



Adult Learning Within Reach

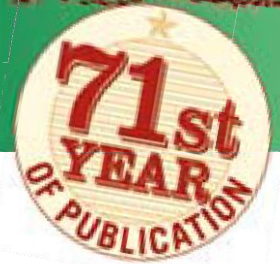


Essex Federation

NEWS SHEET



Spring 2019



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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the Spring 2019 edition of EF

On behalf of the Federation Committee I would like to thank Andrew Aitken for offering to be the future editor of the EF News Sheet. I also thank Ron Marks for his help in producing this edition.

The committee has discussed the future of the EF news sheet. It was decided to keep publishing it as we know it is appreciated by students and may inspire others to join a WEA course. We also discussed if it could be an opportunity to change the format.

One suggestion was that as well as reports on branch courses, it could also become a journal where WEA topics could be discussed. We would not want it to be a forum criticising the WEA's introduction and implementation of new systems. We think it should be more a place where ideas and best practice could be shared amongst branches. These ideas would also help us represent your views at national and regional committees. As this is your news sheet we welcome any ideas or suggestions on what you would want to see. If you have any, please let us know.

I hope you find this edition interesting and I thank you for your continued support. Without it the WEA branch programme would not exist.

Brian Gillion

Autumn 2018: 8 Week Course
How Enlightened was the 'Enlightenment'?
Tutor: Ian Pirie

Once again Billericay Branch was pleased to welcome tutor Ian Pirie. Ian's honest and informative approach to political philosophy had won over those who had originally thought that this topic was a difficult one, and there was a large audience and good attendance at the Reading Rooms in Billericay High Street.

We were keen to discover just 'How enlightened was the Enlightenment' and to learn about the Age of Reason, its key thinkers and how their views may have had an impact on the world of today. Ian explained how The Enlightenment of 18th century Europe rejected religious doctrine and the powerful hierarchies governing society and moved us towards the idea of individual rights, rational thought and scientific progress. His aim too was to get us to question whether such changes had always been for the good of mankind and the natural world.

Topics included: Human Nature, Science and Religion, and the thoughts on these by the thinkers of the age who helped to shape new ideas. There were many names to remember, including Kant, Adam Smith, Rousseau, Locke and others, each with varying viewpoints, but Ian had produced a good outline plan for guidance. Each

Adam Smith

week we were given useful notes to keep us on track, including key points and words of wisdom from the philosophers! Ian encouraged us to continue to build upon our understanding - he brought in newspaper articles, gave reading suggestions and encouraged us to look at books by modern authors.

Discussion helped us to clarify and revise information and gave us all a chance to relate ideas to the present day. Slavery, women's rights, education and ecology were just a few of the subjects that were covered. At the end of the course we realised that nearly every one of us, including some of our quietest members had at some point contributed to the discussions. There had been a lot of information to assimilate, new concepts to understand and some brain power was required, but we could now see how the Enlightenment had paved the way to more liberal, democratic and secular societies.

Thank you, Ian for making this topic enjoyable and accessible to all.

Sue Fisher – Branch Secretary and Course Member



Ian Pirie, Billericay course tutor, chats to (l to r): Christine Townley, Joan Brand, Daniel Fisher, Paul Fielding

Autumn Day School
Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know
Tutor: Michael King

Our third day school of 2018 had the intriguing title Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know.

Tutor Michael King presented a selection of familiar and less well-known literary figures who were mentally ill, disreputable or simply not very nice! After an introduction to the life of each poet, Michael then gave us valuable insights into the inner meanings and references in their poems and invited us to comment.

Given the title of the day school, which comes from a remark said to have been made by Lady Caroline Lamb about Lord Byron, we may have expected the main focus to be on Byron, but he was just one among thirteen poets stretching from the Tudor period to the present day.

It was a surprise that Michael opened with Henry VIII and Mary Queen of Scots, but he reminded us that writing poetry was an accomplishment expected of the aristocracy and was part of their education. Their poetry was not

written for publication, but rather for circulation within their social circle. Poems by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, revealed a range of bitterness, cynicism and black humour, not to mention eroticism.



John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester

One of the poets we studied, John Clare (1793-1864), lived in Loughton for several years as an inpatient at High Beach asylum, a relatively enlightened establishment for its time, and many of his poems were inspired by his walks in Epping Forest. Clare was the son of a Northamptonshire farm labourer and his poems are rooted in the English countryside. After a period of obscurity, he is now regarded as an important nineteenth century poet.

Byron duly made his appearance and we looked at extracts from a long, unfinished poem, Don Juan, which reveals some of his essential ideas.

