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Workers' Educational Association

**EF NEWS SHEET
SPRING
2015**

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Wednesday 11th February 2015 – 8.45 p.m. As I found time – at last – to settle down to start to compose these notes, the blank piece of paper that was my mind had finally found the ‘hook’ on which to hang a few thoughts and with which to make a few connections. I had just been listening to Radio Four’s ‘The Moral Maze’. “Is there a crisis of moral leadership in Britain's Muslim community?” was the question posed, at a very difficult time, in response to Prince Charles’s remarks expressing alarm about the ‘radicalisation’ of a number of young British Muslims. In the words of the BBC’s notes for the programme: “Where are the powerful [Muslim] leaders, stepping on to the national stage to address these problems and point to solutions?... Are the leaders there, but finding their voices are being drowned out by an unrelentingly hostile press?... Is there something more fundamental....or are the majority paying an unfair price for the distortion of their faith by the radicalised few?”

“Stepping onto the national stage” to face examination by Michael Buerk’s team came the first witness, speaking from Ipswich: Muhammad Manwar Ali. Of the four witnesses, he was in my view easily the most impressive, and it seemed that Buerk and his panel thought so too. As many of our readers will know, as well as running his own organisation* for the better understanding of Islam, Manwar is a regular WEA Tutor in the Eastern Region. His first appearance for the Essex WEA was at a Federation Day School in Autumn 2008 taking part in our ‘Three Faiths Symposium’ with Arthur Rowe and the ebullient Rabbi Daniela Thau. Since then he has taught a number of branch classes in Essex. He delivered a Taster session last year and is currently running a class in Coggeshall with 25 people attending, the membership swelling after the first few afternoons. The Secretary, Nancy Powell-Davies, told me that the broadcast, which a couple of members had heard, was the initial focus of discussion at the next session. People attending have commented on his openness and readiness to be genuinely critical in tackling the most difficult questions that arise in connection with his faith. In the Centenary Spring 2013 edition of EF NEWS Gill Poole of West Bergholt wrote: “Manwar made this a very enlightening, thought provoking and enjoyable course for all of us who attended and we felt we really had moved forward

in our knowledge and understanding of Islam,” and in the Spring 2014 edition Don Warne of Mersea Branch asserted that “Manwar’s lectures should be an essential part of the education of us all.”

“The education of us all” – what in essence the WEA is about. As Ruth Spellman, our General Secretary, put it at the 2014 Essex Federation AGM on 11th October: “We Educate Adults”. She reminded us that while 75% of educational money was going to the under 19 age group, all the research showed that most learning took place during the rest of life. Hence the importance of adult educators in enabling all adults to have that access. “We Educate Adults”. The retention of our title ‘The Workers’ Educational Association’ reflects our pride in our origins and our history of opening up education at all levels to those who had lost out in childhood, something that our Community work still does. But as Ruth said, what is it that we actually do? ‘We Educate Adults’: all adults who want to learn, whatever the skill or subject, in a social setting: all of us who, whatever the level of educational achievement already attained, and whatever our ‘class’, are engaged in the perennial quest for still greater knowledge and understanding to maintain our mental alertness and physical health and to improve the quality of our lives.

Ron Marks.

***JIMAS /<http://www.jimas.org/manwar.htm/>**

COLCHESTER BRANCH

Our Debt to Greece

Tutor: Arthur Brown (given in 1978)

I attended my first WEA Class on 18th September 1978, on a 21 meetings course, starting at 10am on Mondays, in Prettygate Library. The title of the course was “Our Debt to Greece” given by Arthur Brown. We had the first session in the Library, but all subsequent sessions were held at Arthur Brown’s house, an old cottage in Lexden Road and we sat squashed in the conservatory on a selection of chairs brought in from around the house.

Arthur used to leave the front door ajar and as it got to 10am, the door was closed. Inevitably, after about 10 minutes the door bell would ring and Miss S would be standing there, waiting to be admitted. She was a tiny “old” lady, bundled up in a thick coat, scarf, and gloves with thick stockings over thin bandaged legs. She would want to sit on the front row, which meant other people shuffling round and changing seats. After not many minutes she would appear to be asleep, but at the end of the class always asked an intelligent question, proving that she had been listening all the time. She would then ask if someone could give her a lift home and sail out, looking frail and vulnerable.

