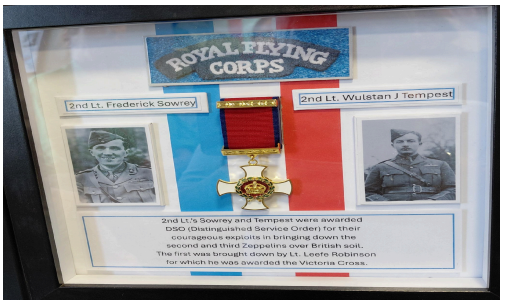
At the beginning of October a small group of us made a belated visit to a 'Hidden Treasure' in our area: the RAF Hornchurch Heritage Centre. This is situated in an unassuming building on Suttons Lane just south of the old hospital site. The building, originally called Suttons House, was used by RAF Hornchurch throughout WWII, possibly as an officers' mess.

The Heritage Centre was opened to the public in 2019. Inside there is a cornucopia of artifacts, photographs and biographies of 'local heroes'. There is even an Anderson Shelter in the grounds.



The Trust which runs the Centre is staffed entirely by volunteers. The two enthusiasts who guided our visit brought everything to life, giving us a fascinating and informative view of an important part of our local history.
They still receive donations from local people who come across items of interest, therefore every visit is likely to be slightly different.

I can strongly recommend a visit. The Centre is open on Saturdays and Sundays for individuals and during the week for group bookings only. There is a small, free car park, but buses 252 and 256 stop outside so they suggest you use the bus if you can. During weekend opening hours there is a café on site.



Pamela Freer

Poetry Appreciation Group

We met at the end of October to discuss John Keats and his well-known poem 'To Autumn'. Indeed, this is a deeply moving meditation on time, fulfillment, change and morality - the richness of autumn in its own right.

John Keats was born in London, the eldest of four children and was said to have been born in his maternal grandparents' stable, The Swan & Hoop, in what is now Finsbury Circus.

Although he died aged 25, Keats had perhaps the most remarkable career of any English poet. He published only 54 poems in 3 slim volumes and various magazines. Although he is now seen as part of the British Romantics literary tradition, Keats would not have been keen to be associated with other major Romantic poets and he himself was often uneasy amongst them.

In poor health, in 1830 he set sail for Rome accompanied by Joseph Severn, the devoted young painter who nursed Keats and managed his affairs until his death. On the night of 23 February 1821 Keats died peacefully in Severn's arms. He was buried in Rome's Protestant Cemetery and at his request there is no headstone to celebrate his life.

Our second choice was 'Jardi Du Luxembourg' (after Rilke) by Derek Mahon.

We reviewed Derek Mahon in May of this year so I will briefly relate the following. Mahon was born in Belfast, Ireland in 1941 and died at his home in Kinsale, Co. Cork aged 78 in 2020. He was widely regarded as one of the most talented and innovative Irish poems of the late 20th century.

Often working in received forms, Mahon's lucid, sculpted lines incorporated both classical allusion and contemporary life. Critics have compared his poetry to that of such masters as Auden, Samuel Becket and MacNiece.

So, Mahon wrote a free imitation of Rainer Maria Rilkie's poem about a carousel in the Luxembourg Gardens Paris, showing how a carousel is a symbol of life and how the world of childhood is a world of vivid colour, which will eventually disperse into adult oblivion, with the little riders inhabiting a world of adventure.

Our Guest Poem was 'MacCavity The Mystery Cat' by T. S. Eliot.

We meet again at the end of November, before breaking for the festive season and meeting again in January.

Michelle Blythe

Quiz Answers:

1: C= 88

2: B= Deciduous

3: A= Croatia

4: D= 22

5: B= Mr Potato Head

6: C= Gin

7: B= Russian

8: C= 37

9: A= USA

10: A= Jupiter

Cast Your Mind Back Answers:

a/Andy Warhol

b/ Val Kilmer

c/ Tom Iceman Kazansky

d/ Top Gun

e/ A finger of Fudge

