

General Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month at 2:00pm  
at Great Baddow Millennium Community Centre, Baddow Road, Chelmsford, CM2 9RL

## A note from the editor

Welcome to the eighth issue of our News Round Up. As always a BIG thank you to those who have sent in articles and photos!! If you have anything to contribute please send them to me for the next issue in July *Jean*

## Want to join our Committee Support Team?

A team of volunteers to help with things like assisting at General Meetings, helping with equipment, looking after the Speaker and other tasks which may arise. If this is something you would like to help with, email or talk to me at a meeting. You will receive updates with any tasks required and you can offer as much or as little help as you wish. If you sign up you will be doing your bit to keep us afloat - *Jean*

## Round-Up of what our groups have been up to.....

### Art Appreciation Leader - Debbie

February

Generally when looking at an artwork the composition and subject matter are what strike you first along with the colour and the beauty or ugliness and general mood of the picture.

When looking at neo-impressionist paintings the actual technique can also be seen which can add to or detract from the picture depending on your subjective feelings at the time.

The first presentation began with an introduction to the differences between impression, where light, colour and form were all important, to neo-impressionism, where paints are not mixed on a palette but dabs of pure colour (fine dots or more aggressive strokes) are placed directly onto the canvas and the eyes and brain of the viewer do the mixing, resulting in more muted colours. In addition, the neo-impressionists were concerned with political and social issues, and liked blocks of shape and geometric forms.

The inspiration for this presentation was the recent exhibition at the National Gallery of neo-impressionist works from the Kroller-Muller collection, and we looked at a selection of these. Subject matter included landscapes, seascapes, people in repose, industrial scenes and music halls. They definitely needed looking at from a distance to get the full effect and we marvelled at how the artists who were working close-up could envisage what their finished product would look like, although Seurat apparently was never

satisfied and used to add the odd dot here and there once his painting was complete to perfect it.

There was a mixed reaction to some of the pictures which seemed dull in colour or form, but a general favourite was the Georges Seurat, 'Chahut', (can-can) which was almost banned at the time as being too shocking to put on display. We loved the humour and spirit of this work and when we realised that half the can-can dancers were men in drag understood why it should not be seen by more sensitive souls.

The neo-impressionist period is defined as roughly 1886 to 1906 and was confined mainly to France, whereas Art Nouveau which flourished around 1890 to 1910 spread across many nations. Hard to believe that two such contrasting styles co-existed. Art Nouveau can be recognised by its elongated forms, stylised lines and shapes, sinuous curves and natural themes. To modern eyes it can seem conventional and pretty, but at the time, it was also considered very avant-garde and Parisians were outraged when their metro stations were designed in the Art Nouveau style. Perhaps the two most famous exponents are Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Alphonse Mucha. The movement also tried to unify all aspects of art, so an Art Nouveau café would have tables, chairs carpets, wall decorations, waitresses' uniforms etc all in the unified style. Comfort was NOT a consideration.

The theme of the next presentation (being the day before Valentine's Day) was love in various aspects. The selected pictures were all from the late 19th century, and once again it was amazing how many different styles were around at one time. We had flirty, tragic, indecisive and 'happy ever after' scenes, and the back stories to these paintings were very interesting. From changing models halfway through the painting, to using out of period clothes because the artist preferred the fashions of his youth, every picture told a story. Our favourite was the Manet 'Chez le Pere Lathuille' where a zealous young man is courting an obviously older woman. In the background, the father of the young man is watching rather disapprovingly.

Finally we looked at a story of tragic love. There are hundreds of paintings of the story of Orpheus depicting scenes from his life, from his early days charming the animals through to his love and then loss of Euridice, his trip to the underworld to reclaim her, his turning back and losing her again, his violent death at the hands of the Maenads and then the retrieval of his head and lyre by various nymphs. We looked at a small selection.

Standout images were the two pictures by Roelant Savery and Breughel the Elder of glowing fires highlighting demons and monsters in an otherwise dark and cavernous underworld. Just as powerful but less vivid were three pictures showing the lovers at the point where Orpheus has turned round and Euridice is disappearing back into the underworld. The poses were different but the meaning in each one was perfectly clear.

AND THE FINAL RATHER GRIM HIGHLIGHT WAS AN EARLY 20TH CENTURY PAINTING BY LOUIS BOUQUET WHERE THE NAKED MAENADS, ALMOST UNARMED ARE JUST STARTING TO TEAR THE BODY OF ORPHEUS WITH THEIR BARE HANDS AND TEETH.