There were no visual aids, except textbooks, no coffee break and Arthur’s talks were spell-binding, informative and very enjoyable. So much so, that he was persuaded to continue the following year with “Roman Civilisation”, which was just as enjoyable and still held, after the first session again, in his conservatory.

This was my introduction to Ancient History and the joys of the WEA.

Jean Roberts

[Ed. This could easily have been called “Our debt to Arthur Brown”]

WRITTLE BRANCH

Effect of Climate Change on Human Evolution

Tutor: Fred Boot

We were delighted to have another course from Fred Boot. He made it clear from the start that this story was changing extremely quickly. Archaeological finds and research add to the evidence every year and scientific techniques are increasingly sophisticated, so books which are only five years old often contain information which is out of date.

Hominid species have been evolving for five million years and Fred discussed the several different hominids now known from excavations and the dates at which they appeared. We learnt about the characteristics which differentiate hominids from apes and then covered the journey our ancestors made out of Africa.

During each period of glaciation much of the planet's water was locked up in ice and as sea levels dropped it would shorten the sea crossing at points such as the southern end of the Red Sea. So over many generations it would have been possible to follow the coastal strip, 'the beachcomber route', to India and round to the Malay Peninsula and on to China. Alternatively, by going up the Red Sea coast and through the Fertile Crescent, other groups could have spread through Turkey and north, through Europe, up the Danube. Fred talked about the remains of early man discovered in Britain especially at Boxgrove, Pakefield, Grimes Graves and Happisburgh. Alternating warm and cold spells drove early man back out of Britain for thousands of years.

Half way through the course we studied the emergence of Homo sapiens, 90,000 years ago, and his spread out of Africa across the continents. The session on the scientific dating techniques was fascinating. Then we covered the insights which have come from work done by analysing mutations in DNA, both mitochondrial DNA and that on the short Y chromosome. It can show, for example, that the Polynesians of today originated in China, not as Thor Heyerdahl believed, from the Americas. We finished with the effects that population growth and technological advances may make to the natural cycles of climate change which have been occurring over millennia.

Very many thanks Fred for a stimulating and challenging course.

Mary Roberts

The Mediterranean Classical World

Tutor: Edward de Maunsel

Early in the course, Ed posed the question as to whether the Mediterranean was the cradle of Western Civilisation. We looked primarily at the development of the Greek and Roman civilisations, including their expansion into Egypt, Byzantium, the Holy Land and North Africa.

The course provided an “overview” of the immense contribution of these civilisations to the development of primarily architecture, language, literature, science and medicine, and law. We came to the conclusion that the answer to the question was “probably yes”.

Particular items of study included the seven wonders of the ancient world, the role of the 12 Olympian gods and their “taking over” by the Romans, and the conquest and settlement of much of Western Europe, the Levant and North Africa, firstly by the Greeks and then the Romans. Using photos and experience from his own visits to Europe and Israel, Ed clearly demonstrated the development of early western civilisation and its achievements. The course whetted our appetite for further research and possibly trying to visit some of these very important sites which contributed so much to western civilisation as we know it today.

Chris Dille

The History and Development of Railways

Tutor: Steven Worsley

We welcomed Steve back for his third course in Writtle. The story of the development of the railways and the impetus it gave to economic change in 19th century Britain was fascinating.

It followed on logically from our study of canal development because the skilled workers moved on from the navigation canals to build the new railways. It partly explained how the system developed so quickly over the next two generations.

One session was spent on the financing of the separate early enterprises which resulted in Parliament being inundated in 1845 by Bills to purchase land for a particular route. We learnt about the unfortunate death of Liverpool’s MP on the opening day of the Liverpool to Manchester line. The speed at which goods could travel by train meant the canal trade would decline. Heavy goods like coal could be transported easily and

production figures rose from 6 million tons in 1770, to 32M in 1836, 64M in 1864 and 242M in 1905. The railways expected to carry freight and carrying passengers was an unexpected 'sideline' in the early days. Rail travel proved so popular that the last mail coach from London to Norwich ran in 1846.

