

WEA

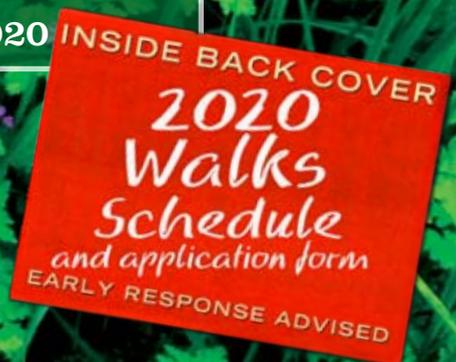
ESSEX FEDERATION NEWS SHEET



- Gods: from Prometheus to Godzilla
- Scandals: Overbury & Dreyfus - What the posh and not-so-posh got up to
- Poetry: Arnold, Eliot, MacNeice, to name but a few
- Music and Art: Where Sondheim meets Seurat

... and much more

Spring 2020





WEA Eastern Region

Essex Federation

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Spring 2020

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to this Spring 2020 edition of the Essex Federation Newsletter.

As you are probably aware, the past year or so has been difficult for the Association with many new procedures and policies being introduced. Despite some thoughts that these have been plucked from thin air, they are in fact the Association's reaction to events outside of their control. Some have been due to legal requirements like GDPR and others have been to deal with changes in the way the WEA is funded by cutting costs.

The WEA's method of implementing some of these changes has at times been questionable, but I am sure that once they have bedded in it will free up time to concentrate on the aim of putting the student at the WEA's heart and bring back the vitality that we have enjoyed in the past.

The Federation committee works tirelessly in trying to understand these changes and in representing your views at the various National and Regional committees, suggesting improvements where necessary.

The committee has planned a programme of Summer Walks, One Day Schools and Summer Schools and we look forward to seeing you at some of them. In particular I must mention Professor Edith Hall's summer school in Colchester on 23 and 24 June. We are very lucky to recruit her as she is one of the world's leading researchers - an expert on Ancient Greece, Ancient Greek and Classical literature - and is a first rate, lively lecturer.

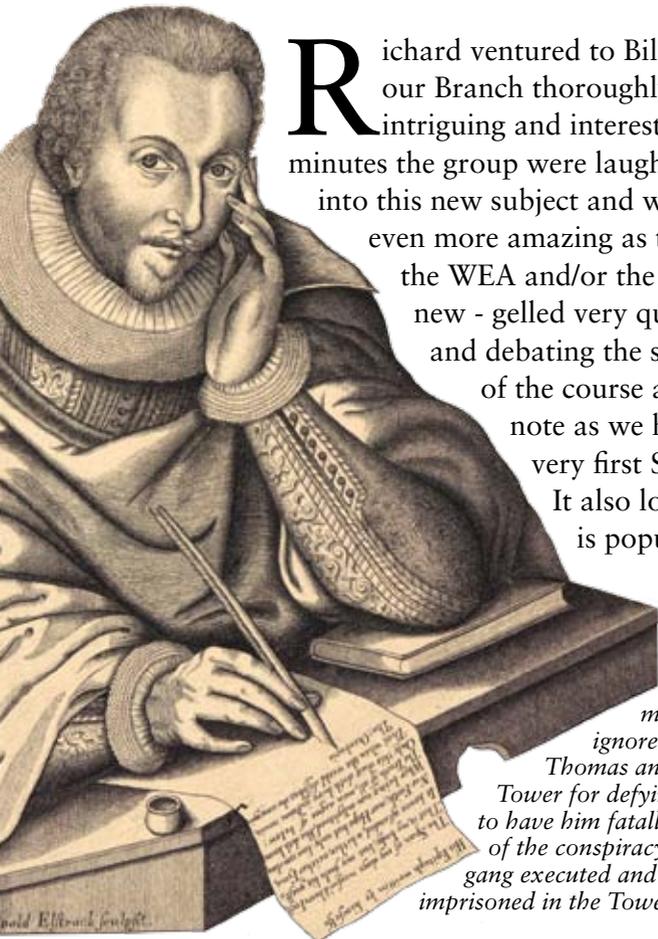
Summer Walks details and an application form is on the inside back cover. On the back cover are details of the year's courses.

Thank you all for your continued support. Without you the WEA will not survive.

Brian Gillion

Autumn 2019: One Day Course
 SCANDALS or Your Mother's Worst Nightmares
 Tutor: Richard Till

WANT TO BEAT A MURDER RAP? START WITH A TITLE - AN EARLDOM SHOULD DO IT.



Richard ventured to Billericay for the first time and our Branch thoroughly enjoyed an informative, intriguing and interesting course. In the first 10 minutes the group were laughing and ready to get stuck into this new subject and with a new tutor. This was even more amazing as there were new people to the WEA and/or the Branch yet all - old and new - gelled very quickly and were discussing and debating the subject with gusto. The title of the course and topic clearly hit the right note as we had 20 enrolments for our very first September One Day Course. It also looks as if mid-September is popular with WEA students

Sir Thomas Overbury (left), counselled his close friend the Earl of Somerset against an affair with the beautiful, but already married, Frances Howard. Somerset ignored him. The couple took against Sir Thomas and, having seen him detained in the Tower for defying the king, conspired with others to have him fatally poisoned. Worried by rumours of the conspiracy, King James had several of the gang executed and the Somersets - now married - imprisoned in the Tower.

keen to get back into the swing of things and catch up on learning after the break!

We looked at two Scandals - not at all the obvious ones - The Overbury Scandal and The Dreyfus Affair. The Overbury Scandal concerned the court of James I. The Jacobean public was alerted to the wild behaviour of the King and his courtiers through the new availability of the written word and the spread of popular music.

The Dreyfus Affair revealed how the deep-rooted prejudice of 1890s France led to an individual being accused and convicted of a crime he hadn't committed. Even those of us with some background knowledge of the Scandals found we learnt something new and re-examined our views. There was plenty of food for thought and Richard's style encourages challenge and reflection in a relaxed and supportive way. Everyone joined in and felt able to express their views even in the context of these difficult times!

A Scandal? Or rather, The Scandal? Well I would say that was summed up by one participant who asked me why more men did not come to One Day Courses given many come to the 8-week programmes and even more intriguing why there were so few for



Frances Howard, in some ways a pawn in Jacobean court politics, divorced the Earl of Suffolk to marry the Earl of Somerset. In spite of being found guilty for their part in the murder conspiracy, the Somersets were pardoned (the Earl was a Royal favourite) after six years in the Tower.



Alfred Dreyfus' unjust exile to Devil's Island for betraying military secrets motivated Emil Zola's famous 'J'Accuse' article, published in L'Aurore in January 1898. In forensic detail, he accused the President of condoning corruption. His hope was to be sued for libel so the state's flimsy case could be exposed. In the event, he was harrassed so much that he sought refuge in England for nearly a year.

other Scandals he mentioned in passing and others just want to do another course by this tutor.

There is a Richard Till fan club - get your Branch to join it!

