

**ESSEX FEDERATION
NEWS SHEET
AUTUMN 2018**

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the autumn 2018 edition of EF.

This is my first article since becoming the Essex Federation chairman in January 2018 after Ron Marks stepped down at the last AGM. I would like to thank Ron for the unstinting work he has done since he became chairman in 2007. He will be a hard act to follow.

My first WEA course was at the restarted Silver End branch in 1986. At the end of the course I and two others who I had become friendly with agreed that we attend the branch AGM. Together with a formidable local councillor who was the driving force in restarting the branch, they came to the meeting having already decided what committee roles they were going to stand for. When it came to the secretary the incumbent told the meeting that she was not going to continue. At this point twenty pairs of eyes looked at me. So I became branch secretary. After 32 years with warnings that it is wrong for someone to be in place for this amount of time and pleas for someone to shadow me I still remain in that role.

I have become Essex Federation chairman at a time when the WEA is facing very challenging times with major changes to our funding. These changes are introducing a new approach and there is a growing movement to put the student first. When I first joined, the WEA had a slogan "Run by its members (students) for its members (students)". I say 'students' because back then you became a member by simply enrolling for a course. I believe that this slogan has got lost over the years and it is encouraging that steps are being taken to restore it.

One way of facing these challenges is to increase student numbers. We can all play our part to increase the numbers by persuading people we know to join a course and experience the joys of the WEA. If we achieve this, your delegates to the regional and national committees will have a stronger voice. It will also help the WEA to become more independent and be in a better negotiating position with the funders.

Brian Gillion

FROM THE EDITOR

First, on behalf of the whole Federation, I would like to thank Ray Hedley for the dedication he has shown and all the work he has put in to the production of many editions of this News Sheet over many years. It is a privilege to step into his shoes, albeit for just two editions until another keen volunteer takes over.

Said keen volunteer eagerly awaited!

Secondly, thanks are due to all the contributors to this Autumn 2018 edition, in particular to Denise Williams of Billericay and Jane Daniel of Writtle for gathering, writing and submitting so many branch articles not just to this edition but to earlier ones too. It is also particularly pleasing to be able to include a number of articles about our Community and Second Chance to Learn programme, thanks to the efforts of our Eastern Region Marketing Officer, Anthea Morrison, and our Education Support Assistant, Claire Gellard.

One innovation this time is the inclusion at a very reasonable cost of colour illustrations in this printed edition as well as in the online version on the Essex Federation website. The support of the Benham Seaman Trust in helping us to provide printed copies to our members and the general public free of charge is much appreciated.

In the Spring 2019 edition I hope to be able to include short introductory articles to Tutors new to the WEA and the courses they offer. It would also be good to receive not only reports of classes, day and summer schools, walks and conferences, but also other articles about WEA events and personalities, personal reminiscences, and ideas for the future of the organisation. Photographs too are welcome, but ones showing people's faces do now require written permission to ensure we are GDPR compliant. However, I can supply simple consent forms to help with this provision.

The said new General Data Protection Regulations and copyright laws have been just some of the externally imposed constraints to which the WEA in common with other volunteer-run organisations has recently had to adjust its practices. But we are managing to find our way through these woods and the paths are becoming clearer.

Ron Marks

BILLERICAY BRANCH

In the Spring 2018 edition of *EF NEWS* we published a highly enthusiastic report of Billericay's fully booked one day course, *Glories of Three Italian Cities*, but were unable to include this photograph of the Tutor, **Mary Hawkins**, an omission we can now remedy.



Spring 2018: One Day Course THE BRONTËS OF HAWORTH - A NEW LOOK Tutor: Margaret Mills



We were very happy to welcome Margaret back to the Reading Rooms in Billericay High Street. The sudden arrival of snow had meant that we had had to cancel the original One Day Course, but on that day, with a strategic plan and swift action - students were contacted, and with good communications between our Chair, tutor, WEA and Hall Lettings Officer a new date was found. Although sadly some had been unable to make the new date set, the course still attracted the Billericay Branch mix of locals, regulars and those from further afield, some familiar with, and some new, to the WEA.

In Margaret's "new look" at the Brontës, she showed how recent research was beginning to dispel many of the myths that had grown up around this talented family. She explained how old newspapers show Haworth as a busy cultured town. With the discovery of new documents, letters, paintings, photographs and notebooks about the lives of the Brontës, we could see how their experiences were woven into their creative works. Margaret told us of their triumphs and tragedies, ambitions and achievements, presenting us with facts and evidence that we could use to "make our own minds up" about the family.

Margaret spoke enthusiastically; her research skills evident in her vast knowledge about her subjects and broad understanding of the times in which they lived. Speaking mostly without notes, she was able to expand on many topics and answer questions which the audience raised. This One Day Course was accompanied by many interesting slides, and with the new Reading Rooms black-out blinds in place, they were shown to their best advantage. As always with Margaret, we had an enjoyable and informative day.

Susan Fisher

**Billericay WEA One Day Course
THE BIRTH OF THE BLUES
Ted and Paul Woodgate**

April saw the Billericay WEA experience the latest edition of the "Paul and Ted Show", this time with a focus on black American music, more specifically the Blues. Once again Ted slipped through periods of history with consummate ease and Paul illustrated the passage of events by playing carefully selected extracts from the genre, occasionally enlightening us with references to key concepts such as twelve bar blues. Technology was used impeccably. Links were made to the African roots of the music and the part played by slavery in its emergence.