Steve's amazing collection of slides illustrated the changes in design of the locomotives from Trevithick and Watt through to today's high speed Eurostar.

One session was devoted to railways in Essex and the architecture needed to cross the various estuaries along the coast. We had an interesting session on bridges.

The impact on Victorian society was massive. 'Local time' disappeared as a timetable needed standardisation and 'Railway Time' came in nationally. Building materials could travel, so terrace houses anywhere could have slate roofs. Perishable goods could travel, transforming the diet of city dwellers and the income of rural farmers and fishermen. Information spread as the London daily papers could be in the northern cities before breakfast and the Post Office had sorting vans on trains by 1838. The idea of a trip to the seaside, or even a holiday became increasingly a reality. Certain centres developed as 'railway towns', like Crewe and Swindon. Men tended to work on the railway for life and, since it could be hazardous, the railways had orphanages. They needed engineers so they promoted the Mechanics Institutes. They ran Banks and football teams ... the list went on and on. Railways permeated the lives of everyone.

Areas of inner London were cleared of slum housing and cheap tickets were available for commuters from the newly built suburbs.

Amalgamations occurred over time as the network spread, and then contracted in the 1930's. We looked at the factors influencing the decisions made by Lord Beeching.

Steve also covered the contribution of the railway during World War 1, carrying troops and ammunition. He also touched on the unifying effect of railways in countries like Belgium and Germany and the challenges faced by the networks built in the United States.

It was a comprehensive and interesting course and we thoroughly enjoyed it.

Mary Roberts

BILLERICAY BRANCH

An Introduction to Family History

Tutor: Margaret Mills

I came to this course thinking it would be a rather dry account of how to use the various sources to find your family history. How wrong could I be? Margaret with her passion for history made these sources come alive. One of the first examples of this was the Census; started after the Act in 1800 the 1801 census only had three questions 1. How many male or females reside there? 2. Occupations (a) Agriculture (b) trade, manufacturing or hand crafts or any other? And 3. How many houses were occupied or unoccupied? Margaret pointed out the Overseer had a big responsibility as quite a lot of the population could not read or write. The history of the census made an interesting background through the years to the 1911 Census which is of course much more family history friendly. Another fascinating piece of information was the fact that in looking through the census for information about a relative, you might find he or they were inmates of the work house. So, Margaret made us all rethink and that these workhouse records could be a new source and wealth of information: date of birth, marital status, and your ancestor's home parish, how long they were in receipt of poor relief, the usual trade or profession and any medical conditions. Dickens was conjured up in Billericay when we were told St Andrew's Hospital was formerly a workhouse and some of the records, including Minutes of the Guardians' meetings can be read at the Essex Record Office.

On the practical front, Margaret supplied many web sites not only for beginners like me but also information for those members who were already very involved with their family history. As the course progressed, because of Margaret's accessibility and real interest in the subject, members felt free to ask questions and to share any information they had found. We were all encouraged to speak of our successful searches and to seek advice if the history trail had ground to a halt. Margaret and others were intrigued when one of the class members presented the deeds for their house - a different source of information and intrigue!

In fact, the last meeting was very animated with people who had been strangers 8 weeks previously swapping stories during the tea break and a

group of us encouraged by the tutor getting together to go to the Essex Records Office.

Hopefully by this time next year I will know if my Granddad really did have to leave his village because of poaching or was this just another of his tales to keep the grandchildren quiet.

Pat Ashbolt

WEST MERSEA BRANCH

Great Film Scores

Tutor: Emeritus Professor Chris Green

The course aim was to trace the development of the role of music in the cinema from silent film to the current day. Few of us in the group could have anticipated what a wide-ranging, fascinating and enjoyable journey this would be. Chris Green was the perfect guide, not only musically expert but also with a passion for cinema. We were guided through a range of topics relating to the history of film and the part that music played, covering such diverse areas as the musical transition from the silent cinema to 'talkies', Russian cinema, music for the documentary, the process of writing for the screen, cartoon films, the film musical and of course the work of the many composers themselves from Max Steiner and the emigres to the US studios to William Walton and Vaughan Williams in this country and on to the new generation of composers such as John Williams and Ennio Morricone. All this was punctuated with film clips and music extracts which added greatly to our enjoyment and appreciation of the subject. In addition, each week we were treated to a short presentation from 'volunteers' in the group on their favourite piece of film music. Definitely one of those courses that instructs, entertains and leaves you wanting more. And to round it off our 'Field Trip' is to be a concert in January 2015, at the Ipswich Corn Exchange, by the Trianon Music Group, and conducted by Professor Green himself entitled 'Trianon at the Movies'. Can't wait!