Denise Fielding
- Billericay WEA

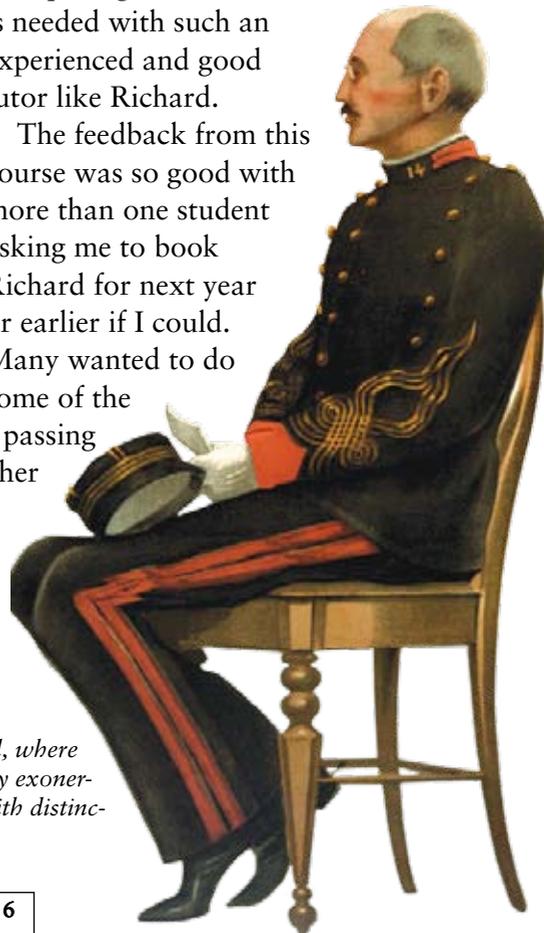
Dreyfus (pictured during a second trial, where his conviction was confirmed) was fully exonerated in 1906. He and his son served with distinction in the First World War.

such a One Day Course. My answer was one of a challenge really with a response that possibly he was a very open-minded and enquiring man. I came away though feeling he had asked a very pertinent question and a point worthy of more reflection. Answers please on a postcard!

This Course is perhaps not what some might think from the title and is absolutely spot on for today. Anyone and indeed everyone would enjoy it. An interest in history, politics, religion, culture and an enquiring mind is all that

is needed with such an experienced and good tutor like Richard.

The feedback from this course was so good with more than one student asking me to book Richard for next year or earlier if I could. Many wanted to do some of the



Autumn One Day Course
Great Bardfield Artists
Tutor: Rosanna Eckersley

ART IN GT. BARDFIELD. A COTTAGE INDUSTRY?

Why were our Billericay members so keen to escape the Reading Rooms after the superb One Day Course on The Great Bardfield Artists? The reason was that we had spent such an informative and inspiring day with Dr Rosanna Eckersley that we couldn't wait to investigate the topics covered, to travel out into Essex and beyond, and view the art and places that she had mentioned.

Rosanna's course was centred on the group of artists that settled in Great Bardfield in the middle years of the 20th century. She discussed with us the work of Edward Bawden, Eric Ravilious, Tirza Garwood and many others. We evaluated their various styles and techniques and looked in detail at paintings, prints, fabrics, etchings, books and ceramics. Rosanna told the story of their creative lives and work using many illustrations and photographs of the places they lived and visited. They had commissions from the War Office, London



*Why Great Bardfield?
Ravilious and Bawden who had met at the Royal College, were busy - as fine and commercial artists - before they graduated. Wanting an escape from the bustle of London - while retaining access to it - they came across Bardfield. The fact that Bawden was Braintree-born probably influenced their choice.*



Transport and the Festival of Britain, plus many others. We saw how a changing society, sometimes looking forward to a bright modern future, and at other times looking back to a cosy nostalgic past, influenced their art and design.

Although we had a smaller number of people than is usual for our One Day Courses, we found that it had its advantages. There was cohesion within the group and people were happy to ask questions. There was less of a rush at break time, giving everyone a chance to discuss what they had seen and heard, to socialise and to ask questions of Rosanna. The committee serving tea had the time to get to know our regulars better and talk with the new members. We also took the chance to ask what other One Day Courses they would like to see.

Feedback from the Billericay audience on the course was very positive. One declared it her 'best One Day Course ever!' Further research by one member uncovered water colour techniques used by Ravilious, the inspiration behind a Denby pottery range and some interesting facts about the painting Spitfires at Sawbridgeworth. Many told us that they would be visiting Great Bardfield and seeking out the 'blue plaques'. Even familiar places, some said, were going to be visited with renewed interest. One adventurer abandoned their sat nav and began a tour of Essex villages on the way to the Fry Gallery in Saffron Walden. I too have a trip

Right: Originally designed by Ravilious for the coronation of Edward VIII, this mug's decoration was speedily adapted for that of George VI. Suitably refined, it was wheeled out again for the 1953 coronation of Elizabeth II.



Left: Eric Ravilious and Tirzah Garwood at work on a mural in the Midland Hotel, Morecamble in 1933. The mural has been recently restored as part of the renovation of the whole hotel. It's an opportunity to see a rare surviving example of what was a popular format in the 1930s.

Image Copyright. Reproduced by kind permission of the Ravilious Family

planned out to the London Transport Museum - suddenly even the fabric designs on underground trains seem exciting! So many course members are still poised over their computers researching, or out with family members exploring. All we can say is thank you to Rosanna for such an interesting course and to Billericay Branch members - please hurry back to us and be ready to be inspired by our next set of One Day Courses.

GREAT BARDFIELD ARTISTS

A like-minded group - John Aldridge, Kenneth and Diana Rowntree, Duffy Ayers among them - formed around Bawden and Ravilious whose prestige burgeoned. The war interrupted their idyll.

Both men were engaged as war artists. Ravilious left a rich legacy of military images - his submarine sequence is remarkable both for content and technique. He was lost during an airborne search mission off Iceland. Bawden, probably the more prolific, himself had a narrow escape - he was adrift in a lifeboat in the Mediterranean for five days. His work in Dunkirk, North Africa and Yugoslavia is notable. Apart from collections devoted to them - Bawden in the Higgins Gallery, Bedford, both in the Fry Gallery, Saffron Walden and the Imperial War Museum - their work can be seen widely. Chelmsford Museum has a decent Bawden archive.

After the war, Bawden returned to Bardfield, as did several others, including Michael Rothenstein, Bernard Cheese and Ravilious' widow, Tirzah Garwood. Most were gone by the end of the 1960s.

For a unique insight into Bardfield's daily round, the Bawden-illustrated Life in an English Village (King Penguin 1949) is well worth seeking out. An undamaged copy (they're often broken up for the illustrations) will set you back something like £40, possibly more (original price, half-a-crown) unless you're lucky enough to find a copy in a charity shop.



We shared with the tutor, Rosanna Eckersley the work of our own Essex artist, Lyn Charles. Lyn owns Picturesque on the High Street in Billericay and this painting is of the Reading Rooms (our venue for WEA Courses and almost next door to Picturesque). Serendipity as they say!

Sue Fisher – Course Member and Secretary



The Reading Rooms, Billericay by Lyn Charles.