They took as their starting point the time when Blues artists began to establish themselves as part of the mainstream entertainment industry, the classic vaudeville Blues. These professional performers included Blues as part of their established repertoire. The course traced the development of the genre throughout the twenties and further into the century.

Billericay WEA was introduced to major artists of the period such as Robert Johnson, Ma Rainey, Victoria Spivey and Bessie Smith with Paul finding apposite extracts to give us a flavour of what created their appeal to so many. Naturally although the women made major early contributions it was the men who received the most publicity.

One highlight was Paul returning from the lunch break having discovered a "gem" in the local record shop! Good to see that Billericay can surprise still! As always we were left wanting more - certainly we would have liked to know even more of how the Blues emerged from Southern Black culture..... And just a little more music!

Alan McFadden and John Pountney - Course Members



The Birth of the Blues

... soon time for coffee and a chat about the course ...

**Billericay WEA Summer Course
ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IN THE UK AND THE MODERN WORLD
Tutor: Muhammad Manwar Ali**

“Islam - other ways of seeing other ways of being”

Wednesday nights in Billericay will not be the same after this term’s wonderful WEA course on Islam comes to an end. The tutor brought an interesting backdrop from his own life to help tell the story of his faith and set his religion within the context of the modern world. He helped us to understand the poor and ill-judged perceptions held by many. As someone said on the course “Once the Wall came down we needed to find a new enemy and we did!” Of course, terrorism is terrible and some terrorism has grown out of factions of Islam, but it engages only the few, not the many. However, so often our binoculars are focused on the bad and not the normal and good in people. The press doesn’t always help!

Islam clearly has great beliefs within its scriptures. However, we don’t always hear them and understand their meanings.

This course was well presented, with a detailed handbook and free books including the Koran to help our learning during the course and after. Manwar is a good tutor who helps his students to engage with the subject in an open way and he allows for lively interaction, debate and student insights.

In week seven he brought in a projection and sound kit so that we could see him talking as part of TEX.ex... look out for it on YouTube!

I talked to some of my fellow students on the course and they said:

“It’s more than a course!”

“I thought our tutor was amazingly open and I really enjoyed how he explained the details. It made me realise how little I know about Christianity and perhaps a course on this and other religions would be good!”

“I can’t wait for Wednesday nights”

“Why can’t the course go on for more weeks”

“Enjoyable, enlightening, informative and opening up a wealth of meaningful discussion”

“What am I going to do with my Wednesday evenings?”

“I enjoyed the comparisons with the Catholic faith.”

“It explained a lot that I had not understood before.”

“Excellent discussion in the last session...the best round up of any course so far!”

So, if you have not booked this course yet I would encourage you to do so.¹ It opens your mind, it makes you think and it stimulates good debate with your fellow students.

Thank you Manwar!

Christine Townley - Course Student



MERSEA WEA

In January we were glad to welcome Chris Green for the third time. The course was “AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ORCHESTRA” and was well attended.

We started by considering how the modern orchestra appears and then looked back to see how it had developed into its present form. We learned about the Baroque period when ensembles were smaller and had fewer instruments. There would not have been a conductor and the keyboard player would have acted as continuo - keeping time. Musicians played for wealthy patrons.

As the Baroque period gave way to the Classical, instruments began to change; the lute, very much the instrument of the court, began to disappear, the flute to become more prominent while the string section increased. We also saw increased use of percussion, with drums covered with stretched vellum.

We noted the development of the symphony, with its recognisable form, and the Italian influence in the Concerto Grosso. The arrival of opera played a significant part in the development of the orchestra.

As the Classical period moved to the Romantic, orchestras were playing to bigger audiences and the influence of the German States and the Austro-Hungarian Empire became dominant. Orchestras became larger and it was no longer possible for the

¹ (Look for details on the Federation or National WEA websites or brochures - Ed.)

keyboard player to hold an orchestra together and the conductor became essential. We considered some famous composers and how they wrote for more and different instruments. Although the role of conductor has traditionally been a male preserve there are now women conductors such as Marin Alsop at Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and Mirga Grazinyte-Tyla at the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

Orchestras have become hugely expensive to run and state financing is becoming increasingly scarce, as are wealthy patrons. Orchestras have depended heavily on the sale of recordings and playing for film makers has also been an important source of income for some. This was especially beneficial to the London Symphony Orchestra, which had been in dire financial straits before playing for “Star Wars”.

In many ways music can be a common bond between people, but it can also be exploited politically. During the 1930’s and 40’s The Berlin Symphony Orchestra came to be seen as an arm of the Nazi Party and Jewish players were dismissed. The West East Divan Orchestra is an example of the healing qualities of shared music between Israelis and Arabs.

One of the tasks Chris set for us was to prepare a concert programme, bearing in mind the need for balance, audience appeal and instruments required. Although this seemed daunting at first, we gave it our best shot and, with Chris being very encouraging, we enjoyed the experience. Indeed, the whole course was much appreciated.

TIPTREE WEA

At Tiptree WEA we have had another very successful year with two very different courses.