Val Hope

FRINTON BRANCH

After threats of branch closure, the new academic year began with changes to Frinton's long-standing committee. Gladys Rouse retired as chairman after eight years at the helm and was replaced by Katie Andrews, who also took over as Branch Secretary. Susan Imhofe was appointed Treasurer in place of Beryl Dartnall (Beryl, our longest-serving committee member, had also served for many years as Treasurer of the Essex Federation until arthritis forced her retirement some years ago). Fortunately for the workings of the Frinton Branch, Valerie Holmes remains on the committee but has moved from the dual posts of Branch and Class Secretary to become Librarian while Maggie Sandell has taken over as Class Secretary. The only person not to have moved is our experienced Publicity Officer, Ian Mandrell, who continues to produce our very professional posters and leaflets and to circulate past learners with news of forthcoming courses. Numbers of registered learners in the September term were about our average: 23.

We were delighted to welcome back Roger Mannion, who had previously been to Frinton to talk about Railways. This time he steered us through the history of England as it relates to the Tower of London. Conceived by William the Conqueror as a symbol of power and as a fortification to keep out hostile Saxon Londoners, the Tower was also used as a royal palace until negative associations with Henry VIII's regime persuaded royalty to move out. Over the centuries the buildings have had a variety of uses, including royal mint, menagerie, government record office, armoury and weapons store, and prison. The Hanoverians promoted the Tower's role as a tourist trap, putting the crown jewels and regalia on display to the paying public. Then the gothic revival movement and the Victorians' passion for altering old buildings to match their view of how medieval England would/should have looked led to some of the original structures being rebuilt or demolished. Now they are protected by the charity Historic Royal Palaces and by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. Over the course of the term we covered such perennial topics as Magna Carta (pro-barons or pro-people?). Richard III (monster or miserable loser?), Anne Boleyn (victim or harlot?), Oliver Cromwell (protector power-hungry dictator?), And the Kray brothers (villains – no question mark here).

This whistle-stop tour of some of the events and personalities that have shaped modern England was an excellent way of refreshing possibly rusty memories of school history lessons.

Katie Andrews

COLCHESTER BRANCH

Choral works that changed the musical world

Tutor: Chris Green

The brochure of the Colchester branch offered no less than 16 ten-week courses in the autumn of 2014, on a wide range of topics, so we were spoilt for choice – but those of us who attended Chris Green’s course were more than happy with the choice that we had made. Each of the ten sessions was hugely enjoyable and informative.

The tutor talked about a range of different choral works, from the familiar such as Handel’s Messiah and Elgar’s Dream of Gerontius to the less familiar such as Durufle’s Requiem and The Bells by Rachmaninov; from the old, such as Monteverdi’s Vespers, to the contemporary such as Karl Jenkins’ The Armed Man. In each case he played us excerpts from his CDs. He showed a real depth of knowledge of his subject, not least because he is a very experienced conductor and has conducted many of the works discussed. As well as talking about the music itself, he described the social and cultural context in which each of the works was composed, and he went on to show the ways in which they influenced later composers. Two unexpected details: he gave us pieces of fact-finding homework each week, and members of the class were invited to prepare and give five-minute talks on their chosen choral works.

Our appreciation of the selected choral works was greatly enhanced, and this was the case with the more familiar works as well as the lesser-known ones. Thank you, Chris, for a truly excellent course.

Colin Hetherington

TIPTREE BRANCH

“Voice to the People– Students find their Voice!”