April

We have all unashamedly reached an age where we can look back on our lives and see how our attitudes and tastes have changed and developed over the years. Two presentations in the April meeting of the Art Appreciation group showed this process in artists.

Francis Picabia (1879-1954) based his early works on Fauvism and Cubism but was then credited with creating the first abstract painting in the Western world. He then moved on through Dadaism and Surrealism and finished off concentrating on nudes. His artworks were influenced by a variety of sources from the ancient classical world through to more contemporary artists and he used different techniques, most notably in his Transparency series where he overlaid his surreal oil paintings with transparent figures and images. We looked at nine of his pictures spanning his career. As an artist unknown to all of us, we could look at them with fresh eyes and they generated much discussion about what we could see in them, the artistry, the thoughts behind them and of course the basic question which always splits the group – whether we would have them hanging in our house.

The second artist who also developed through his career, although not to such a great extent, was Edward Degas. Known as an impressionist, we found out that he adhered to very few of the impressionist ideals – he did not paint outdoors – he did not paint landscapes – he used muted colours. However he was associated very strongly with the Impressionist group and was hung in most of their exhibitions. His training as a draftsman is clearly evident when you look at the structure of his paintings which seem to be snapshots of scenes unposed and not carefully arranged to be pleasing to the eye. But in fact they have been very carefully planned to create the sense of direction and space within the images. Best known for his ballet dances, in fact his early career concentrated on horses and jockeys, and later in life, as his eyesight failed, he turned to sculpture. His early paintings show quite a lot of detail, but later on he used the paint differently to convey shimmering effects in for example the costumes of the ballet dancers, or broader strokes better to convey the mood of a picture. Degas had an amazing visual memory and having seen a scene and sketched it once, would return to the studio and complete his masterpiece.

Away from individual artists life we looked at some art techniques. From a distance the picture of the Pantheon in Rome by Luigi Moglia from around 1850 seemed just like an average ‘don’t look at me twice’ picture hanging in a second-rate gallery. But close examination showed it to be made of thousands of tiny pieces of coloured glass which were inserted into a base layer of putty using tweezers and endless patience. We amazed at how this technique could create so much detail from sharp outlines to dreamy clouds to bustling street scenes. A video of this micromosaic technique can be found here. <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/how-is-it-made-micromosaics>

Finally we had a quick look at colours in art and found out that arsenic, lead, urine, manure and various other unsavoury ingredients were used to make paints, which perhaps could explain why many artists developed various diseases in their old age. One of the greatest revolutions in paint technology was when paint could be stored in tin tubes instead of pigs’ bladders, resulting in the ability to produce premixed colours and to take the paint out with you and paint in the open air.

Finally, a couple of quotes by Tom Stoppard about modern art, which you may or may not agree with.

Skill without imagination is craftsmanship and gives us many useful objects such as wickerwork picnic baskets. Imagination without skill gives us modern art.

It is not hard to understand modern art. If it hangs on a wall it's a painting, and if you can walk around it it's a sculpture.

*Debbie* !!! This group is looking for more members !!!

**\*COMMUNITY ADVERT\* Great Baddow Bowling Club welcomes you** 

How do you fancy playing bowls at your local club? It's just off the road leading to the Millennium Centre so it's very close by.



The club is holding a public taster day on **Sunday 24th May** when U3A members would be very welcome to come along and have a go. Just pop in between 10.00am - 2.00pm when club members will be able to show you the ropes. No equipment or prior knowledge needed - just wear flat soled shoes and a big smile.

The club is always keen to recruit new members so if you, or someone you know, would like to learn more about the club and/or the game, you're welcome to come along for an initial chat. All you have to do is email Sue at [gbbc.communication@gmail.com](mailto:gbbc.communication@gmail.com) to make arrangements to meet.

See our article on page 38 of the March edition of The Great Baddow Times for starters. This photo gives a little flavour too - girls versus boys (wearing pink and blue of course) playing in our annual Battle of the Sexes match. You can imagine the jestful gloating at the end of the game!

Thanks for reading this article. The club looks forward to welcoming you, especially as we prepare for our centenary celebrations next year.

*Sue M*

**Transport group  Leader - Alan**

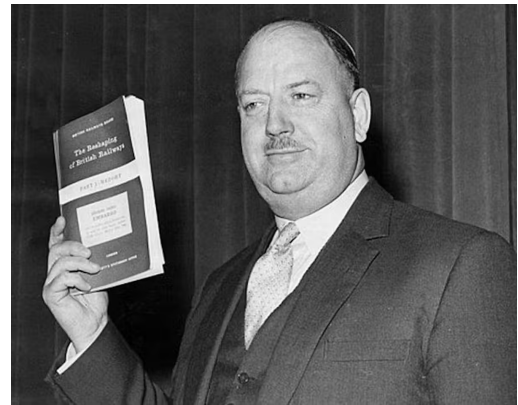
March

The March meeting was the best attended meeting in some time, with 18 including 2 new members. However there is space for more members, and members can influence the topics covered towards your favourite modes and periods of transport if they are willing to present or introduce guest speakers - please contact group leader Alan via our website.