In September 2017 we welcomed back Ted Woodgate and his course **TURBULENT HALF CENTURY; BRITISH SOCIETY 1919-1969**. His two previous courses with us had proved extremely popular, so it was not surprising that this course was very well attended. It began with the ending of World War 1 when there was huge dissatisfaction over demobilizing of troops and even the possibility of further conflicts. The journey progressed through the following decades ending in the Cultural Revolution engendered by youth in the 1960s. Enhanced by open discussion the course enabled us to understand more fully the truth behind the headlines.

In January 2018 we welcomed a new tutor to Tiptree WEA, Steve Haydon, with his course *Science in Our World: Benefits & Controversy*. This was a very different course to any previous one and at first there were concerns that the subject matter would be very daunting and dry. This fear was completely unfounded: in fact it was the very opposite. Steve provided clear and informative explanations. He shared the knowledge that there are no ‘right’ answers, and people must question what they are being told. He covered many topics including energy sources, climate change, nutrition, additives, diseases of the modern world and stem technology. Steve encouraged discussions and there was some opportunity to work in small groups. The course provided participants with a different and more encompassing outlook on modern life.

Gillian LePage - Vice Chair

WRITTLE BRANCH

Autumn 2017 Report

A RUSSIAN JOURNEY

The Tuesday morning class in September 2017 brought us a tutor new to the branch. **Anat Vernitski** gave us her '*A Russian Journey*': *An introduction to Russia, the land, its people and culture*.

This course is really a taster which dips in and out of various aspects of the topic and builds on the previous knowledge of the students to make this rather alien civilisation more accessible. Anat's knowledge is incredibly widespread, and, if she doesn't know the answer to a particular question, she looks it up and comes back with the answer the next week.

We started with an introduction to the Russian land and people - the overwhelming impression was of the immense size and variety of the land. We tried to imagine what it would be like to see the great rivers, the grassland steppes, the frozen tundra and the swampy forested taiga.

Next we looked at Russian composers such as Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Balakirev, Borodin and Cesar Cui who made their goal the promotion of purely Russian music. Their compositions were inspired by Russian history and folk stories, and drew on traditional tunes.

Then, in a very stimulating session, we used the different Russian National anthems to help us trace through Russian 19th and 20th century history - we looked at English translations of the anthems used between 1833 and 1990 and at the main points made by the words. The first official anthem was used from 1833 to 2nd March 1917 when the last Tsar Nicolas II abdicated. In this version the Tsar is pictured as a father figure, and the tune used was that of the English anthem 'God save the Queen'. Later the 'Internationale' was used, and then the current National Anthem, which is more Russocentric.

Another session covered the Russian Orthodox Church - we are lucky that in East Anglia there are several Russian Orthodox churches which some of the students had already seen, including two in Colchester, and a monastery near Tiptree. Anat explained the Iconostasis, the wall separating the nave from the sanctuary, on which icons are arranged in a theologically determined order, and she and some students brought in icons so all could see them.

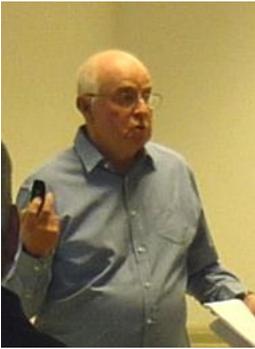
When we progressed to the topic of 'Folk Art', members of the class brought in 'Matrioshki' (nested wooden dolls) and 'Khokhlama' (decorated wooden bowls)

Subsequent weeks used Russian visual art to introduce us to the stories of Ivan Grozny (Ivan the Terrible) and Peter the Great (the builder of St Petersburg). The reign of Ivan the Terrible saw the beginning of diplomatic relations between Russia and England, and we were able to study the fascinating messages passed by the English diplomat Anthony Jenkinson from the Russian ruler to Queen Elizabeth.

We also studied parts of an English version of Alexander Pushkin's 'The Bronze Horseman' and, to finish with, we studied the Cyrillic Alphabet.

A very enjoyable course, which would be a good starting point for Anat's other courses on different aspects of Russia.

THE EAST END STRIKES BACK



On Tuesday afternoons we were welcoming back a very popular lecturer in **Ted Woodgate**, who gave us his latest course, '**The East End Strikes Back**', which covered the social and industrial changes in the East End in the 1880s and 1890s leading up to the **Great London Dock Strike of 1889** and the '**Match Girls' Strike of 1888**.

This well-researched course was of particular interest to the many class members with family links to the East End. Although Ted was focusing on the East End, he did also discuss conditions in other areas of the country, and showed that in many ways the inhabitants of the East End were badly off compared with those in other industrial areas such as Manchester.

We began by looking at conditions in the country as a whole. Ted started by showing that unrest among the poor is no new thing by referring us back to 'The Peasants' Revolt' of 1381!

We then discussed the rise in the population of Britain from 18.53 million in 1841 to 33.03 million in 1891, as medicine and public health improved, and the fact that this provided a larger market of people to sell things to. At the same time the Factory Acts of 1850 and 1853 set maximum hours of 60 per week in textile mills, and other industries followed suit. Leisure pursuits such as drinking and smoking proliferated after Bank Holidays were introduced in 1871. The expansion of the railways meant that people were much more mobile.