Check page 35 for overseas competition.

Romford-born Lyn Charles took up painting late, having been inspired during time in South Africa. Resident again in the UK, her gallery in Billericay is worth a visit.

That gallery - Picturesque - offers work by a wide variety of artists, including her own. She can be contacted at www.picturesque.co.uk

Image © Lyn Charles and reproduced by kind permission

One Day Course
Brazil Through the Eyes of the Camera
Tutor: Bex Harper

BRAZIL...ALL THIS AND COFFEE, TOO

Dare I mention the 'B' word? In this instance, I mean Brazil.



For many, their knowledge of Brazil is confined to this - the Brazil football logo.

Given the events of 31st January 2020, our scheduling this course for 1st February might be seen as foresight - it was apt and welcomed by those who attended with comments such as 'Enlightening', 'Interesting' and 'Fascinating' heard through the day.

Bex is a knowledgeable and talented tutor with the ability to engage a group in an innovative and creative way - 'through the eyes of the camera'. Students came to this course for varied reasons and all left having enjoyed an opportunity to be, have fun, learn and participate together.

I am not really hugely interested in film but I learnt more about Brazil than any geography lesson I ever did and became more interested as

the day progressed. The course outline below whetted my appetite and did not disappoint as we explored the economic, political and social history of the country alongside the film industry. The films in themselves were fascinating though come with a health warning (an in-joke between course members).

'As Brazil takes its place among upcoming world powers, all eyes are on its culture and peoples. Brazilian culture, rich with its European, African and indigenous backgrounds, provides interesting food for thought. We look at how several internationally-well-received films from Brazil reflect the cultural tensions that this country's history has created'. Dr Bex Harper I heard a number of comments as I was tidying up: 'Well, that was different'; I really enjoyed that' and 'What a good tutor- she really knows her stuff'.

I think that says it all and hope your Branch will open its eyes to such a course and talent.

Denise Fielding – Student and Committee Member

One Day Course
Tales from Two Counties - Episodes from Local and Family History
Tutor: Ted Woodgate

HISTORY: THE KILLER DETAILS

Episode One:

Ted Woodgate returned again to the Billericay Reading Rooms to deliver this new and rivetingly interesting course - Tales from Two Counties which explores aspects of childhood in the 19th and early 20th century using family history in a local and national context. Students were engrossed as Ted revealed the fascinating story that linked his great grandfather's family with social and economic history on the Essex-Suffolk borders in the late 19th century.

While doing research on a family history website Ted discovered that his great grandfather, William Bear, was not recorded alongside his wife Maria on the 1881 census. Ted told us that if the husband was deceased, usually the wife would be recorded 'head of household'. Intrigued as to why it was not so in this case, Ted did further research and found that in 1881 William was in Chelmsford Prison for the manslaughter of one of his children aged 11.



A Victorian prison. Not a great place to spend your time

This is a piece of family history unknown to Ted and his sister; it had not been passed down through the generations.

Using a range of historical sources including parish records, local newspapers and the census data Ted has been able to build a picture of what happened.

William and Maria Bear had 10 children and at the time of the incident they were living in Sudbury. William was a silk weaver

working long hours. His son William, aged 11, sold seafood in local pubs and was caught stealing a purse.

What happens next?

To discover all the interesting details, you will need to attend this course! Ask Ted to deliver it at your branch.

During the session

students were asked to consider what social, political and economic circumstances in Sudbury might

A spinning shed in the early 19th Century. Sudbury was a major centre of the trade.

have contributed to this tragic story. Ted skilfully drew the group's attention to wider social change at the end of the 19th century including the work of Dr Barnardo and William Booth. Students left the course wanting to discover more both about their own family history as well as Ted's. In fact, one student has discovered even more detail on the Woodgate family, which they have passed on to Ted.

'Tales from Two Counties' is the first of 8 half-day history courses that Ted is planning. Billericay WEA Branch cannot wait for the second in the series.

Paul Fielding - Student

8-Week Course

A History of Britain's Railways

Tutor: Roger Mannion

HISTORY: BACK ON THE RAILS

As a relative newcomer to the WEA I have so far mostly enrolled on courses which fitted fairly exactly with my fields of interest. The course on Islam and the course on Film put me in my comfort zone so when I looked at this year's courses and saw one on Railways, I wasn't sure. My main experience of railways, or so I thought, came from many frustrating years of commuting and in more recent times using my senior railcard to travel around relatively inexpensively!

Anyway, enrol I did and I have been surprised at how Roger has painted a picture of life in Britain through a history of rail. The way that the railways responded to, and shaped, our country has been enlightening and fascinating. From the birth of Thomas Cook to the development of GMT, we have left no stone unturned. The building of beautiful railway stations, which somehow had passed me by, will have an increased interest for me, reflecting the many innovators we have discussed including Brunel with his new and iconic ideas. We were astonished at the early railways - trains with no brakes and little signalling. We learned that 'leaves on the line' was a genuine reason for delay, a topic of derision in my commuter days!

But one of the most enjoyable aspects of any WEA course for me is the participants. Roger encourages questions and I have been in awe at fellow participants' breadth of knowledge whilst learning of their personal family connections and experience. This for me brings learning to life! The passion for learning in this group is both palpable and infectious.

So, I would like to thank Roger for a wide-ranging course which has most definitely expanded my knowledge and horizons. I would also like to thank my fellow learners for your inspiration.

I hope to continue to tackle the widest range of subjects!

Jane Fitch - Course member

PRESENTATION

The WEA Billericay Branch was delighted that their nomination of Margaret Mills had been successful and wanted to make a special occasion of this WEA Outstanding Tutor Award at their Annual Meeting in February 2019. Over 30 people applauded Margaret's contribution to learning and teaching, community engagement and the WEA. Margaret's classes



Jane Babbage (Latham) Education Coordinator presents local Billericay tutor, Margaret Mills with her Outstanding Tutor Award

are always popular scoring 10/10 regularly with requests for 'more'. Margaret amazes all with her ability to run a session with no notes, engaging everyone and always finding some snippet of information that no-one knew and cannot be easily found in a text book Billericay is proud of their local tutor and felt even more so when Jane Babbage, WEA Education Coordinator, agreed to attend the presentation.

"I am pleased you

nominated Margaret and I consider that what makes her so successful is not only her knowledge and enthusiasm for the subjects she teaches but also her teaching style. Margaret has an engaging personality which holds the attention of students. Margaret has clear objectives for each session and works to meet these each week. Also she has a strong rapport with the students and this builds good relationships that improve student engagement. I have also seen how much Margaret cares about people and often goes beyond her tutor role to make sure they are okay."

The photograph says it all!

Well Done, Margaret!

Denise Fielding, Chair

This article was held over from the last edition. Apologies. Ed

COLCHESTER BRANCH

6-week course

Music and Art

Tutor: Chris Green

ARTISTIC TAG TEAMS. PAINTING AND MUSIC: CAN THEY WORK TOGETHER?