The 20th century poets we studied were Ivor Gurney, Spike Milligan (a surprise!), Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes. We gained insights into the often tormented world of the first three, who all produced moving, fascinating and powerful poems despite, or maybe because of, their mental illness. Ted Hughes featured in his own right, as well as through his relationship with Sylvia Plath. He, perhaps, came into the category 'dangerous to know'.

Michael wisely avoided a Power Point presentation, which would not have added anything of benefit. We were able to study the texts of all the poems without distraction!

This was a study day to remember, greatly enriching our knowledge of a wide range of poetry and providing a stimulus for further reading.

Day schools at our Branch always include a two-course buffet lunch, which is much praised by participants. The lunch this time was well up to the standard we have come to expect, and special thanks are due to the catering team!

Carl Murray



Lord Byron

MERSEA BRANCH

Autumn 2018
A Russian Journey
Tutor: Anat Vernitski

In September 2018 we welcomed Anat Vernitski with her course “A Russian Journey” which was to give us an insight into the country, its people and their culture. It proved to be a very popular course and attracted a large audience, including some who were new to the WEA.

Each session covered a different aspect of Russian life such as Music, Art, The Russian Orthodox Church and Icons. It was interesting to learn that Colchester has two Russian churches, one of which was until recently the garrison Church, and that there is a Russian monastery near Tiptree. Using pictures, Anat explained the Iconostasis, which is a screen dividing off the nave from the sanctuary.



Ivan the Terrible

We heard about some famous Russians such as Ivan The Terrible and Peter The Great. We even learned some useful phrases, which we might use should we ever visit Russia. Anat encouraged us to write them down as we heard them rather than trying to spell them.

Anat encouraged both group discussion and individual contributions. Some class members brought in items of interest which either they or family members had collected. Others spoke about their visits to Russia or to Art exhibitions such as that currently on at Buckingham Palace.

It was interesting to hear how two Greek scholars created the Cyrillic alphabet. Where they could they used Greek letters or sometimes Hebrew. Where there was no appropriate Greek or Hebrew letter, they invented letters.

The course was much enjoyed and certainly increased our knowledge of the country, its people and their culture.

Hilary McMullen

TOLLESBURY BRANCH

Autumn 2018
Four Day Schools

Tollesbury branch had a re-think in 2018. To swell struggling numbers, we decided on four Saturday day schools for the autumn term. Attendees have been small in number but we have more or less broken even on each day school and attracted some new people from elsewhere.

First was Margaret Mills talking about Essex country houses.

We enjoyed learning about the history of three of the principal houses in Essex: Ingatestone Hall, Hylands Hall and Audley End. Ingatestone Hall's Catholic incumbents were connected with the royal family of the day through their expertise as lawyers. They largely kept out of trouble with authoritarian Anglican rule at the time, but a priest hole has nevertheless



Audley End c. 1890

recently been discovered there. Hylands Hall had a turbulent history, mainly being occupied by industrialists who spent ‘loadsamoney’ but then either decided to move out or lost their fortunes. During the war it was occupied by the forces and is now being run by the local authority. Audley End's occupants were more aristocratic and the same family resides there today. Margaret informed us that Audley End house is the best house to visit for seeing how the other half lived – particularly the servants.

Ron Marks gave us a taster of Shakespeare's work, describing and explaining his language. Shakespeare used lots of techniques including iambic pentameter. We later got to show off our drama talents with some play reading, using excerpts from Romeo and Juliet.

Dr Nicholas James gave us our next talk on historic landscape. A vast subject and as one participant said, “a brain work out!” We

all enjoyed learning about features in the countryside which gives us clues to their historic context. Indeed, we were shown how people used their ancestors' earthworks to mould their own structures, thus making landscape interpretation not straightforward, but hugely fascinating. We only got as far as the Middle Ages and definitely felt a Part 2 at a future date was needed!

Our final talk for the term, coming in November, is provided by Mark Felton who is guaranteed to give us a great "derring do" escape story from World War II.

Anne Mossman

WRITTLE BRANCH

Autumn 2018

Money, Money, Money

Tutor: Andrew Beharrell

Money, Money, Money delivered by virgin WEA (first timer), Andrew, was neither about ABBA nor Richard Branson's Virgin Money. We covered all aspects of money from its history, to supply and demand (A Level), changing shopping patterns, currency, prevention of forgery, and the influence of money on our daily lives, and much more.

Andrew had an engaging style and he involved us, wherever possible, in a dialogue, which kept us all alert. His lectures were

well prepared, contained excellent use of IT and power point, and delivered at a pace that we could all follow. Two of the many nuggets that I learned were the number of security checks built into the new £10 note, and the use of the Big Mac burger as a Purchasing Power Parity in making exchange rate theory more digestible (excuse the pun); Switzerland was the most expensive and Egypt the cheapest. With a down-to-earth style time flew by to such a point that we often worked through the sacred tea break.