Between 1870 and 1900 there was a rise in working class living standards because medicine and public health were better. Some industries began to see a reduction in working hours. The Factory acts of 1850, 1853 set maximum hours in textile mills at 60 per week.

The five and a half day week became more widespread in the 1860s, and this and the Bank Holiday Act of 1871 meant that workers had more time for leisure pursuits. Resorts like Southend and Blackpool grew to provide activities for working people on their 'days off'. We talked about the popularity of pubs at this time. In the 1830s activities such as smoking and juggling were restricted to the 'saloon' so that the landlord could charge for admission. This led to the development of 'Music Halls'. In opposition to the drinking culture of the pubs the Temperance movement gained many followers.

People began to follow football teams, and cycling became a very popular pastime with many joining clubs such as the National Clarion CC.

We then wondered whether in 1870-1900 the East End shared the economic and cultural progress of the working classes elsewhere. 40 per cent of the working classes earned less than twenty-one shillings and six pence per week, and, in large ports like London a lot of the work was casual and seasonal so it was difficult for workers to earn a living wage or to budget from week to week. The population of boroughs such as West Ham grew very quickly.

In the East End there was no regulation of dangerous substances used in manufacturing. This became evident in connection with the Bryant and May match girls' strike and the Beckton Gas Works dispute.

The electorate was smaller than elsewhere, e.g. 8.6pc of the population in Whitechapel in 1891, because of the casual nature of the work and the small number of home owners. Friendly Societies began to develop to provide sickness and funeral benefits, but weren't very helpful in the East End, because casual workers couldn't make regular contributions to the societies.

Demand for matches went up in the 1860s at the time when cigarettes came into common use and were more affordable. From 1830 to 1890 matches were generally made with sulphur and white phosphorus and the composition was lethal if ingested. Working class women in the Bryant and May factory in Bow were affected by 'phossy jaw' where the bone of the jaw was eaten away. Ted pointed out that the success of the subsequent strike for better conditions is traditionally ascribed to the activist Annie Besant, but although she was involved, the women themselves organised and supported the strike.

The Great London Dock Strike occurred in 1889, and was started after a minor dispute in the West India Dock which then escalated. Activists Ben Tillett, Tom Mann, and John Burns announced the formation of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside, and General Labourers' Union, and they succeeded, after a short strike, in getting agreement from the employers to pay 6d an hour.

Ted emphasised that Tillett, Mann, and Burns, together with Gasworkers Union activist Will Thorne, were self-educated men who rose to high positions in Trades Unions and/or Parliament and played tremendous roles in the development of the country. This course was a fascinating exploration of a time of rapid social change, which affected the ancestors of many families in this area.

Art Appreciation: 'INSPIRED BY EAST ANGLIA'

On Wednesday evenings, we were very pleased to welcome **Sue Pownall**, who braved the journey down the A12 to give us our first Art course for some time, and a very stimulating and interesting course it was, too.

Sue covered not only artists who had lived in East Anglia but also those who had visited to work here too. Great sources of images from the period were the large number of railway and other transport posters which took us all over the region to areas such as Epping Forest, Clacton, Southend and Harwich. Artists covered ranged from the very well-known, such as John Sell Cotman, Stanley Spencer and Maggi Hambling, to people who should be more well-known, such as Leonard Squirrel and Mary Potter, and ranged in time from John Constable in the early 19th century to John Piper in the late 20th.

The course was organised thematically, starting with 'weather', and going on to 'water', 'landscapes', 'buildings e.g. churches', and then specific places e.g. Colchester. This approach meant that many artists came up in different weeks; so we were able to learn to recognize individual styles, and to learn about a variety of painting and printing techniques as examples came up naturally. As a practising artist, Sue is well-qualified to talk about when and why different techniques are

used. She encouraged us to discuss the composition of the various works, and the class members enjoyed arguing about whether the works should have been 'cropped' for greater effect.

Sue kindly searched out for us paintings of our local area by Alfred Bennett Bamford (1857-1939) who painted All Saints church at Writtle, St Margaret's church at Margareting, and what is now Chelmsford Cathedral.

This course would be suitable for any group in East Anglia, as the material included and the supporting technical handouts cover so many different areas that there is definitely something for everyone!

Spring 2018 Report

IMPERIAL DESTINY: THE BRITISH EMPIRE 1500-2000

The Tuesday morning class in January 2018 brought us a welcome return for **Roger Beckett** with this course, which examines how a small island off the North Western edge of Europe became the principal power in a world dominated by Europe.

Roger's informative slides, insightful analysis, and comprehensive handouts (e-mailed to the class) made this a superb learning experience.

We started thinking about Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries, and how much knowledge Europeans would have had of the rest of the world.

In about 1400 AD luxury goods were being brought in from the East, but Europe had little to offer in exchange. The Spanish and Portuguese led the way in opening up the wider world to Europe. The Portuguese annexed Ceuta on the North African coast in 1415, then explored down the West African coast, and in 1487 Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope to the Indian Ocean. Later a Portuguese fleet reached the east coast of India. From 1500 onwards, as the Portuguese used naval power to develop a trading empire in the Indian Ocean, Portuguese colonies were trading stations round the coasts. Across the Atlantic, Spain explored, and conquered, large areas of Central and South America, discovering vast quantities of silver. This wealth provided Spain with the funds which resulted, in the 16th century, in Spain being viewed as the most powerful state in Europe.