Chris promised us a course taking "many twists and turns in linking music and art" – how right he was. His aim was to look afresh at works of art which have inspired composers, to discuss their reasons and to listen to some of the resulting music. Art would be considered in its widest sense; paintings, sculpture, architecture [Goethe's 'frozen music'], furniture, books etc. Starting with the Baroque, and Counter-Reformation Catholicism, Chris progressed through Rococo, Neo-Classicism, Romanticism and in to the early 20th century. Each evolved as a reaction to the previous style but, as Chris emphasised, these movements do not always match in art and music; whilst Neo-classicism, the apotheosis of the Enlightenment, arose partly in reaction to the 'excesses' of Baroque and Rococo, in music it mostly refers to a 20th century movement.

Chris always encourages input from members and it would be impossible, in a short report, to cover the many points of interest he raised. I will just pick out a few examples to give some idea of the range of subjects covered.



Above: A small section of the Isenheim Altarpiece.

Right: Paul Hindemith. His relationship with the Nazis was complex, but ultimately he moved to Switzerland, then in 1940 to the US - a necessary step as his wife had Jewish roots.

freedom in the repressive climate of his day but it mirrored Hindemith's own struggle with Nazism. The political message of the opera was clear and Hindemith was denounced by Goebbels in December 1934. Hindemith fled to Switzerland where the opera was premiered in 1938. Each movement is inspired by a different panel of the altarpiece.

Mathis der Maler and Hindemith
Our first in-depth consideration was the magnificent *Isenheim Altarpiece* by Matthias Grünewald, created c1515 for the Monastery of St Anthony in Alsace and now in the Musée d'Unterlinden in Colmar. When Germany took control of Alsace in 1870/71 the altarpiece came to represent the essential character of the German nation. Taken to Munich during WW1, it was only returned to Alsace when the region became French again.

The composer, Paul Hindemith, born in 1895 near Frankfurt, was interested in the Reformation and, almost 400 years after the altarpiece was painted, he composed a Symphony which he re-worked into his opera *Mathis der Maler* (*Matthias the Painter*), writing the libretto himself.

The opera concerns Mathis' struggle for artistic



Commedia dell'arte

This theatrical form dates to the 16th century although one character - Harlequin - has earlier origins. By the 17th century Commedia dell'arte actors were performing for the French court and Harlequinades became popular, the plots centring on complicated young love, with Pierrot in love with Columbine who loves Harlequin. Harlequinades reached London by the 18th century, in time becoming part of pantomimes, with Harlequin as a principal player. Another stock character, Pulcinella, became Punch, of Punch & Judy.

Commedia dell'arte has been a source of inspiration for artists in many fields; Watteau produced many paintings, there are frescoes by Tiepolo and paintings by Picasso & Klee, to name but a few. Maurice Sand, George Sand's son, published an extensive album of his drawings of these characters in 1860, many of which are now seen as definitive. Molière was heavily influenced by it and musical compositions are manifold; Busoni wrote an opera, *Arlecchino*, several characters in some Mozart operas, such as *The Marriage of Figaro*, have their roots in Commedia dell'arte and his orchestral piece, *Pantalon & Columbine* is still in the catalogue. Pierrot inspired many composers; e.g. Saint-Saëns, Schoenberg, and Debussy. The puppet in Stravinsky's *Petrushka* is known across Europe as Punch, Polchinelle and Pulcinella. Stravinsky's music included a dissonant chord which is known as the 'Petrushka' chord. Milhaud and Sibelius each wrote pieces entitled *Scaramouche* and Walton composed a comedy overture, *Scapino*.



Above: An eighteenth century Columbine.

Below: Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (son of the more famous Giovanni Battista) had a thing about Puncinella. This is one of many engravings that he produced on the subject.



Hogarth and Stravinsky, the Rake's Progress

Hogarth is probably best known for his early 1700s engravings of *The Harlot's Progress* and *The Rake's Progress*. They reflect the venality and folly of society while drawing an obvious moral. Stravinsky's operatic version of *The Rake's Progress*, based on Hogarth's engravings, with a libretto by W.H. Auden and

Chester Kallmann, was first performed

in Venice in 1951. There are earlier musical references in the score but Stravinsky has 'his own musical language of tonal and harmonic ambiguities'. It became a repertory staple in the late 1970s, precisely because of this strangeness. David

Hockney designed the sets for a 1975 production at Glyndebourne.

Above: Igor Stravinsky. Did he see the Rake's Progress as a critique of capitalism?

Left: The Rake. It isn't going to get better than this. Here from Part Three (of eight) of the Progress, we see him losing his watch - at the very least. Soon, his money and his sanity will be gone. In fact, the only thing he'll retain is the love of the young maid he discarded in Part One.



Walton, Rembrandt and Belshazzar's Feast

Rembrandt painted his magnificent *Belshazzar's Feast* c1635 aged 29. Depicted are the king and his guests drinking from sacred cups looted from the First Temple. They are shocked as a hand appears and writes on the wall, in Hebrew, Mene mene tekel u-parsin, (God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought it to an end).

Walton was commissioned by the BBC in 1929 to write a small work for choir, soloist and orchestra; Osbert Sitwell wrote a libretto for a cantata based on the biblical story. However, Walton struggled for a year, finally delivering an oratorio for an ensemble that was too big for the BBC. Independently premiered in Leeds in 1931, conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent, it was a huge public success, although shunned by some cathedrals.

Synaesthesia is a condition where one may 'hear' colour or 'see' sound and several artists and composers are known to have this sensory stimulus. Schoenberg was much influenced by his colour sense; in *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*, he used "a clavier à lumières, a keyboard 'instrument' which emitted light instead of sound" The term 'Visual music' [the translation of music to painting] was originally coined by the artist & critic Roger Fry to describe the artist Kandinsky's work. When Kandinsky



Above: Belshazzar's Feast. It came to the UK in 1736, having been bought by the Earl of Derby. Since 1964, it's been in the National Gallery.

Below: William Walton.



heard Schoenberg's music it changed his whole artistic theory and, influenced by Schoenberg, he began to represent sound by colour; for example, he felt that "Blue is for the cello, green is for violin". Matisse also thought that rich deep blue affected the viewer like "a vigorous stroke of a gong". Ligeti, the Hungarian composer, stated that, "Major chords are red or pink, minor chords are somewhere



between green and brown" and Scriabin associated musical notes and keys with colours with a system of fifths, based on Isaac

Un Dimanche à la Grande Jatte is in Chicago and so inaccessible to most of us. However, its close relative Baigneurs à Asnières (small section above) can be seen by all at the National Gallery. There's other Seurat work at the Courtauld Institute. Seurat executed about a dozen major works, so we have more than a fair share.

Newton's *Opticks*. Bliss wrote *A Colour Symphony* in four movements [Purple, Red, Blue and Green] although each movement was based on the symbolic meanings attached to certain colours, rather than depicting the colour itself.

Finally, a brief mention of extracts from Sondheim's wonderfully choreographed *Sunday in the Park with George*, inspired by Seurat's *Un dimanche à la Grande Jatte*; from Carl Davis' *A Simple Man* inspired by the life of L.S. Lowry and from an amazing ballet, with choreography by Maurice Béjart, set to Beethoven's *9th Symphony*.