Well done, Andrew, it was well worth leaving the house on a cold dark evening to learn and be enriched.

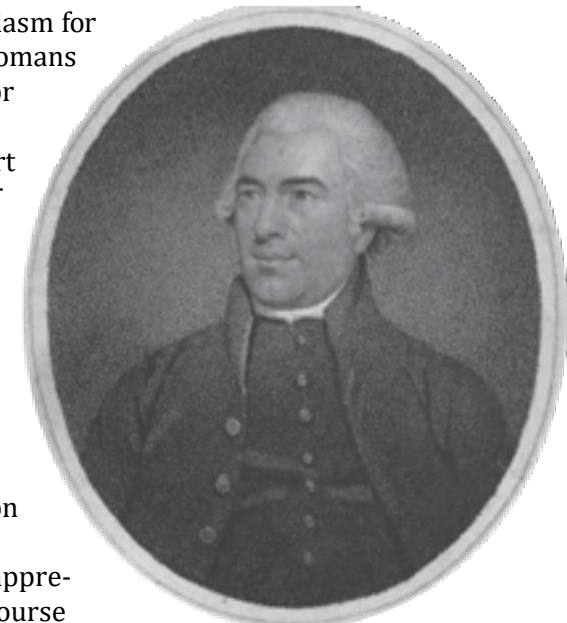
Mark Loster

Autumn 2018

Plant Hunters

Tutor: Andrew Sankey

Andrew is a superb lecturer and we all enjoyed his course enormously. In the first lecture we had to assess which plants were native British, and which were introductions. The British enthusiasm for gardening, from the time of the Romans to the Tudors, drove the search for the new and unusual. We learned about the political value to Robert Cecil of having a garden fit to entertain a Queen. Andrew included details of the lives of some of the early gardening families like the Tradescants and voyages to the new colonies, like Virginia. We learned how the first great sea voyages to Australia included skilled plantsmen like Joseph Banks, and how a breed of Surgeon / Botanists in the Royal Navy collected seeds on their travels. We appreciated Andrew's dry wit and the course was well illustrated throughout.



Sir Joseph Banks

We learned about the importance of royal patronage in the rise of Kew Botanic gardens, among others, and the birth of the (Royal) Horticultural Society. Some of the plant hunters, like Ernest Wilson, exercised meticulous planning for their trips. Others, like David Douglas in Northwest America, had a cavalier disregard for their personal safety which defied belief. Some stories had an element of Boys' Own Adventure / espionage, especially the 'theft' of tea seedlings from the closed land of China, which led to the commercial success of the Indian tea plantations. Do you realise what we owe to China for 'our' fantastic garden shrubs?

There is so much in this course that I have not space to include; we just wanted it to continue. We are a large branch and appreciate

a lecturer who can be interactive with a group of more than forty. We have an excellent book list for further study. We look forward to welcoming Andrew back for another course on Herbs and Apothecaries ... and to a guided tour of the Cambridge Botanic Garden.

Autumn 2018
Scandals
Tutor: Richard Till

We were delighted that Richard had a new course, as the Branch had really enjoyed his course on Boudicca. Would we have signed up for a course on 'What faced the 1945-51 reforming Labour Government'? No, probably not. But we know Richard's tactic of providing a concise political background before moving to the main topic ... in this case, the Profumo Scandal. Given the age of our Branch, most of us were

'teens to twenties' when this scandal broke. The rigid social mores and the class-based system which protected the 'ruling class' led to an appalling miscarriage of 'justice' which certainly shocked me. Reporting had analogies to the 'false news' techniques now prevalent in the US. Listing the deliberate judicial 'errors' by the Trial Judge it seemed incredible that this happened. The lectures were skilfully presented to take us back to that mindset and to take us through the political consequences, especially for Macmillan and his 'old order', and ultimately for a change in society.



Capt. Alfred Dreyfus (2nd right) in 1906, after his restoration to the army

Session 5 – 'Anti-Semitism and French History 1789-1890' proved fascinating. How little I knew about the history of our nearest neighbour! The Dreyfus case was another example of bigotry, planted evidence and perjury. Another innocent man who was humiliated, transported and imprisoned. Next it was some American history from 1920-28 with a 'fixed' election with, dare one say it, distinct echoes of the 2016 Election. That the Teapot Dome Scandal has never made it into the English History Curriculum is understandable, but a pity. Lucky us, that there is no curriculum for the WEA. I will not do a spoiler; you must book this Course.