However, Spain and Portugal were not able to hang on to their early empires long-term. Initially, the Iberian position was an advantage in exploration, but, as nations attempted to dominate European trade, Spain and Portugal were at a disadvantage, as trade in Europe was run from Antwerp and then Amsterdam, and the Low Countries and Germany were centres of industrial production and advanced agriculture. Spain was not self-sufficient in food; she was dependent for imported grain upon North Africa, Sicily and Northern Europe and her industries such as textiles were in decline. Spain lacked the trading and manufacturing strength to provide goods to her colonies, and had to buy from other countries. England obtained a foothold in the Americas by colonising those parts of the Eastern seaboard of North America which were not occupied by the Spanish, i.e. north of Florida, and later, from 1624, the Caribbean.

In the early 17th century England and Holland also expanded into the Far East, displacing the Portuguese. Both nations founded East India Companies to organise

and finance their trade. The Dutch were the more successful and England eventually copied many of the Dutch methods. The Revolution of 1688 with the arrival of William of Orange as joint monarch prompted the introduction of Dutch ideas such as the use of joint stock companies to promote commercial ventures, the creation of a central bank (the Bank of England was founded in 1694), and a national debt financed by selling government bonds.

Spain and Portugal were unable to sustain a leading position and in the 17th century the Dutch, the English, the French and states such as Denmark and Sweden became active in world trade. The 18th century would see a series of world-wide conflicts as the European powers struggled for dominance in growing world-wide trade.

The introduction of sugar to Barbados in the 1640s to replace less profitable crops brought slave labour to the English West Indian plantations. England formally entered the slave trade in 1660 with the formation of the 'Royal Adventurers in Africa' (later Royal Africa Company) which was granted a monopoly to supply the English sugar colonies with 1000 slaves per year. James Drax established the first successful sugar plantation in Barbados in the 1640s and sugar became the most valuable single item in British trade.

The British Empire that had been established by the middle of the 18th century was a mixture of settlement and trade. The East was about trade, about protecting British trade and stopping the trade of other nations. The West Indies islands, which originally had been white settler colonies, had become sugar-producing slave economies generating enormous wealth. The West Indies were the most valuable part of the British Empire.

The colonies on the mainland of North America resented the taxation and restrictions on trade imposed by Britain, but when the French were in Canada all were aware of the need for help with defence from Britain. When the French were driven out, the protection provided by the Royal Navy became less important to the colonists, and eventually they declared a war of independence. When France, Holland, and Spain joined the war in support of the colonies it was impossible for Britain to win. After the War of Independence trade continued in much the same way, but the main change was the fact that convicts were transported to Australia!

The French wars became after 1800 a battle against the domination of Europe by a France led by Napoleon. Britain had two main aims: to sustain and develop trade to ensure the economic survival of the nation and to prevent invasion of Britain from the European mainland. The consistent British policy tried to prevent any one nation so dominating the Continent as to threaten British interests.

Britain's more isolationist attitude can be seen in India. After 1800, East India Company employees did not take Indian wives, and conversion to Islam or Hinduism became rare. The methods or mores of the European way of life had to be seen to be superior.

In the later years of the British Empire it was affected by many factors probably outside its control. For instance, travel times, which had been unchanged for centuries, decreased very suddenly. The opening of the Suez Canal meant that Britain had more involvement in Egypt, and the First World War changed everything!

When Britain entered the war in 1914 it was no longer the dominant industrial nation in the world but it was amongst the richest. Large overseas investments

produced financial returns which, together with earnings from financial services such as insurance, more than bridged the gap between goods exported and goods imported. The cost of the war changed this. Annual defence spending in 1913 was £91.3 m. In 1915 it was £716.6m. By 1918 it had risen to £1955.8m. Of this expense, 28% was raised by increasing revenue and the balance by borrowing

The end of the Second World War saw Britain even more weakened than in 1918 and an even stronger United States was not sympathetic to the preservation of the British Empire. The greatest difficulty for Britain in the post-war period was accepting the fact that Britain was no longer a great power in world terms and could no longer justify or even afford a world-wide empire.

Roger ended by saying 'Some historians attempt to credit the British Empire with founding societies based upon the rule of law or upon democracy, and while there are arguments to be made I think such claims are overly ambitious, but what is inarguable is that English has become closer than any other language to being a universal medium of communication (a fact always resented by the French).'

WHY SHAKESPEARE?

On Tuesday afternoons we were welcoming back another old friend in **Ron Marks** with '*Why Shakespeare? The Man, his Theatre, the Performance and Legacy of his Plays*'. This course explores aspects of Shakespeare's work to help explain why it remains such a significant part of our cultural heritage.

This was a varied and interesting course, which combined sessions where we were told about the origins of Elizabethan drama in the Mystery and Morality plays, the history of the Shakespeare family etc, with sessions where we carried out practical exercises in identifying forms such as blank verse and prose, and other play-reading sessions where we took parts and read sections of plays, and sessions where excerpts from films and videos of the plays were shown.