I have always been interested in Art History but this course has opened my eyes to its multiple connections with music – connections which continue. I'm sure that anyone attending this wide-ranging and inspiring course will listen and look in an enhanced way thanks to our excellent tutor.

Stella Sommerlad

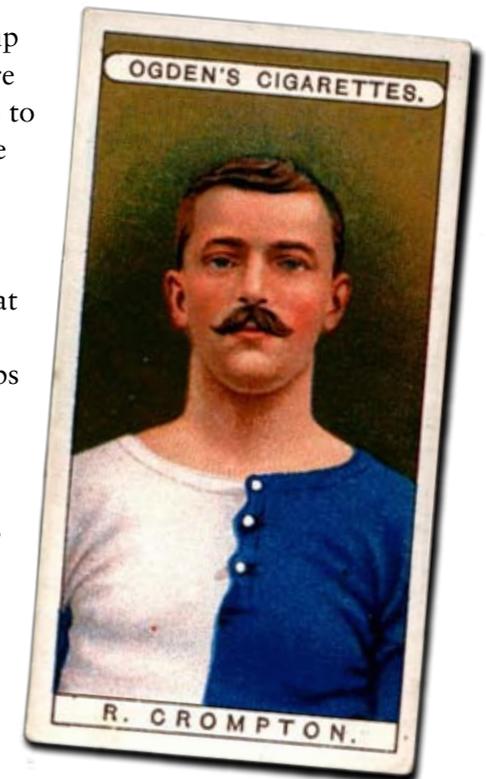
MERSEA BRANCH

Gods of Today
Tutor: Ben Pestell
6-Week Course

"Not only is there no God, but try finding a plumber on Sunday." WOODY ALLEN

Amongst those who turned up for Ben Pestell's course there was no shortage of ideas as to what were the gods of today. These ranged through celebs, footballers, the Royal family to money, mobile phones and technology.

First, however, we looked back at the gods of earlier days and asked why they had been needed - perhaps it was to explain the inexplicable. Almost all early peoples believed in a god of the sun, often driven across the sky in a chariot. Clearly, our ancestors were aware of the sun's importance and spent much time observing it. Newgrange in Ireland is older than the Pyramids, older than Stonehenge and is an example of how much its builders knew about astronomy. This structure must have taken many years, even generations, to build and must have involved



Gods of a kind maybe, but a footballer's deity can be chillingly brief. Who now knows that Bob Crompton held the most England caps (41) until 1952? Or that he captained Bolton to two league titles?

complicated calculations. Ben observed that our lives are less influenced by the sun and the moon these days, but we islanders disagreed. We are all very aware of the tide and even had to change the timing of one of our sessions to allow Ben to leave the island without getting his feet wet.

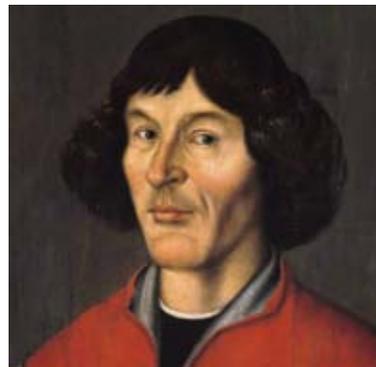


Remarkably, Newgrange predates the Great Pyramids of Ghiza and Stonehenge. Just as impressive, the central passage is aligned with sunrise at the Winter Solstice.

Over the succeeding weeks, we looked at many other gods and noted how often their stories were those of violence and of dysfunctional families. We saw the personification

of gods to express emotions or abstract ideas. Sometimes gods, for example Uranus, became less powerful as they were replaced by newer gods. We considered the gods of different societies and cultures and saw how stories passed from generation to generation. Many are still part of our everyday language, as in the names of days and months.

We learned about the gods as tricksters and as instruments of change, an example being how Prometheus stole fire from the gods, for which he was severely punished. While Ptolemy saw the earth as being at the centre of the universe, Copernicus and Galileo thought the centre should be the sun – heliocentric rather than geocentric. This was seen as heresy by the church.



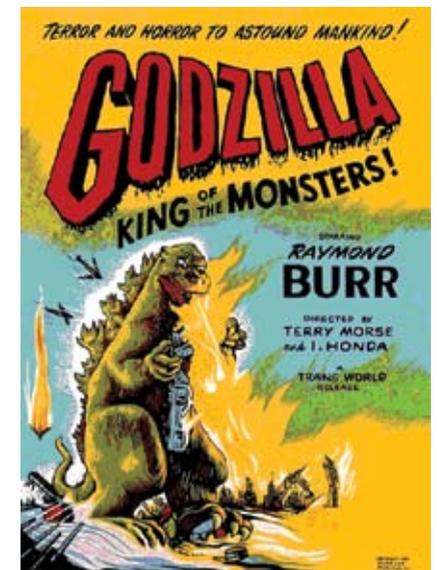
To describe Copernicus as a polymath is to underestimate him. Polyglot, he was a doctor of canon law, a mathematician, astronomer, physician, classicist, translator, governor, diplomat and economist. His calculations were key to establishing earth's heliocentricity, but - knowing how the church would view it - he withheld his treatise on the subject. Galileo built on his work and - unable to stay silent - faced the Inquisition.

Stories of the gods have always been a part of our heritage and feature throughout literature, philosophy and psychology. Christopher Marlowe has Dr. Faustus meet with Helen of Troy and, in *The Wind in the Willows* there is a wonderful account of a magical meeting with Pan. William Blake's *Urizen* has a frontispiece of *Urizen* as a mythological figure with a pair of dividers.

William Blake said that: "The ancient poets animated all sensible objects with gods.....Thus men forgot that all deities reside in the human heart." Descartes thought spiritual life was more in the mind. Voltaire said that if God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him.

Frankenstein and *Godzilla* represent modern myths. In many ways, it seems that all changes and nothing changes.

So, what about the gods of today? At one time, when we were discussing the subject of possession, a class member commented that we often say, "I don't know what possessed me" or, *He's not 'King of the Monsters', he's a very naughty boy.*



In the end, Ben was not arguing for the ephemeral preoccupations of social media, which we might think of as gods of today. His thesis was rather that the metaphysical and intangible forces, which our forefathers had characterised as deities, continue to influence our understanding of the psychological and philosophical aspects of our lives. Nearly all human beings wish to understand the world they live in, and so construct different theories to help them make sense of it.

This course made us think and certainly added to my vocabulary: I now know what an 'aetiological myth' is and can distinguish between, 'Pantheism' and 'Panentheism'.

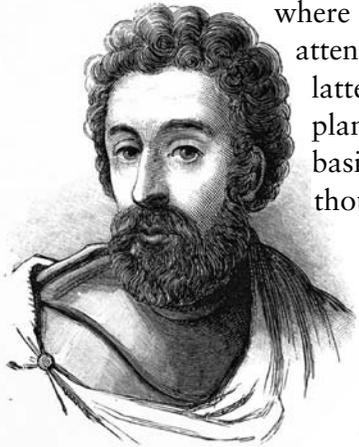
Hilary McMullen

History on Film
Tutor: James Clarke
10-Week Course

TALKIES AND PORKIES

'HISTORICAL' MOVIES AREN'T ALWAYS ACCURATE. WHO KNEW?