Tutor: Bill Tamblyn

Our report is about the last session of Bill Tamblyn’s excellent course entitled. ‘A Voice to the People.’ We had listened intently to Bill’s selection of traditional music from the 1960’s through to the present day. Some of the famous singers and groups we recognised, but there was always an unfamiliar tune, song or singer to grab our attention. Throughout the course Bill was always asking the question. *Is traditional music a voice to the people, of the people or for the people?* In other words is it taking the moral high ground, is it authentic or is it entertainment. For our last session Bill was keen that we find *our voice* and we certainly did. We had 7 students on the course who were new to Tiptree (most new to WEA) all of whom had come because of an interest in traditional music. Most pleasing was that as well as regular members, every one of the newcomers was happy to participate. Afterwards I asked each of them to e-mail me with a resume of their contribution.

Dave replied:” I think you know how much I enjoyed the course with Bill, and I’d like to thank Tiptree WEA for organising the whole course so well. I felt welcome and among friends from the very first moment. It was a pleasure to give back a little, by sharing some music. I played a Tabor Pipe, which is basically a whistle with three holes instead of six. Higher notes are achieved by blowing slightly harder, in four stages, to get a range of about twelve notes (just over an octave). It is normally played with the left hand, and the right hand plays a small drum which hangs from the left elbow. Sometimes the right hand holds a pint of beer instead!”

The song was “The Sheepstealer” which Martin Carthy sings beautifully. There was a sheep stole from the marsh and Marcus was the sinner; He stole the sheep on a Saturday night for Sunday for his dinner. So good a cook he had—she was so good and clever For a very good pie he should have had if she's only got the liver.

On her recorder Kathy played two Christmas carols from the Appalachian Mountains in America, ‘I Wonder as I Wander’ and ‘Jesus, Jesus Rest Your Head.’ They were collected by John Jacob Niles in the 1930's. She

also played a recording of a traditional American carol called ‘Children, Go Where I Send Thee.’ In Kathy’s e mail she said:” I really enjoyed Bill’s course and particularly the last class when we all shared. I went to Bill’s Quire concert on Friday night in Lexden. It was an interesting and enjoyable selection of songs and poems throughout the seasons and included a number of Christmas carols from Europe and America. “

Beverley and Ray brought in a hammered dulcimer which Bill had mentioned a lot during the course, saying that it was used in Norfolk folk music. Realising that there was one in the family they journeyed to Norfolk to borrow it; many students were intrigued after Bill demonstrated it to the class and gave us a short performance (after he had managed to tune it!)

Bev explained:” As Ray and I are both incapable of giving any sort of musical performance, we decided our contribution would be some Sabahan folk music, from a tape selection which we had acquired while resident there in the 1970’s. Sabah, (Malaysia) is a multi-cultural society with many native tribes, plus Malays, Indians, and Chinese peoples. We had started Malay classes, alongside a group of other ex-pats; and had a tutor who (having failed to teach us much Malay!) decided that he would give us information about local customs, culture, and history. “

Ray and Bev had set up a display of maps, posters, and artefacts which they had acquired whilst living in Sabah. On display were some native instruments, including a SOMPOTON, a wind instrument made of a gourd and bamboo pipes – played by blowing down the pipes (Bill was happy to have a go.) The tape included music played on this instrument, and also on 2 other native instruments, a BUNGKAU (Jews harp) and a TURALI (a nose flute). Native singers were heard performing several songs, including a rendition of ‘O my darling Clementine’ in Malay (or an approximation of it!). The tape ended with some rousing dance music. Bev concluded,: ”It brought back many memories of interesting experiences we had there; and, we hope, demonstrated the breadth of folk music across so many cultures. “

This was Tom’s response” “ I was pleased to take part in our last session; and, I very much enjoyed all the other contributions. The two songs I performed were designed to address the issue of “authenticity” which Bill had emphasised during the course. ‘High Germany’” dates from the Wars of the Spanish Succession, in particular the Battle of Blenheim (1704).