We began with a discussion of our trips planned for 2026. These will be on the IFS Cloud cable car across the Thames to North Greenwich, and to Sudbury on the relatively little known branch line now known as the Gainsborough line. As a result of the discussions we will aim to combine the cable car with a trip on the Thames in an Uber boat, and we

may visit the Gainsborough line twice, once for a boat trip on the River Stour (upstream of Constable country) and once to see the railway museum at Chappel.

Our talk in March was by Hugh, about the Beeching cuts to the railways. I had been looking forward to this subject for some time because, being young, I do not remember Beeching but it is one of those names that keeps coming up. However this talk was special because Hugh was not only telling the story, but he had been there processing Beeching's data on punch cards, a technology that several in the meeting remembered.



The nationalised railways were profitable until 1952, and were making rapidly increasing losses in the 1960s (£67M in 1960, roughly £3B today). Two thirds of the revenue was from freight of which 40% was coal, reflecting how much things have changed since then when so much coal needed to be transported from the mines to the power stations and other major users.

Hugh set the scene with for example four major competing routes into Leeds/Bradford, the least-used 1,762 stations had annual passenger receipts of less than £2,500, the M1 motorway was emerging, the Beatles and the Profumo scandal were soon to come, and the Transport Secretary was Earnest Marples.

The analysis was based upon a 100% sample of rail journeys in a particular week, with little thought to future trends. The outcome was the loss of 5,000 track miles, 2,363 stations and 67,700 jobs.

We were very privileged to hear this account from an insider.

*Alan*

**Strollers group** 🚶 **Leader - Jo**



February - Strollers

Thursday morning in February. Drizzle all day. 7 of us set off for a historic walk around Maldon. Amazingly Thelma insisted she could do it with her walker! She did! All the way down Market Hill! She was so pleased at the end that she was able to do that! We all enjoyed our lunch afterwards at the Queens Head. Well done to Thelma!

*Jo*

## March - Strollers in Terling (spot the difference)



## Music Performing group 🎵 Leader - Debbie

February ~ MUSICAL COMBINATIONS TAKE US OUT OF OURSELVES!

"Music--has the ability to take people out of themselves for a few hours" said Elton John. This was very much vindicated on 21st Feb. at the meeting of the Music group!

There was a wide variety in musical styles, levels of experience and especially in the different combinations of instruments. Who would have thought a 'cello and tenor sax would work together- playing J.S. Bach (and others!) They did, though!

More conventional combinations included two recorders, two oboes, string trio, two alto saxes, guitar and clarinet and flute and clarinet.

An accompanied solo- part of Dvorak's Sonatina for Violin deserves a special mention; the piano accompaniment warrants it being called a duet, and is very challenging, as is the violin part. So, congratulations to Mike (violin) who is our "senior" member, and Lynn.

Sadly, our opening performance was cancelled due to illness. How does one avoid an over-short programme? Enter Penny and Kevin- at virtually a moment's notice, to give a mini-recital on clarinets and saxes. (They re-appeared - officially-later in the afternoon to play two pieces by local composer Jeffery Wilson.)

It was good to see several younger members, either participating or listening (in readiness for next time!?)

As usual many composers, both well-known and more obscure were featured, and an excellent afternoon was had by all.

*Ken*

April ~ "QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY!"

The Programme for the Music Performance Group's meeting on 25th April was a little shorter than usual. This was largely because so many members were also involved in other musical activities on the same day, so- for all the right reasons! WE still enjoyed a varied and exciting afternoon of high quality musical performance!

This got under way with a virtual visit to an art exhibition(!) by way of a selection of Mussorgski's "Pictures at an Exhibition" arranged for two clarinets and played by Lynn and Penny.

Then, back in time by a couple of hundred years. "King William's March" by Jeremiah Clarke was preceded by two other pieces and played by a mellifluous combination of 'cello and bass clarinet by Lynley and John C. Then to Purcell and the "Golden Sonata" played by Ann and Liz on violins, with Sue accompanying on piano.