I have been on a number of WEA courses and have realised that they fall within two fairly distinct categories. There are those where I attend with a little background knowledge, and those where I am completely beyond my comfort zone and attend to explore a subject I know nothing about. The latter category has included courses on art, music, plants and gardens. The former usually has some basis in history, so, as a keen attender of cinema I thought I had pigeon-holed James' course. My preconceived idea was that this would be a chance to rubbish those films that re-write history. Pretty much anything by Mel Gibson comes to mind, the recent 'meeting' between Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots and the laughable Titanic all seem to blend contemporaneous interpretation



William Wallace. Probably in need of an image makeover, but was Mel Gibson the man to do it?

and the thoughts of a current writer and director. Shortly before the course started I had read an article by historian Michael Wood which basically said that those interested on history should accept that the cinema wasn't selling us documentaries, but entertainment and art. As a consequence, I wondered where James' views would lie.

The course was in fact much better than I had expected. I enjoy films but am ignorant about how they are conceived, written, produced and directed. I also knew nothing of the cinematographer's art, how the placing and angle of a camera can alter an interpretation of a scene and its pace, the accompanying

music and colouring can direct the mood of the audience. Overlay all of this with an appreciation of a director's motives and how previous films may have influenced them and I have found my knowledge of cinema has increased week by week.

James works hard to include the views and interpretations of his students. His knowledge of cinema is encyclopaedic and his resources include clips, whole films, articles, reviews and interviews. He has an extensive list of films he can use and has shown flexibility in changing his plans and introducing the group to films that have arisen in discussion. I have enjoyed my 'homework', that is, checking the film for the next week on YouTube, and seeing what previous critics might have said about it. It has enabled me to look at films that I would never have dreamed of seeking out and introduced me to some that are part of history, Battleship Potemkin being a highlight. Similarly, I have been introduced to films that I would have avoided in the past, for instance Marie Antoinette starring Kirsten Dunst, supposedly aimed at an audience of adolescent girls but with scene framing that looked as if it had been directed by Thomas Gainsborough.

We are just over half way through the course and I will be sad when it ends. One of the best recommendations I can give for James is that at the end of a session nobody wants to go home and the caretaker is champing at the bit. We have even abandoned a tea break to cram more in.

The course has made me realise that James could take any aspect of cinema and weave it into an in-depth course. I will be looking out for him in the WEA programme in the future.

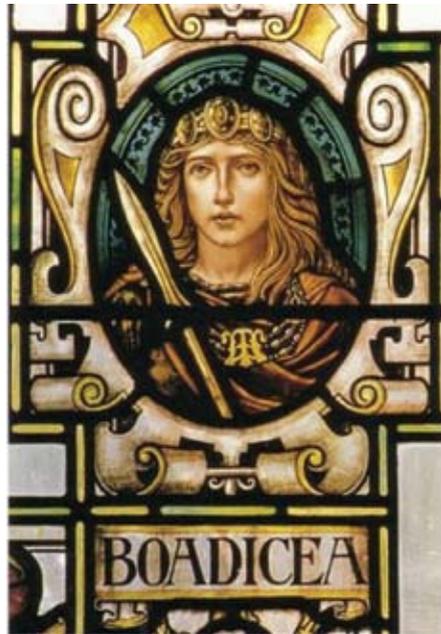
John Smith



Sergei Eisenstein and the original poster for his masterpiece Battleship Potemkin. His techniques have been widely imitated, not least, the 'Odessa Steps' sequence, which turns up in films as varied as De Palma's Untouchables and Woody Allen's Bananas.

Ten Britishers of Note
Tutor: Ed de Maunsell
10 Week Course

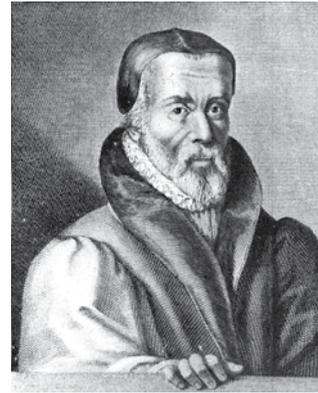
Ten names, some easily identifiable and well-known in relation to specific deeds and others more obscure. But how much did we really know about any of these individuals? Each week for 10 weeks Ed De Maunsell guided us and brought to life each personality by exploring the lives of these people all of whom have contributed to the evolution of Britain.



Boudica. There are no contemporary images. This Victorian guess is in Colchester's Moot Hall (part of the Town Hall).

Boudica, Queen of the Iceni people in East Anglia and famous for the uprising against the Romans in 60AD. But who was this person and why rebel against the Romans? There are only two written sources about her, one written in the second century and the other in the third century and each presents a different perspective. She had many roles, rebel, queen, warrior, widow, mother, woman. Initially her family had a good relationship with the Romans but when her husband died the Romans took over his properties, beat her and raped her two daughters. These acts triggered her rebellion.

William Tyndale (1494-1536). Who???? This gentleman was an English scholar who became a leading figure in the Protestant Reformation. He is credited with being the first person to translate the bible from Hebrew and Greek.



William Tyndale. His genius didn't save him from being burnt at the stake - although this may have been because he opposed Henry VIII's divorce. Ironically, a few years after Tyndale's death, Henry sanctioned several English-language bibles that drew extensively on Tyndale's.

Several military and political characters were explored including Oliver Cromwell, Horatio Nelson and Wellington.

Surely the ultimate working class hero must be Aneurin Bevan who, in 1948, introduced the NHS to Britain. It's an institution which is a vital part of all of our lives, but how many of the younger generation have even heard of him?

We looked at one other queen, Elizabeth I, who after 44 years on the throne still fascinates us and is shrouded in a certain degree of mystery although in theory her life is well documented.

Edward I, our greatest king, unified all four countries in the UK. He was militarily successful and a politician.

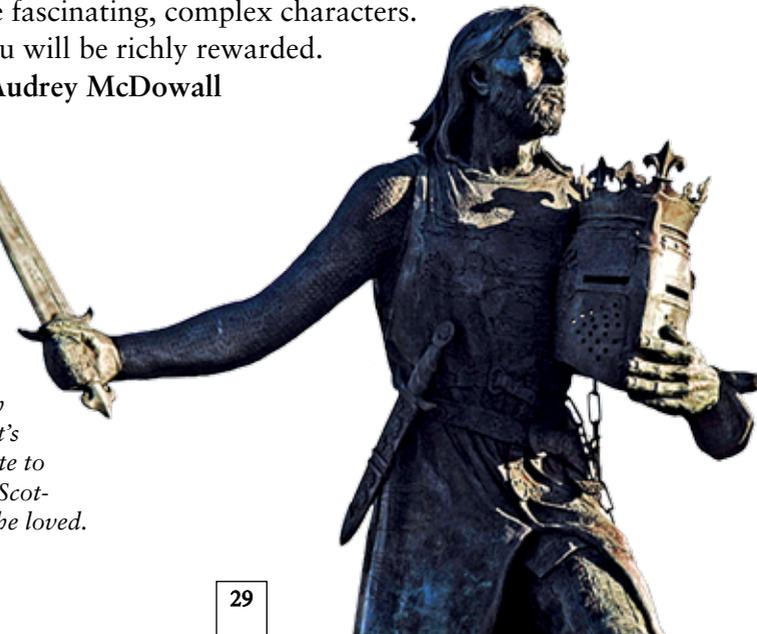
Last but not least we explored the lives of Winston Churchill, (was he a hero or a warmongering fanatic) and Margaret Thatcher.....?