We finished with the Jeremy Thorpe Case, which coincided with an excellent BBC drama exposé of this 1960s' scandal. It took the courage of Private Eye to bring Thorpe down. We ended the course with a somewhat subdued discussion about the state of the British Judicial System.

Thank you, Richard, we cannot wait for another course.
Mary Roberts

HATFIELD PEVEREL

Autumn 2018
Musical Postcards - A Journey Through Time and Place
Tutor: Professor Chris Green

Hatfield Peverel Branch's autumn course was a magical travelogue built around programme music - descriptive music, music which tells a story - woven by our tutor Professor Chris Green.

Our composers wrote pieces descriptive of places, scenes or events, current and before their time, in a variety of genres from popular light concert pieces you might have heard on a Sunday afternoon at a bandstand in the park - to opera, ballet, contemporary film scores and classical orchestral items, many influenced by jazz and folk idioms. We explored historical byways around composers' lives and places experienced. Something for all musical tastes.



Elizabeth Maconchy's memorial plaque in Church Street, Boreham

Wandering from Britain to the Channel Islands, across France to Spain, east to Italy with a diversion to the Austrian Alps. Music by composers of the 18th to 20th century from all over Europe who lived in these countries or visited them.

Which composers? Many well known - Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Debussy, Mendelssohn, Rodrigo, Rossini, Richard Strauss, Tchaikovsky, Richard Rodney Bennett, Ennio Moricone to name a few - but also lesser known composers including a local girl Elizabeth Maconchy, who lived in Boreham.

An enjoyable, engaging course spiced up by Chris's (in jest) rude remarks about our village

- I'm sure other venues get similar treatment!

Several members were encouraged to become Chris Green 'groupies' - attending a concert in Broomfield Church in November with the theme of Remembrance. This was sung by one of Chris's choirs, The Anglia Singers, and also a delightful choir of children from The Bishops Primary School. It was good to hear the whole of the Choral Suite from *The Armed Man* by Karl Jenkins, as well as other music appropriate to the centenary of the end of World War I.

Also, in early January, some of us travelled to Ipswich to hear the Trianon Music Group celebrate their Diamond Jubilee with the first of three concerts. We heard a programme of music from film and TV (including of course *Diamonds Are Forever!*), all conducted by Chris. It was a wonderful evening, created by a group of very talented musicians and singers, and the enthusiastic audience filled the Corn Exchange in Ipswich.

The course has certainly encouraged members to explore their musical horizons, as well as enjoying familiar pieces of music.

Lesley Naish

COLCHESTER BRANCH

Autumn 2018

What is Bad Music?

Tutor: Chris Green

Students coming into the foyer of CMC on a Thursday morning in the Autumn term would have been intrigued by the notice 'Bad Music - Chris Green - Room 1.' WEA, and certainly Chris, do not do bad music and listening at our class room door would have confirmed this. The bad music we were to discuss comes from the power of some music to change the direction of music, to overthrow old ideas, to criticise society, to be subversive, to upset. Nothing would necessarily have happened immediately or soon after but could take a long time before its effect was felt.

Music has this power, unlike many art forms. Martin Luther (1483 -1546) has been quoted as saying "Music with its power to move emotions was an inexpressible miracle second only to theology." We will come across Luther again later.

Approach

Our tutor used both music and visuals as important aids to augment his presentation and encouraged questions and comments as he went along. Also there were occasional small research questions put to us to look at for the next session. Sometimes, if a fellow student had missed a class, members were asked to give them a brief resume. We covered nearly all genres. Nothing much escaping our attention: choral music from Baroque to modern, opera from Mozart to Shostakovitch (taking in some Freudian psychology), dance, orchestral and theatre. Also we looked at some composers whose behaviour was questionable or just downright bad. This was done in a series of 'case studies' of which some examples follow.

The approach was never solemn, often serious and, occasionally, challenging. Chris continues to do this after many, many years of teaching at WEA and conducting, for coming up to sixty years, choirs and orchestras.

Bach's St John Passion

The first case our tutor proposed was Bach's St John Passion and that really challenged any preconceived ideas. He told us of conversations he had with Jewish members of choirs who said they could not take part in a performance of this.

Of the Passions Bach wrote for Holy Week, only the *St Matthew* (1729) and *St John* (1724) have come down to us. In the Lutheran church, they must strictly follow the words in the Gospels on the trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Luther had translated the Gospels from the original New Testament Greek (as he did not trust the Latin translation) into the vernacular German. Earlier Luther had been sympathetic to the Jews but in his later life he turned extremely anti-Semitic. Bach would have had access to Luther's writings but, like most well-educated people of his time, would not have put much importance on them of nearly 200 years before. Around Bach's time, the senate of Hamburg issued a decree that in Holy Week "vilification of the Jews would not be tolerated."