There are a number of variations of this song but the one I use was first published as a broadside ballad in 1780. The practice of soldiers taking wives/girlfriends/mistresses to war with them was quite commonplace in those days. It is very much regarded as a traditional folk song. The second song, 'William Coffey' is the story of an Irishman who enlisted in the British army and fought in the Crimea. He was one of the first ever soldiers to be awarded the Victoria Cross. He continued as a soldier and retired as a sergeant but later died in poverty and was buried in a pauper's grave in Chesterfield. However, that song was not written until 1969 and might be regarded as contemporary rather than traditional. My point is that both songs are equally authentic, each coming from a time and a place and, crucially, telling a story. My third song, 'As a Child,' is a light-hearted recollection of my own childhood but equally authentic insofar as it provides a social commentary on inner-city life during the post-war years and beyond." Tom accompanied himself on guitar. He also brought in an Appalachian dulcimer - a melody string with drones and plucked not hammered. This was simply to allow comparison with its European cousin, the hammered dulcimer (brought in by Ray and Bev) It is larger and much more complex in operation. In his e mail Tom said I enjoyed the whole course immensely and was made to feel very welcome by you and the other regulars. Tom travelled in from Southminster and enjoyed a breakfast at the local cafe before each session of the course!

The next contribution organised by Cyndy came under the guise of *a voice to the people* and could be viewed as a political comment, but the song delivered with gusto by our contingent of ex health care workers was certainly an amusing interlude. Cyndy explained that "The Nurses Song" to the tune of The British Grenadiers originates from the early 1960's when at Christmas the nurses would put on a concert for staff and patients in the hospital. It's a satirical and amusing look at the story of hospital life when Matron was 'top of the tree' and the cadet at the bottom and everyone there knew their place.

Janet explained that the CD she played was an attempt to give us a glimpse of what we might find if we went either to a session at a folk club, with 'ordinary' members providing the music or to a concert at a folk festival, with better known soloists brought in to perform (always with lots of joining in.) Janet played some of her favourites, including songs by

Norma Waterson and Eliza Carthy (who are mother and daughter), and Roy Bailey. These were mostly from Towersey Festival in Oxfordshire.

Denise and Bob delighted us with a rendition of a song 'Our Ship She Lays in Harbour' with two part harmony and a refrain in each verse so that course members could join in. They explained that the song was collected in Sussex in the 19th Century. Denise also performed a step clog dance 'Old Lancs' from the repertoire of the late Pat Tracey who lived in Great Braxted. In his e mail Bob described how Len Goodman of 'Strictly' Fame had attempted the same dance, not very successfully, in a television programme a couple of nights before our performance.

Bob accompanied Denise on a Hohner melodeon (rather like a harmonica) He explained that It gives a different note when you push or pull the bellows. The melodeon I used plays in the keys of G or D mainly with half the buttons for each. It being near Christmas, we chose to use Good King Wenceslas as the tune.

Our chairman Rita and husband Ash (also a newcomer and an ardent Folk fan) brought in two jig dolls and demonstrated their use. These dancing dolls, carved from wood, are usually between 8 and 12 inches in height. They are generally 3 dimensional and jointed so that they give the appearance of dancing. To operate the doll a board is placed with one broad section on any flat surface on which the operator sits, thus holding the board steady. The other end of the board and most of the narrow middle section, projects over the edge of the surface. The operator holds the end of the rod which is firmly fixed in the dolls back and dangles the doll over the broad end of the board. The operator beats rhythmically on the narrow section of the board thus causing the board to vibrate and the doll to dance. Variations in striking the board and the movements of the hand contribute to the variety of steps which the doll can make.



The history of jig or dancing dolls is long and complicated, but many performers in the traditional folk genre use these dolls rather like a percussion instrument. But the complexity of the rhythms which can be achieved and their visual impact make jig dolls an exciting and interesting accompaniment to any folk song and dance gathering.

On behalf of everyone at Tiptree Branch, I would like to thank Bill for generating our enthusiasm and to all the contributors to the wonderful finale of our Autumn Course. We concluded with the usual Christmas buffet so that all could socialise and peruse the instruments etc which were on show.

Chris Gunton – Sec Tiptree WEA

HATFIELD PEVEREL BRANCH

Current Controversies in the World of Science

Tutor: John Pickard

In September 2014 we were very pleased that John gave us such a lively and interesting 10 week course. We had wondered if Science would deter some of our regular attendees but no; the course was well attended by those with a science background as well as those without. John explained the scientific background to all the issues, and his encouragement soon brought questions coming from the class. We covered global warming, fossil fuels, nuclear power, food, stem cells, super intelligence and fracking, all measured against fascinating political opinion.