We started by looking at the background to William Shakespeare's life - what is actually known and what can be inferred, including interesting background about William's father being a glove-maker, which ties up with the use of glove-making terms in the plays. William's birth and baptism are recorded, as is a special licence for his marriage to Anne Hathaway when he was only 18 and she was 26. The fact that the family of William's mother Mary Arden came from a family with Roman Catholic links has led to speculation that the Shakespeares had similar sympathies. Scholars refer to the years 1578-82 and 1585-92 as 'the lost years' as there is no record of his presence during that period until he was recorded in London as an established actor and playwright in 1592. William belonged to the company called the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

We then looked at the development of the English theatre, and heard about the early pre-Shakespearian comedies such as '*Ralph Roister Doister*' seen in the Michael Wood television series 'In Search of Shakespeare'. These early plays were performed in schools, at the Inns of Court, and in the courtyards of inns. We looked at a contemporary drawing of the Swan theatre, and read the prologue to '*Henry V*', which refers to the theatre as 'this wooden O', referring to its shape.

In a typical class session, we discussed the use of various structures in the plays, for example the use of Prologues and Epilogues, often used to allow an actor to speak directly to the audience, for example in the Prologue to *'Henry V'* where an actor asks the audience to use their imagination to transform the wooden theatre into the landscapes of England and France, and in *'A Midsummer Night's Dream'* where, in the Epilogue, Puck hopes the play hasn't given offence and asks the audience to show approval.

The class then carried out an exercise to insert line divisions to turn passages of prose into blank verse.

In the same session, we read the opening scene of *'Romeo and Juliet'*, noting where it starts in prose and then changes to blank verse. We then watched the scene in the BBC version, followed by the Zeffirelli film version. This is an interesting teaching technique, as it enables the learner to pick up where and why cuts have been made by the director, and to compare different methods of staging. We also, in a later class, were shown and discussed three versions of the opening of *'King Lear'*.

This course enables the learner to experience excerpts from a wide cross-section of Shakespeare's plays, and will perhaps encourage them to go to see live performances or films. The class exercises on the structures of the language used, and the play-writing techniques add an extra dimension to the enjoyment of the plays.

BRITAIN VERSUS EUROPE

On Wednesday evenings, yet another old friend in **Ed de Maunsell!** Very topically, with the looming arrival of Brexit, we were studying *'Britain versus Europe'*. This course gives a history of Britain's relationship with Continental Europe. Why is there always disagreement?

Ed took us chronologically through, mainly, the history of events since Britain joined, first the Common Market, and then the European Union. It was very valuable to hear the facts, as, although these events have all occurred in our lifetimes, we definitely couldn't remember what had happened when!

Audience participation was encouraged, and, as members of the class seemed to read a variety of different newspapers, and our topic was in the news practically every day, the discussions did sometimes get heated!

We looked first at some background history on Britain v Europe:

- The Romans conquered Britain between 54 and 55BC and from 43AD to 409AD.
- The Anglo Saxons invaded in the 230s.
- Norsemen invaded in 789.
- Normans (who were originally Vikings) invaded and seized power in 1066.
- In 1937 many prominent people campaigned for 'Appeasement' or making peace with Hitler's Germany before he could invade.
- The decolonisation 1947-1967 means that we have weaker links with other parts of the world and probably should look more to Europe.

Previous attempts at European co-operation included:

- the Congress system - an 1814-1822 system for resolving disputes, formed by Austria, Russia, Prussia and Britain after the end of the Napoleonic Wars.
- 1944 Benelux countries set up a Customs Union.
 - The history of our joining the European Union was covered next.

In 1957 the Treaty of Rome, was signed by Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, and West Germany. Its purpose was to set up the European Economic Community and the Atomic Energy community (Euratom).

In 1960 EFTA the European Free Trade association was formed and Britain joined. Members now are Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Lichtenstein.

Britain applied to join the EEC in 1963 and in 1967 under Harold Wilson. On both occasions Britain's application was vetoed by Charles de Gaulle.

In January 1973 Britain and Denmark both joined.

Labour made a manifesto pledge before the February 1974 election to renegotiate the terms of Britain's membership of the EU and to allow a referendum on whether people wished to stay in Europe under the renegotiated terms. In February 1974 there was a hung parliament, and Harold Wilson formed a minority government. In October 1974 Wilson had a three-seat majority and renegotiation took place. The government said that its objectives had been met; so the referendum took place and on June 5th 1975 Britain voted to stay in the EEC by 67 per cent to 33 per cent.

In 1984 Budget Abatement was negotiated by then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. It was agreed that Britain should be given a rebate of about a third of its contribution because the method of calculating contributions penalised Britain, which had fewer farms than other members, and collected more revenue in VAT.

The Treaty of Maastricht (Treaty on European Union) in 1993 was designed to prepare for monetary union and prepare for political union, and the

Treaty of Amsterdam 1997 devolves some powers from national parliaments to the European Parliament. The Treaty of Lisbon 2007/09 was designed to make the EU more efficient and democratic, giving more power to the President and the European Council.

In May 2015 David Cameron's Conservatives won an outright majority and Cameron pledged to put forward a bill setting up a Yes/No referendum on leaving the EU. Cameron was thought to have been totally confident that the result would be in favour of remaining. But on 24th June 2016 in the British Referendum the people voted 52 per cent to 48 percent in favour of leaving the EU!

The class then followed Theresa May and her colleagues as they attempted to reach an agreement with the EU on the terms for Britain leaving the EU! Watch this space!