In the Passions there are links and insertions and some of these by Bach's predecessors were



Johann Sebastian Bach
in

1748, aged

61

anti-Semitic but Bach took these out. He was, however, a Lutheran Pietist and servant of his church and the St John Gospel blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus so the words had to be included with, for Bach, harsh music. There is no such mention of the Jews in St Matthew.

We should remember that the Nazis latched on to the *St John Passion* and that in Auschwitz and Theresienstadt, Jewish musicians were compelled to play German music for Nazi audiences.

The Threepenny Opera

Kurt Weill was supported by his German-Jewish family in his classical music education. However, he had left-wing sympathies and when he teamed up with Bertholt Brecht they produced the tryptich of *The Threepenny Opera*, *Happy End* and *Rise And Fall*

Of The City Of Mahagonny as a broad form of musical theatre. All three addressed the social inequalities of society and attacked the capitalist system. The music combined folk tunes, tango, foxtrot and the sleazy music of Berlin cabaret. While the music was well-received, the message may have got missed in some places. The hit song *Mack The Knife* has been covered many times:

Oh, the shark has pretty teeth, dear,
And he shows them pearly white
Just a jack-knife has Macheath, dear
And he keeps it out of sight.

On the first night of *The Rite Of Spring* in Paris in 1913 the audience were distracted by the high jinks of a dinner-jacketed clique. On the first night of *Mahagonny* in Leipzig in 1930 the audience were intimidated by an invasion of brown-shirted thugs. Weill fled Germany in 1933.

Chichester Psalms

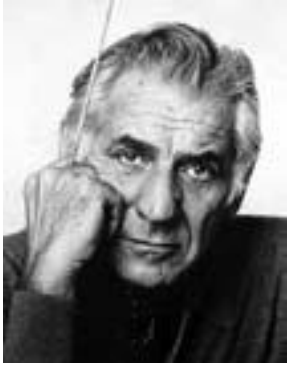
The Dean of Chichester, Walter Hussey, seemed to have the skill, or knack, of persuading world-class artists to create work for his cathedral. For the Southern Cathedrals Festival of 1965, Leonard Bernstein composed the work *Chichester Psalms*. It is from the Book of Psalms for small orchestra, choir and boy treble or countertenor. All in Hebrew. It is a beautiful work, described as affirmative and

serene, with Psalm 23 *The Song Of David* for the boy treble most graceful. It is not an easy one to perform with its unusual rhythms. One lady in our class loves singing in it but found that the tenors had some difficulties with the rhythm and the language. It was first performed in New York on 15th July 1965 conducted by Bernstein and very well received. It was performed at Chichester in the Festival on 31 July 1965. There were some eyebrows raised under mitres at the Hebrew! Now it is often used as the anthem at Evensong in Anglican cathedrals.

Bernstein's Mass

Jacqueline Kennedy commissioned Bernstein to compose a mass for the opening of the Kennedy Centre in 1971. Bernstein first thought of a mass in the normal form but expanded his ideas and it is now

formally *Mass: Theatre Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers*. He used the form, Latin and liturgy of the Tridentine mass but added to it his own lyrics, in English, and music with those of Stephen Swartz and Paul Simon. It is likely that an intelligent person like Jacqueline Kennedy would have been aware of this.



*Leonard Bernstein by
Jack Mitchell*

The work begins in harmony but slowly doubts and questioning come in for the chorus and celebrant, representing mankind, until the celebrant, in anger, dashes down the sacred vessels. Resolution begins when a solo voice sings "Sing God a Secret Song." Full resolution comes when the chorus and players gather round the celebrant and sing "Pax tecum" and "The Mass is Ended, Go in Peace."

It was not too well received at first and has been described as "*West Side Story* meets *Chichester Psalms*."

However, the FBI were watching this left-leaning composer, looking for anti-war and anti-establishment undertones, even in the Latin text. They could not work out any but still advised Nixon not to go to the premier.

Conclusion

A great deal of ground was covered in twenty hours of lectures and we would have liked more (like good audiences). Perhaps there might be more to come such as the iconoclastic Presley and Beatles. Or the more sedate return to Englishness by Vaughan Williams, Holst and Delius. Or Piazzolla, the only composer I know of to be threatened with a pistol for his music.

We were expected to be able to come to our own conclusions about the label "bad," the different ways it could be used and to which cases we had discussed this could be applied. Also to be considered were evolution and change in music and audience response to these.