The science did not seem a problem to anyone and we all went away more informed about these issues than before.

Sarah Dodson

ESSEX FEDERATION

Summer School 2014

"1066 and all that"

Tutor: Rosemary Williams

For many years Rosemary Williams was an outstanding History tutor for Essex WEA, offering an impressive portfolio of topics ranging from Scandinavian History to the Ottoman Empire, from the Holy Roman Empire to Invasion from the East and from Bonnie Prince Charlie to King Arthur and many more. Her sheer brilliance and clarity and her imaginative presentation of subject matter made her classes a sell-out each term and she amassed a strong WEA student following. People simply loved to learn with Rosemary who, not content to rest on her classroom laurels, provided her students with weekly summaries which were masterpieces of information, concision and elegance. All achieved on an A4 sized piece of paper.

Against this background, it was a sad blow for her WEA students to learn in December 2013 that, after many years, Rosemary was leaving the area to move to Wales. But Essex WEA surely knows a legend when it sees one and the Essex Federation was soon inspired to invite Rosemary back to Colchester for a three day Summer School held from 30 June to 2 July 2014 at the Castle Methodist Church. Surely no comeback concert by a pop star diva could have been more popular - Rosemary's Summer School was sold out as soon as her return to Colchester was announced.

Her choice of subject was a challenging one: "1066 and all that" - described as her favourite history book. Whilst something of a "classic" in history circles since the 1930s, this is by no means an easy book. Written by witty Oxford academics, its comic references and allusions require a depth of English history knowledge on the part of its readers. For lesser mortals unable to "decode" all of the references, this inevitably means lesser understanding and enjoyment of the unique humour of this book.

Rosemary was therefore the ideal person to guide and enlighten us and take our enjoyment of "1066 and all that" to a much higher level.

She began by an intriguing quotation from the book's preface: History is not what you thought. It is what you can remember..... Rosemary thought there was some justification to this, suggesting that "arguably history and

memory are the same thing and equally unreliable"! Similarly, Rosemary considered that the book's amusing reference to there being no memorable history without the Great British People's self-sacrificing determination to become Top Nation accurately reflected "several centuries of historical writing and teaching which was essentially nationalistic and teleological"! At a later stage, Rosemary invited her WEA audience to put forward their definitions of Britishness. This was an interesting exercise which produced answers such as tolerance, queuing, common sense, patriotism, eccentricity, rule of law etc. Rosemary noted that we sometimes define ourselves by our attitude to others ("non- this or non-that") and she felt that it was probably impossible to have an exact definition.

Following an introductory discussion of "History" - its purpose, nature, meaning and treatment throughout the ages, Rosemary went on to work through the book and provided helpful explanations and insights into some of the hilarious episodes featured in it. Amusing examples were:-

"On the death of William IV..... Queen Victoria though asleep at the time and in her nightdress..... immediately ascended the throne and announced her intention of being Good and plural and not amused".

Victoria is supposed to have said (at the age of 11) when told one day she would be Queen: "I will be good". She is supposed to have said "we are not amused" when told a slightly improper story. Becoming "plural" refers to the majestic "we" often used by British dignitaries in previous ages.

Although [Elizabeth I] this memorable Queen was a man she was addressed by various affectionate female nicknames.....

In her famous speech at Tilbury, Elizabeth claimed that she had "the heart and stomach of a King and a King of England too". Nonetheless, she cherished the title Virgin Queen and she featured under several pseudonyms in the literature of the time.

[Imaginary application form for Wars of the Roses] Are you a good plain crook? Are you Edmund Mortimer? Have you ever been King before?..... Are you insane?.....

If not a crook, a successful nobleman sometimes required flexibility i.e. treachery or changing sides. Edmund Mortimer (his nephew) had a claim to the throne and was an intriguer. Henry VI was intermittently insane. He was deposed in 1461, reinstated in 1470 and then deposed again six

months later. Edward IV usurped the throne in 1461, fled abroad in 1470, then made a successful return in 1471.

The causes of English defeat (at Bannockburn) were all unfair and were..... The Pits..... Superior numbers of the English- (who were accustomed to fight against heavy odds and were uneasy) and when Scots were..... reinforced by..... "butlers with camp stools"..... English soldiers mistook them for a fresh army of Englishmen and retreated in disgust.....