Jane Daniel

ESSEX FEDERATION SUMMER GUIDED WALKS

GOLDHANGER WALK - 20th June 2018

On a bright June morning 20 enthusiastic walkers gathered in the square of this delightful Essex village on the edge of the Blackwater Estuary. The village pump became an immediate talking point, having been dug to a depth of 175 feet during the 1921 drought!

Our guide for the morning was local man, David Newman, and his depth of local knowledge added greatly to the walk. First the group walked along Head Street, where David produced photographs of village buildings taken in the early 1900s. We were able to compare the original use of the dwellings and their condition with their present day use as private houses.

Next we walked along Fish Street where a number of the artisans' cottages had been converted into modern living space or indeed replaced with the occasional 'new build'. An archive picture of the mill and the baker's shop provided a sharp contrast to the restored houses we see today.

In our third street we looked at one of the original farm houses and the brick walls which surround most properties in Church Street, the latter being constructed to keep livestock out of villagers' gardens during the 19th century. The last buildings the group viewed were the coastguard cottages for the officers who acted as a local militia reminding those in years gone by that smuggling was not to be entered into lightly! We viewed a picture of the guards, who were armed and marched through the village daily, a deterrent to our Victorian forbears.

We finished the walk, looking around the churchyard and the magnificent war memorial, walking down to the edge of the curtilage with superb views over the estuary and home of the Maldon Salt works. David led the group into the church, giving us an overview of the interior and the two splendid paintings which once had pride of place in the local rectory.

An informative and fascinating two hours.

Charles Soule
The Maplesteads WEA





RM 20.06.2018



COMMUNITY & SECOND CHANCE TO LEARN COURSES

The WEA is a national volunteer-led adult education organisation founded in 1903. It runs professionally-taught courses throughout England and Scotland in numerous **branches**, 120 of which are in the Eastern Region. However, in addition to our branch activities we run many **community** courses, both accredited and non-accredited, for adults of all ages in, for example, English, including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), maths, digital and work-related skills, community, citizenship and family topics, foreign languages, creative writing and performing arts. See <https://www.wea.org.uk/>



When my son sees me doing my homework, that makes him want to do his! He's now moved up a level in everything at school. I feel that learning as an adult has given me the confidence to be a better parent, and my son says he's really proud of me. I'm showing him that you can achieve anything you want if you just work hard at it.

Danielle - student

#WEAParenting

Grow Together
Learn Together

Basildon student achieves her dream and inspires her son

WEA student Danielle Moth explains how accessing adult education can not only improve job prospects but lead to better parenting skills too.

I decided to go on a WEA course for two reasons. I was already volunteering in a school and I wanted to take it further and become a teaching assistant. I also wanted to be able to help my son with his homework.

Going on the Helping in Schools and SEND courses has given me a better quality of life. I've made new friends who I've stayed in touch with, I've got loads more confidence, and I'm now able to help my son with his homework. I didn't always know what the homework questions were looking for but I do now. And when my son sees me doing my homework, that makes him want to do his! He's now moved up a level in everything at school. I feel that learning as an adult has given me the confidence to be a better parent, and my son says he's really proud of me. I'm showing him that you can achieve anything you want if you just work hard at it.

I'm still volunteering at the school where I did my placement and I've also got a job as a Midday Assistant here as a result of going on the course. I'm studying for my Level 2 English with the WEA and once I have that, I can apply for Teaching Assistant jobs. I hope that I will eventually get a full time job, maybe working one-on-one with a child with special needs as I really enjoyed this part of my placement. I have dyslexia but this hasn't stopped me from achieving my dream. To anyone looking to go on a WEA course, I would say, don't let anything stop you, even if you struggle with something like dyslexia. The tutors are fantastic.

Tabor Centre drama students show that disability is no barrier

Drama tutor Debbie Young shares the rewarding journey she has taken with a group of disabled students at the Tabor Centre in Braintree.

When the drama class first started three years ago I think the students thought it would be a 'traditional' drama class. There would be an established play, lines to learn, costumes etc. And then I presented them with 'The Hat'. "Is that a costume?" one student asked. "No," I replied. "What's it for then?" "Ah well, it contains magic."

"Magic? Is there a rabbit inside?"

"No."

"A wand?"

"Nope."

"Then what kind of magic?"

"Then what kind of magic?"

"The greatest magic of all - imagination," I said. And so the students were led into the world of improvisation as the hat contained ideas for characters, settings and scenarios that they had to develop into sketches. At first they were tentative, indeed each week there was a chorus of, "Oh no, not the hat!" whenever it appeared, but this nervousness soon disappeared and excitement filled their eyes as they wondered what 'the hat' would have them do next. The hat has now changed to a canvas bag but only because it's bigger, and the hat now stars in lots of scenes.

At the beginning the students were too shy to perform in front of others, even staff, but as their confidence grew and one or two people were allowed to see their work,

they began to relax, so that when I suggested a mini showcase to be performed in front of staff, volunteers and their peers, they actually said yes. More than that, they wrote some of the scenes themselves, one about a shadow child, and another a dancer. Now, nearly three years on, the class performs two showcases a term. The most recent took place on 25th July and was a great success. One of the students said “I had a part and it made me feel very good inside when it was finished, I thoroughly enjoyed it.”