In many examples, we saw that what was disliked when new became treasured after time.

Ray Hedley

Member
Experience Rachel
Jordan

From 2010 to 2018 I taught English as a Second Language in Singapore. This was a job I trained for two decades after gaining my degree in modern foreign languages from the University of Sheffield. Previously I had worked in London as an administrator in design companies, a picture researcher in publishing and an exhibited artist who ran educational outreach workshops in Kent and Essex. With a positive spin, you could say I had a portfolio career before the phrase was invented or, with a negative one, you could say I didn't really have a career at all. Anyway, after gaining my Cambridge CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults), my self-mocking six-word autobiography was written: "True vocation twenty years after graduation!."

As you probably know, Singapore is a small but influential modern city-state. What you may not know is that it prides itself on being an education hub in South East Asia which attracts a cosmopolitan mix of students to its universities, colleges and English language schools. It is a clean, efficient and safe society with a mix of Asian and Western influences, making it a good choice for foreign students and offering many interesting cultural insights to those who stay long enough.

During my time there, I worked mostly in private language schools for adults. Here the students attended intensive English courses, for either three or five hours per day, five days per week, for anywhere from one month to a year. That is a lot of studying! But given the fact that to progress from a beginner to a competent level takes at least 1,000 hours, it was a necessary commitment for them. Most of my learners were very focused and worked as hard as they could - after all they had chosen to invest their own time and (usually their own) money into their studies. In addition to that, they normally had very specific reasons for wanting and/or needing to improve their English so their motivation was high.

When I look back from the familiar comfort of my home here in Tiptree now, there are so many highlights of my Singapore

experience that it is hard to choose which ones to recount. I could focus on the aspects of the English language that learners love or hate; I could talk about the trials and tribulations of having to prepare for 25-30 hours of teaching contact per week; I could get nostalgic about working in a year-round hot climate where I only ever needed to wear sandals and even kept flip-flops under my desk so I could wear them home. But I will share a few anecdotes about the people I taught. For at its core, teaching is an interaction between human beings, and adult learners are a fascinating bunch.

In keeping with the communicative method of language teaching that I had learnt, I spoke English and no other language to my students in the classroom, which immersed them in the language they were there to learn. In any case, as they were a multilingual group it would have been difficult, especially as I do not speak Chinese, Japanese, Korean etc! They were very mixed classes in terms of age, educational background, culture, religion and nationality so I had the pleasure of meeting students from over 33 countries. Seeing each other in a classroom every day for three hours over 12 weeks means you really get to know each other well. Although I was there as a teacher, I also learned a great deal from my students - about their societies, cultures, lives.

In a typical classroom I had young professionals from Japan whose companies had sent them so that they could learn English to communicate better with international clients, Chinese women needing to integrate into a country whose official language is English because of getting married to Singaporean men, Indonesian college students hoping to improve their job prospects.

There are some individuals who particularly stand out. A Sri Lankan Buddhist monk who always came to class in his orange robes made it a very memorable term. He participated as much as any other student did and seemed to really enjoy the debate we had about money and ways of obtaining it, both legally and illegally!

Another unforgettable moment is when a young Russian woman from Vladivostock and an older Russian woman, not from Vladivostock, had a heated argument across the classroom, in English I might add, about what the coldest temperature is there in winter! The former said it was minus 30 degrees, the latter said

it was minus 40. We all watched on as they thrashed it out for five minutes, assertion after assertion. The class was gripped by the live debate! I didn't intervene as they were arguing in English so it was actually very good speaking practice for them.

Another student who stands out was a Chinese Catholic priest - yes, I am not joking. He was a man in his mid-thirties from a very humble rural background (think two-roomed stone hut with a wooden fire in the central area of the abode), who had converted to Catholicism in his twenties, then became a priest and was assisted by the church to pursue his English studies as he was keen to go to university in Dublin. After countless hours of sheer hard work (and no doubt by the grace of God as well), he achieved this. I hope to meet with him one day now that we are closer geographically.

Around the world many millions of non-native English speakers are studying hard to master a language that they hope will be their passport to a better education, job, relationship, life. The number of native English speakers globally is only around 350-400 million whilst the non-native speakers are estimated to account for up to 1.5 billion. It's hard to establish accurate figures but it is fair to say that native speakers are probably outnumbered by a ratio of around 3:1 or more. At this moment, many conversations being conducted in English are only between non-native speakers. Thus, the English language is changing considerably as a result of it being used as lingua franca. That, plus the influence of technology on the way much of the world communicates, makes it extremely interesting to be an English language teacher during this period of linguistic flux.