If you are unable to attend this course at a future date please do investigate at least one or two of these fascinating, complex characters.

You will be richly rewarded.

Audrey McDowall

Edward 1, not as far from William Wallace (p26) as either would like. The two weren't close - not for nothing was Edward known as 'The Hammer of the Scots'. This statue of Edward is at Burgh in Cumbria. Burgh? It's where he died, en route to one of the England v Scotland grudge matches he loved.



**...Give me
your tired,
your poor,
Your
huddled
masses
yearning to
breathe
free...***

*** Terms & Conditions apply**

One of the most potent American icons, the Statue of Liberty was given to the US by France, to mark the Centenary of American independence. In the event, the statue wasn't positioned until 1886, partly due to the difficulty of raising funds (in the US) for the pedestal. There's a copy (quarter-sized) in Paris on the Île aux Cygnes, and others in various French cities. The idea was to recall France's alliance with the US during the Revolutionary War, but it hasn't always had the desired effect with the Americans.



It was a surprise to realise that only 200 years ago the western two-thirds of North America was still wild, sparsely populated and undeveloped. In her first lecture, Lucy outlined the groups of people who had travelled west in search of a new life. We then studied some historic maps of 'America'. Knowing little about American history, I was surprised by how far north the Spanish territory of Mexico once extended. In the centre, the territory of Louisiana was given to France, by Spain, when Napoleon was in power in 1800. It was subsequently sold to America, cheaply, in 1803 and was known as the Louisiana Purchase. Later lectures covered particular settler groups.



Few expeditions have been so mythologised as that of Lewis and Clark. Commissioned by Thomas Jefferson in 1803 to explore the land acquired by the Louisiana Purchase and to find a route to the Pacific, in both aspects their enterprise was seen as a success. As many historians have pointed out, their varied party (including a German, a Frenchman, an African American and several Native Americans - one the much-celebrated Shoshone woman, Sacagawea) represented the diverse nature of American society.

Above: Lewis & Clark in a parley with Native Americans.

In 1803, President Jefferson persuaded Congress to send an expedition to explore western North America. We traced the footsteps of the three-year expedition of Lewis and Clark. Then we studied the lives of the Mountain Men, Traders and Trappers from 1800 - 1840. They sent back stories of the rich land, west of the Rocky Mountains.

In 1845, the belief in New York was that Providence had given them the right to develop an experiment of liberty and government across the land, and that they had a 'Manifest Destiny' to possess the whole continent. In practical terms, that meant they needed to



The American thrust west usually evokes wagon trains. However, 'clipper ships', designed and built in Boston, were speedier and more reliable - they could make the round-the-cape trip between New York and San Francisco in as little as 100 days - a wagon train would be lucky to do it in five months. The fastest recorded passage was 89 days by Flying Cloud - notable for having a female navigator.

The transcontinental railroad killed the seaborne business almost overnight, but clippers - refined for even better speed and handling - continued to be built in Britain for the transport of wool and tea from Australia and China.

Many thanks to Lucy for such a fascinating, well-researched course.

Mary Roberts

populate these vast empty territories. We studied the Pioneers, many of whom had suffered in the 1837 economic crash in the Eastern States.

By structuring the course to focus on different groups of settlers this huge project was reduced to manageable sections. Among the groups of migrants, Lucy chose the miners of the Californian Goldrush (1848-74 in various locations in the Rockies). We then looked at the Mormons, whose early success created envy, so they became persecuted and moved several times, until they settled around the Salt Lake.

Another defined group were railwaymen, who followed their expanding tracks across challenging terrain until the two tracks were united, to form a trans- continental link. We looked at the issues facing the Homesteaders who took up offers of government land in the Great Plains. Then, the cattlemen who started from Texas as drovers before becoming ranchers.

By the end of the course we had an overall view of the development of early America.

Histories of the Home: Cultural Developments of Family, Homestead and Belonging.

Tutor: Bex Harper
9-Week course

HOMING IN ON.. HOME

When I started the course, I didn't realise how deep a study of the home could be. We were shown the different related subjects such as anthropology, history, health, environment, entertainment, sociology, economics, architecture and design, human geography, culinary studies, science and technology and division of labour. I am sure there will be more.

Each week we looked at and discussed some aspects of these subjects, starting with what we imagined a home to be and how it can vary culturally with the passing of time.



As we all know, what homes need is STUFF. These 1950s ads reinforced that vital message.

A feeling of 'home' can also apply to your town, nation, or even a continent and one week we were looking at American settlers and the Empire and how the British tried to make a home in India. Increasing globalisation and mobility may affect a sense of belonging and families are sometimes apart for economic reasons.

Quite often, children can be a help with feeling part of a community for incomers through schools and activities.

Technological advances have removed a lot of the drudgery from running a home, thus freeing up time for other things.

Wendy Johnson

From Billericay to Venice
The Reading Room

WHERE BILLERICAY MEETS VENICE

You're never off duty!

WEA Volunteers and Branch Officers will understand when I say that you feel responsible even when you are on holiday! No doubt you have a checklist and are always seeking a new course and tutor.

Billericay WEA holds its courses in a historic building – The Reading Rooms on our High Street. A detour in Venice as the flood siren went led to a surprise - The Reading Room in Venice! There was much action outside the building encouraging participation.

This struck a chord with the WEA – Reaching out to Adults!

I sent this photograph (*below*) and emailed the Billericay WEA Committee advising them that I was thinking of starting a Venice branch. I received a number of 'I'll be on that Committee' responses!

We're not in Venice but this article is a chance to say a public 'thank you' to the Trustees and Volunteers of Billericay's Reading Rooms. They have been supportive and helped to promote the WEA and local adult learning. The success of the Billericay Branch is in part thanks to them and having such a facility – The Reading Rooms - in our High Street.

Denise Fielding
Chair of Billericay WEA



Reading Room pic: Denise Fielding



Apart from the Reading Room, Venice has quite a lot to offer. Previous page: San Giorgio Maggiore from the main island. This page: A gondola park; One of the lion statues outside the Arsenale. This one is of Greek origin and was brought to Venice in 1694 as loot by Venetian soldiers who had conquered Athens.