What better contrast to end the first half than some virtuoso jazz- mainly with a latin feel and some very complex cross-rhythms?! Kevin played three clarinet numbers, accompanied on piano by the composer- through the wonders of modern technology!

In Part Two, Paulette and John joined forces on bassoon and bass clarinet for a combination of baroque and Irish Folk music! Garry contributed contrasting styles in two pieces for tenor sax, and the same could be said for Gerry, who played Vivaldi and Albeniz on guitar, accompanied by Penny on piano. Three pieces by Rabboni for flute were a revelation, suggesting that *bel canto* doesn't only apply to the voice(!) and were beautifully played by Debbie.

And to round things off- a bit o a musical "swap shop" First- Jane accompanied Lynn, then they reversed roles!

There's such a variety among us. Some took up music in later life. Some went back to it. Some hung on to it(!) But, for all of us it is a vital part of our lives.

Ken

#### EXERCISE FOR PEOPLE OVER 60

Begin by standing on a comfortable surface, where you have plenty of room at each side.

With a 5-lb potato bag in each hand, extend your arms straight out from your sides and hold them there as long as you can. Try to reach a full minute, and then relax.

Each day you'll find that you can hold this position for just a bit longer.

After a couple of weeks, move up to 10-lb potato bags. Then try 50-lb potato bags and eventually try to get to where you can lift a 100-lb potato bag in each hand and hold your arms straight for more than a full minute. (I'm at this level).

After you feel confident at that level, put a potato in each bag.



Exercising and using it, so we don't lose it!

## Photography Group 📷 Leader - Mike

Good News! I have yet again been flooded with inspiring literary and derogatory contributions from my fellow members of the Photo Group (PG). Reinforced by the many begging letters from the wider u3a membership for the return of a PG article for this issue, following our absence from Issue 7 due to unforeseen circumstances (I actually lost my quill pen if you really want to know), I've bowed to their clamour to be heard.

Here is a précis of the comments (both written and verbal) of PG members :-

- “Didn't understand a word of the article that you wrote for Issue 6 about F stops, and I've been coming to this Group for 10 years”
- “Why didn't you include my article on Intentional Camera Movement?”
- “Can't believe that you included that photo of Priory Park, instead of mine”
- “Are you ever going to publish that self-portrait I sent you?”
- “Why do you always get to write our article?” (Guess?!!)

Since the Issue 6 article, the group have held their bi-annual competition which was based on the anonymous submission of 2 images per member, which were then scored by the rest of the group. The image theme was either black and white or macro/close-up. The winner was Doug with his beautiful Puffin photo, with second place shared between group leader, Mike, with his monochrome Spitfire image and Maurice, with the bluebottle image shown below, with the title “a.k.a. Peter Sellers” causing total confusion to all but die-hard Goon Show fans. Doug's prize was a lovely photographic calendar produced annually by James Crisp in aid of the Helen Rollason Cancer Charity. James, as you undoubtedly will remember, had given us a fascinating talk on minimalist photography before Christmas.

Photoshoot outings on varied days of each week (to accommodate those who can't always make it on a Thursday due to other commitments) have included attending a Chelmsford Ladies Rugby Club match for some action shots, a trip to Beeleigh Falls and Lock to attempt long exposure shooting (see below for an example of the dedication shown by some – even standing in the river with mud sucking round our welly boots) and a leisurely stroll round Maldon Prom and Hythe Quay trying to find maritime examples for minimalist photos.

Our next few outings include a visit in April to Copped Hall (near Epping) with a private tour of the building and gardens, followed by a trip to the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance HQ, North Weald Airbase, in May. Each outing has a different theme, trying to cover many challenging aspects of photography that most of us shy away from in favour of simple landscapes. However, even simple landscapes can be vastly improved with a few basic composition tips. So if you'd like your photography to move from snapshots to great shots, why not come along and join us. No camera necessary if you've got a phone that takes pictures. Your first two trial visits will be free. We'll be at the Galleywood Heritage Centre Common Room on the second Monday of each month between 2pm and 4pm.

*Maurice*

And finally...



“aka Peter Sellers”



Beeleigh

**Groups looking for new members**

**Art Appreciation** - 2nd Friday of the month at 11:15am Meadgate Church, Orchard Centre

**Table Tennis** - weekly on Tuesday afternoons 1- 3 pm Meadgate Church, Orchard Centre

## Meet your NEW committee members

### **Andrew - Vice Chair and Treasurer Groups No 2 Account**

I'm Andrew, and my job on the committee is Vice Chair and also to manage the Groups' number 2 account. This account is limited to providing individual groups with a safe place to keep the money they collect to pay future bills.