I am currently taking a sabbatical from teaching to refresh my mind and pursue further English studies. After teaching for eight years, I want to increase my knowledge of the English language itself as well as language learning theories and methods. I am studying for a Diploma in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) which is a practical, Masters level qualification. In addition, I am attending the WEA course 'English Language, Lore and Legend' as I am fascinated to know more about how the language I teach came into existence. And I am enjoying being back at home in the land where it all began. For now ;)

Rachel Jordan

Learners' Celebration at First Stop Centre - Braintree

WEA have been delivering on a Building Better Opportunities (BBO) project in Braintree working with people on a one-to-one basis to support them back into employment. This project has been delivered out of First Stop Centre. Jan Russell, the project coordinator for WEA, also works for First Stop. The First Stop charity's mission statement is: "To work with people who are disadvantaged, in a non-judgmental way, in order to improve their lives" and they certainly do – working with a range of organisations and funders to deliver an outstanding service.

In 2018 the centre's achievements were recognised several times including:

- September 2018: they received the Connect Well Award nominated by NHS Mid Essex CCG.
- March 2018: they won the High Sheriff's Cup promoted by Essex Community Foundation. <http://www.highsheriffs.com/Essex/EssexAwards.htm>
- October 2018: they were awarded the Community Partnership Award nominated by Freeport Braintree.

Each year the centre celebrates the students' learning. This year the event took place at the centre on Thursday 13th December 2018.

Learners were invited from all of the courses that have run at the First Stop Centre this year, which included courses funded through the Essex Learning Partnership fund, Workers' Educational Association courses and InterAct (through Building Better Opportunities).

A range of subject areas has been covered, through courses and one to one support, including: Maths, English, IT, Mindfulness, Confidence Building, Employability Confidence, Anger Management, Mental Health, First Aid Training and Resilience.

The centre was full and everyone who attended the courses received a well-deserved certificate of achievement. Some students

who attended won the coveted 'special recognition' certificate: this was for achieving 'above and beyond' and for putting in that extra effort.

Certificates were given out by the chair of the Management Committee at First Stop, Ian Wardrop, who gave an introduction to the celebration endorsing what was a very special day for many..

Staff who support their learners were given certificates in recognition of the work they do with the most hard to reach and vulnerable members of society.

Afterwards, the traditional spectacular buffet was enjoyed by all.

In 2018 First Stop Centre was supported by many organisations, one of which is Landsec, who manage Freeport Braintree. They very generously supported the centre with their time and energy. First Stop were part of their Giving Tree project and this meant that everyone who attended the day received a gift and a Christmas Care Package from Freeport, full of useful goodies.

It was an upbeat day and everyone went away happy (and full!) Learners/participants were very touched by the kindness of everyone who supported them and this was evident throughout the day.

J. Russell and S. Ridealgh, January 2019



Simon Caldicott, WEA BBO participant, receiving his certificate from Ian Wardrop

A Typical Essex Windmill?

Christine Burden

Tucked away behind the houses in Bocking Church Street is a fine example of an Essex post mill. There are 22 surviving windmills in Essex, of which 7 are post mills, more, I think, than in any other county. Post mills were the earliest form to evolve in medieval Europe. Wooden and stone or brick tower mills were developed rather later. The mill is so called because the whole of the working part of the mill is built around and suspended from an enormous wooden upright timber, the post. Basically this a whole

oak tree; not just any old oak, but a park land tree allowed to grow to maturity, while its woodland brothers were harvested when much younger to provide secondary timbers.

There is no such thing as a typical Essex windmill. The old millwrights had to work to the budget the mill owner allowed and, particularly in the case of wooden mills, with the materials available to them.

Our windmill has a roundhouse, a brick addition surrounding and protecting the wooden trestle which holds up the post. When I first saw our windmill I assumed the brick walls of the roundhouse were holding up the wooden superstructure. In fact, the working part of the mill could function perfectly well without one.

Roundhouses were a much later innovation, and provided useful storage. None of our surviving Essex mills is roundhouseless, but there is a fine example of an open trestle mill at Great Chishill, which was once an Essex mill, but relocated to Cambridgeshire when the county boundaries changed.

Our roundhouse is big enough to house a small collection



of artefacts donated over the years, some mill connected, others agricultural and a few whose function we have no idea of.

When visitors have finished examining these, they can climb into the wooden part of the mill, which is known as the buck. The lowest of its 3 floors was where the miller spent most of his working day. Here he had various ropes and levers to apply the brake, to adjust the gap between the millstones (vital to ensure a decent consistency of flour) and to operate the bolter, a machine used to separate the meal produced by the stones into various grades of flour.