BOOK REVIEW

The Trianon Enigma by Chris Green

£10.00 130 pages

The *Trianon Enigma* is a splendid and unusual book about musicians, by musicians, but not only for musicians. It tells the enduring and endearing life-story of an exceptional amateur music group, at its sixtieth anniversary.

The material is precise, sometimes surprising, continually intriguing and has been skilfully assembled and edited with many photographs, making for a gentle and diverting read. Big events in the wider world occasionally intrude, providing anchorage in time to this life-long story of success. Yet there's also a clear sense of continued struggle. It's a very human history.

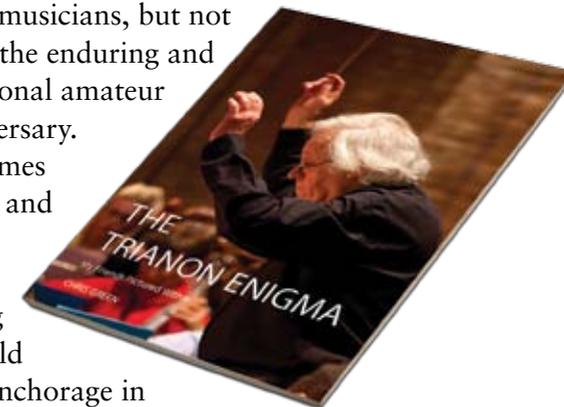
Chris Green writes with quixotic humour and a compelling charm, while many other Trianon members add brief contributions including professionals like Malcolm Arnold, Imogen Holst and John Rutter, giving glimpses of the hard work behind Trianon's success. There are details about the origin and ambitious evolution of this talented and close-knit community which, in my view, isn't sufficiently recognised for the quality and impact of its work.

For an amateur music group, the influence of Trianon has gone unusually far afield, crossing national boundaries and into the professional music sphere. It has consistently been a seed-bed for new musical talent, through young members who have gone on to professional musical careers.

Why isn't this gem of an amateur music group far more widely known? Most other countries would surely include Trianon on their list of national treasures. That's why the book's title is so spot on.
Alwyn Lewis

Publisher: Diatom

ISBN: 9780957089211



OBITUARY

Jill Frostick
 Secretary – WEA Ardleigh Branch
 1932 - 29th December 2019
 Aged 87

Jill died at the end of December after suffering a series of small strokes over the previous year. She had been Secretary of the Ardleigh Branch of the WEA for many years - I believe from the mid 1990s - but had been going along to WEA meetings for a long time before that. She was a member of the Essex WEA Federation for a number of years.

Jill was a keen WEA member and spent much time making sure the Branch continued and persuading people to attend.

Jill was born at Grove House, Great Bromley and that is where she died. Other than two years after she married in 1955 she lived the rest of her life there. She was very much a part of Great Bromley, always involved in village activities. She was a mainstay of the WI and was also a member of many Societies, including the Stour Valley Antiquarian Society, Essex Handicrafts Association, the National Trust and several others, including helping at Brownie Camps, being on the local School PTA and helping with Meals on Wheels.

Jill had many skills, gardening being one of her main loves, but she also loved cooking - there were always home-made cakes if you popped into Grove House - Flower Arranging, Handicraft, Tennis, Swimming and numerous other activities. She loved singing, being part of the St Botolph Music Society, the Leigh Singers in Ardleigh and the Great Bromley Church Choir. She was also well-read and knew a lot of poetry by heart. She was well travelled, having visited most parts of the world.

Her funeral took place in a packed Great Bromley Church on 9th January 2020 and she was buried with her late husband Charles at Little Bromley Church.

She will be greatly missed by all of us in our local community.

John Terry (Chairman Ardleigh WEA)

WEA SUMMER WALKS 2020		RETAIN THIS PART FOR YOUR RECORDS		DETACH THIS SLIP	
Date	Venue	Your record of booking	Detail	BOOKING SLIP	
Tuesday 7th April	Sudbury		<i>From wool to silk, to brick making, agriculture and even a very industrious artist! Meet at Gainsborough's statue at 10.30am. Cost £6</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gt Bardfield
Weds 13th May	Harwich		<i>Mayflower 400! – walk round this historic town including Christopher Jones' house, the ancient Treadmill (1667). Optional visit to the Redoubt in the afternoon. Meet at the Ha'penny Pier at 10.30am. Cost £6</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mersea Island
Tuesday 2nd June	Colchester		<i>Converted Buildings of Colchester . A cinema that was a post office, a pub that was a theatre and a theatre that was a chapel + many more. Meet at the War Memorial at 10.30am. Cost £6</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thaxted
Weds 10th June	Great Bardfield		<i>Discover where the Bardfield artist community lived and worked. Meet at the Town Hall (next to the Bell Pub) at 10.30am. Cost £6</i>		
Thursday 9th July	Mersea Island		<i>Visit the Roman Burial Mound, the Museum and walk along the coastal road to the very west of the Island. Meet at the Roman Barrow (on East Mersea Rd) at 10.30am. Cost £6</i>		
Tuesday 1st Sept	Thaxted		<i>"There is no town in North Essex (and very few in England) to equal in beauty, compactness and juxtaposition of medieval and Georgian architecture." (John Betjeman). Meet at the Guildhall at 10.30am. Cost £6</i>		


 Name(s):

 Email:
 Phone No:

Places are limited on each walk and **MUST** be booked.
 Walks usually last 1½ - 2 hrs. Sensible footwear is recommended.
 Please indicate number of places for each walk

Please detach and return the completed slip with a cheque (payable to WEA Essex Federation) to: 23 Highfield Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 2NF

ESSEX FEDERATION EVENTS 2020

SPRING ONE DAY SCHOOLS:

Feering Community Centre Saturday 25th April 10.45 – 3.30 pm
Angelika Kauffman and Dora Maar – Tutor: Sue Pownall
Beethoven – Tutor: Chris Green
Colonial America – Tutor: Ian Chambers

SUMMER SCHOOLS:

Chelmsford – Monday & Tuesday 15th & 16th June 10.15 – 4.15 pm
Central Baptist Church, Victoria Road, Chelmsford
The Anglo-Saxons – Tutor: Michael Bloomfield
The History of the Marconi Company – Tutor: Tim Wander

Colchester – Tuesday & Wednesday 23rd & 24th June 10.15 – 4.15 pm
Castle Methodist Church, Maidenburgh Street, Colchester, CO1 1TT
Troy: Myth, Image and Reality
– Tutor: Professor Edith Hall, Kings College, London
Climate Change: The Science and the Politics
– Tutor and title: still to be confirmed

AUTUMN ONE DAY SCHOOLS:

Feering Community Centre: Saturday 21st November 10.45 – 3.30 pm
The Changing Role of Plant Hunters – Tutor: Andrew Sankey
Volcanoes – Tutor: Charles Lewis
Wordsworth 150 – Tutor: Ron Marks (t.b.c.)

Rising costs mean that we have had to increase the One Day School fee from £14.00 to £17.50. The Summer School fee is £45.00

The News Sheet is mainly a record of completed courses, partly to give readers an idea of what they might like.

We also welcome essays from members on subjects they think will be of interest to others.



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