Here’s what some of the audience had to say about the performance:

‘They all took their roles very seriously. It was really good - very funny.’

‘They all put their hearts and souls into it. We were able to follow it very well even though some of the students aren’t able to speak.’

The students have devised their own ‘radio play’ serial comedy drama which includes sound effects for those less able to talk. They’ve recorded soundscapes (where all sounds are made using the voice, body or what can be found in the room), ranging from a day out in London to a thunderstorm. Recently they finished a showcase which included a mixture of fables from around the world, a medieval scene and a tale to show how everyone has value and purpose. Every single student, regardless of disability and acting ability, has increased in confidence and their self-esteem soars higher each term. They truly have embraced a world of pure imagination.



Tabor Centre Drama Group

ESOL students in Basildon apply their new skills and raise money at Macmillan Coffee Morning

Education Support Assistant Claire Gellard explains how a group of Basildon students benefited from planning and delivering this successful fundraising event. In July 2018 an ESOL Entry 2 class in Basildon organised yet another successful Macmillan Coffee Morning, this time raising an impressive £215.00. Motivated by the positive experience of the previous year's event,

this time students took the initiative and did most of the planning and organisation without needing too much support from the tutor. Prior to the event, they planned what to bring and wrote and delivered invitations to their friends and to the staff of the primary school where these ESOL classes take place, and where the event was hosted. WEA and ESOL Entry 2 class would like thank the school staff for attending the event and helping to raise money for cancer support.

Both the preparation and the event itself benefited the students immensely and in many ways: they developed their planning and negotiation skills, learned some new cooking-related vocabulary in order to be able to share the recipe for the cake they made, practised writing formal invitations and improved their social skills by hosting the event and entertaining their guests. They also developed some maths skills through planning their budget, dealing with quantities of the ingredients, and handling the money raised on the day. Both the event and especially this ESOL course mean a lot to these students. This is what some of them said:

‘This course was very helpful for my English speaking and writing.’

‘This course is very important for me and my life in the UK.’

The Coffee Morning was truly a great way to finish yet another academic year before a well-deserved summer break in preparation for a new start in September, and for new challenges that will come as the writing exam awaits. Good luck ESOL Entry 2 class in Basildon!



Essex Federation One Day School Topics 2018 - 2008

2018: African American Civil Rights

Lennie 100 (Bernstein)

The RAF in World War II

American Indian Wars

Charles Rennie Mackintosh

The Typewriter and Changing Technologies

2017: The Medici

How to Read a Film

'Down at the Old Bull and Bush'

Women's Art in Britain and France

The Origin of The Blues?

Shadow World: Espionage and Intelligence in the Reign of Elizabeth I

2016:

"All The Rage" - Costume from Edwardian Times to WW2

Vernacular Architecture

Mindfulness: Philosophy and Practice

George Washington's Essex Ancestor

Capability Brown and the English Garden

Music in Disguise

2015:

Dark and Light: Faces of Silent Cinema

19th Century East Anglian Murders and The History of Forensics

Edith Cavell 1865-1915

Magna Carta and the First Parliament

Voices of Conflict: a fresh slant on prose and poetry of World War One

Culture on the Brink: Music and Art Before WW1

2014:

Living with Conflict: Essex and the Great War

Women, the Great War, and Achieving the Vote

Civilians in the Front Line: British & Allied Merchant Seamen in WW2

Shakespeare and Conflict

Shakespeare's Musical Legacy: Song and Stage

The Post-Impressionists: The Origins of Modern Art

2013:

1963 in Retrospect: Britain, the Decline of a Global Power

A Social History of the mid-C20th through the Work of John Lennon

1963 and the Discovery of the Working Class

The Diverse Flora and Fauna of North Essex

The Unification of Italy

The Great Eastern Railway & the London Underground 150 Years On

2012: Gustav Klimt and 'Total Art'

The Conquest of Infectious Disease

Charles Dickens: Special Correspondent

Four Queens and the Changing Constitution of Great Britain

British Fashion 1960 - 2010: the Capsule Collection

Rudyard Kipling: His Life, His Fiction and His Inspiration

2011: Maldon: An Essex Riverside Town in Two World Wars
Camera, Lights, *Action!* - an Introduction to Film Studies
How do UK Non-Government Organisations provide Overseas Aid -
are they any good at it?

The King James Bible: a study of its history and significance
in the year of its 400th Anniversary

The Anglo-Saxon Imagination

René Lalique: Designer in Glass

2010:

America on the Move 1860-1960: the Pony Express to the Space Age

American Art: an Independent Tradition

Great American Literature: Mark Twain and Walt Whitman

Enigma and the Codebreakers and Women as Special Agents

Sharing Schumann: a workshop to mark the 200th Anniversary
of his Birth

Whistler's White Girl and Other 'White' Women in Victorian Art

2009:

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and their Plant Collections

Turner and the Masters

Meeting Mendelssohn: a Workshop to Celebrate the 200th
Anniversary of his Birth

China's History and Emergence as a World Power

Robert Burns; Scotland's National Poet

Darwin and Wallace: the Evolution of Evolutionary Theory and
Recent Scientific Advances

2008: Elizabeth the First and the County of Essex

Three World Faiths: a Discussion on Comparative Religion

Can British Farmers Continue to "Bring Home the Bacon?" -
the Future of Farming