The stones are on the floor above, two pairs in the front of the buck with the bolter at the back. Millstones work in pairs, the lower one stationary, the upper one powered by the sails, and both enclosed in a wooden tun.

The grain arriving at the mill is carried up to the top floor by the sack hoist, which is a wind powered mechanism with a chain running from top to bottom of the mill. This is operated by pulling a rope to tighten a slack belt and it lifts the corn sacks to the bins without the need for human muscle power.

When a mill is working, the sails turn the large wooden wheel inside the mill. The brake is on this wheel, which also is cogged to take the drive to the machinery.

Bocking has 2 types of sails; one pair was equipped with cloths, as all medieval mills were, the other with Venetian blind-like shutters. These were a later innovation and made the mill rather easier to control. Trying to remove 4 cloths from the sails in the face of an approaching thunderstorm must have been no joke. The shuttered sails could simply be opened by pulling a lever, so the wind whistled harmlessly through them. Sadly our mill no longer works, but we hope to get those sails turning soon. (A small visitor once asked us where the motor was which made the sails go round.)

Our open season starts on May Day, when we hope to see plenty of visitors, but if you can't get to Bocking our fellow post mills at Ashdon, Finchingfield and Mountnessing are also open regularly, as are the bigger brick tower mills at Rayleigh, Stansted Mountfitchet, Stock and Thaxted. The only surviving wooden Essex tower mill is Upminster, now over the border in Havering. All these mills are worth a visit. Details of opening hours can be found on the internet.

CENTENARY

Brightlingsea WEA Branch were delighted to present a bouquet to Wyn Smith to honour her 100th birthday, which she celebrated very recently. Wyn is a long standing member of the Brightlingsea WEA and is active in many Brightlingsea events. She took part in the Colchester aural history project with Patrick Denney and has enjoyed many of the recent, and not so recent, WEA classes. We look forward to her continued participation.
Angela Wilson



OBITUARY

Jim Page
1925 - 2018
Thirty years with WEA

Hatfield Peverel Branch was sorry to learn of the death in December of Jim Page, aged 93. For more than 30 years Jim was involved with WEA, as a lecturer, branch member and sometime Chairman, a former member of the Essex Federation Committee who also served on the Regional Committee.

Jim was born in Lincolnshire, and moved aged 19 to Pontypridd, Wales to work in town planning. While there he surveyed the route of the 'Head of the Valleys' road to prove it could be built (and indeed it was!). He moved to Hertfordshire Planning Department, then to Cambridgeshire via Carlisle and Wiltshire. He joined Chelmer Institute (now Anglia Ruskin University) in 1971 as a lecturer in town planning. He was in his element teaching, as he had

an encyclopaedic memory of town history, and loved sharing this knowledge.

His first contact with WEA was in about 1982, when he was asked by Tillingham Branch (then in the London District) to lead a walkabout around Chelmsford as part of their 'History of Chelmsford' course. The members so enjoyed the day that, on learning that Jim was shortly to retire and that his research area was 'The History and Evolution of Towns', they invited him to do a course for them.

He moved from Chelmsford to Hatfield Peverel in 1983 and joined the local branch. He

was persuaded by Arthur Brown to teach in Essex as well as the London area, and for more than 20 years taught many 10 week courses, sometimes as many as 3 a week, and also took students on town visits including Sudbury, Ely, Wisbech, Kings Lynn, St Albans and Chelmsford. He also taught a summer school on '2000 years of Essex Towns' in 2011.



Jim Page on his 90th birthday

He was Chairman of Hatfield Peverel Branch for several years, and continued to serve on the Committee. He was an enthusiastic class member and in 2015 the Branch celebrated his 90th birthday with a presentation and celebration cake. He continued to come to classes until ill health and hospital appointments prevented him from doing so.

As well as WEA, Jim was a prominent member of the two village churches, St Andrews in Hatfield Peverel, and All Saints Ulting. He had enjoyed bell ringing for many years (though sadly neither local church has any bells to ring!).

Summing up the life of such a man is very difficult – and he will be missed by his many friends in the village and across the country.



WEA Eastern Region Essex Federation

Federation Chairman:
Brian Gillion

Federation Secretary:
Lesley Naish
essex.federation@gmail.com

EF News Sheet Editors
(Spring 2019):
Ron Marks and Andrew Aitken

Send copy for Autumn 2019 to:
ronmarks.wea@gmail.com

Essex Federation Website: www.wea-essex.org.uk

WEA Eastern Regional Office:
2nd Floor, 27/28 Bridge Street, Cambridge, CB2 1U J

Tel: 01223 417320
Email: eastern@wea.org.uk
Web: wea.org.uk/eastern



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