I also run the Italian group. When Sandra and I first came to Great Baddow 10 years ago, we came across people speaking Italian in the library, and found the U3A group was meeting. As I had studied Italian a long time ago, I joined the U3A and the group in short order, and 3 months later found myself in charge of it, as the lovely Lorna, 95 years old, felt she had done enough. We lost members during Covid, but it is still going, with 5 enthusiastic members.

We are both members of several other U3A groups – Mah Jongg, Gardening, Local History, and Ramblers – and outside the U3A, we belong to the Chelmsford French Circle and enjoy the monthly talks at the Essex Record Office.

We also have an allotment, which keeps us fairly busy, and a small garden, which gets away with less. I bake bread and make jams and marmalade, and we both enjoy cooking and reading. My other hobby is doomscrolling.

As to my origins, I am mostly Celtic, my mother being Dublin-born and raised, my father born in Edinburgh but raised in London, and I lived in Cornwall from 6 months until 18, when I went to Liverpool University to study French and Italian. My subsequent career, obviously, was spent entirely in the computing industry.

### **Gerard - Membership Secretary**

My name is Gerard and I've inherited the membership secretary role from Tony, who has come to the end of his three year tenure. Tony will be a very hard act to follow, but he's been superb in handing over the role and I'll do my best to carry on his high standards.

My background is that I'm a retired accountant and found my way to the u3a via the Mah Jong interest group. Being an accountant isn't the most exciting way to pass the time, but we struck lucky in the mid 1990's when I was seconded to Hong Kong for four years. We had a Chinese friend who introduced us to Mah Jong and we've enjoyed it ever since. Seeing a bit of Asia was a real eye opener and the children visibly blossomed being transplanted into such a different environment. We have three children and three grandchildren, all growing up incredibly quickly. We're doing our best to stay active – I go to Tai Chi and Pilates, both of which have helped me enormously. We like to travel whenever we can and especially like the French Alps, both winter for the snow and summer for the hiking. Walking in the Alps over summer is great - no-one crashes into you, you don't fall over, its not sub-zero and you still get to go to the mountain cafes!

### **Beverley - Interest Group organiser**

I was born in London, raised in Essex and live in Galleywood where I have resided for the past ten years.

After working for forty plus years, in what can only be described as various administrative and managerial roles, I decided to hang up my boots in October 2023 following a 24 year service in the NHS! On retiring, my fear was I would be bored (oh ye of little faith) but just like my work ethos, I threw myself in at the deep end by joining local clubs and societies and wonder now how I had time to work!!

My hobbies are Watercolour painting, card making and occasionally I like to go for a stroll too, but only in fair weather!

I belong to the Gardening and Weekenders interest groups and would like to join other groups as and when time allows, although I wouldn't mind running a group of my own one day.

### **Andy B - Website assistant**

I've spent most of my life in a variety of uniforms. I served as a Police Officer and then worked at Stansted Airport for the Border Force and still found time to do a few years at the sharp end for the East of England Ambulance Service. I have been married to my (much) better half, Alison, for 29 years and I've lived in Chelmsford since 1981. In my spare time I teach sailors to navigate, use VHF radio and Advanced First Aid.

### **Moe - Welfare Secretary**

I'm Moe. I'm originally from Liverpool and I came down to the East End of London in the mid 1970's to train as a nurse in Whitechapel.

I've worked in quite a lot of places over the years, starting out aged 13 picking beans on a farm, working on a market stall, in a library, in a short stay home for mentally handicapped children, before training to become a nurse. Gerard and I have been together for over 50 yrs and we have 3 grown up children, 3 very lively grandchildren and a black cat!

In the nineties we lived in Hong Kong which was great! It was all very lively, especially haggling in the markets. While we were there, I helped out in a children's home, mostly for children whose parents just didn't have the space to have them at home. Even so, the kids were lovely, they were all very happy!

I like reading, travelling, board games (as well as Mahjong) and trying to do the cryptic crossword!

### **Coming up at the General Meeting**

Weds 13 May - **All About Willow** with **Deb Hart** - a talk about the history, traditions and its many amazing uses

Weds 17 June **The Fascinating History of Lloyd's of London** - with **Mark Butterworth**. A talk about the very first coffee houses to insuring the Titanic

Weds 15 July - **Porridge and Pens** with **Jemma Williams**. Jemma talks about her inspirational work in Ghana

**Newsletter contributions** - If you have any items please send them before mid-June for inclusion in the next issue.

Please note: in the interests of security, all personal details of individual members (surname, address, email or phone number) have been removed