There is evidence that the Scots used "*pits*" to break the force of the English cavalry charge but no evidence that the English fell into them. The English did outnumber the Scots but they were dispirited and incompetently led. The "reinforcements" were in fact sutlers and grooms from the Scots baggage train who came to observe the battle. (Sutlers were civilian merchants selling provisions to the Army)

Conclusion

For three days, therefore, WEA members had an absorbing and enriching tour through this book. Once again Rosemary showed herself to be an outstanding tutor and we were happy beneficiaries of her passion to share her knowledge with others.

Stop Press- Rosemary booked for Summer 2015!

Frank O'Connell

FORMER BRANCH

Ed: We gathered the other day that WEA got a mention twice in the Wivenhoe pantomime, Red Riding Hood. Someone was asked where Grandma was and she was at a WEA Class, learning Nuclear Science or something like that.

It is a pity that there is no longer a Branch there. How about starting one up again?

OBITUARY - DEREK GRATZE

Died 9th December 2014

After Derek had retired from Berger Paints, he and his wife, Madge, moved to Nounsley in 1987. He soon became involved with WEA. He joined the tutor panel offering his life-time interest in The History of Flight. His courses were informative, interesting and fun. He soon had the class experimenting with paper darts to illustrate the various effects of design on the aerodynamics of flying craft.

With him we visited the Shuttleworth Collection in Bedfordshire where he made special arrangements for us to be allowed under the ropes to have close up inspections of many of the aircraft. We were also invited into the restoration workshop where wooden wings were being covered with cloth soaked with dope in the traditional way. The fumes were quite heady!

But for me the highlight of the course was a visit to a gliding club where we each had two flying sessions at the controls of a real glider and really got a practical feel of being in the air. It felt so free and was incredibly quiet. I wanted to stay up there all day practising my turns!

Derek was also a lively member of the District Training Team. This was a group of fellow tutors and voluntary members with a brief to visit branch classes to support and advise and generally to see that all was going smoothly.

Catharine Voysey



“WE EDUCATE ADULTS” – COMING EVENTS IN 2015

Saturday 11th April: ‘Politics: what is it good for?’



The aim of this day school is to take a fresh look at political ideas and practices. What makes politics both fascinating and indispensable? Share ideas on how to engage others in making more of their democratic power in achieving vital social goals. This is a joint initiative between the WEA and the *Question the Powerful* project. The Tutor, **Dr. Henry Tam**, impressed delegates to the Autumn Regional Council with his erudite and entertaining introductory talk. Henry is a Lecturer at the University of Cambridge and Visiting Professor at Birkbeck, University of London. His acclaimed publications include satirical novels as well as academic books. A former senior civil servant and expert on democracy, he has been a guest speaker at global events from Strasbourg to Washington.

Our day school will serve up:

- A starter on political history: *how did we get here?*
- A taste of different political ideas: *what options have we got?*
- A main course of action for you: *why we can make a difference?*
- A scrumptious sample of the endgame: *which future awaits us?*

10.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. at Anglia Ruskin University, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ

There is no charge for attendance, refreshments or lunch, which are provided.

To reserve a place please e-mail joan.familynoir@gmail.com or ' **01245 354644.**

Thursday 16th April: Richard Waskett Memorial Lecture
An illustrated lecture to mark the sixcentenary



of the Battle of Agincourt

“A Medieval Adventure”
with John Morgan

2 p.m. Oaklands Museum, Oaklands Park, Moulsham Street, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 9AQ. **Fee: £5**

Followed by tea, scones and cake at about 3.30.

See leaflet with booking form.



Saturday 25th April: Spring One Day Schools

Magna Carta & The First Parliament with Roger Cooke
Civilians in the Front Line: British & Allied Merchant Seamen in
WW2 with Professor Tony Lane

Culture On The Brink: Music And Art Before WW1 with Professor
Chris Green

11 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. Feering Community Centre, Coggeshall Road,
Feering, CO5 9QB. Fee: £10

SUMMER SCHOOLS 2015

Colchester: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 22nd, 23rd, 24th June at
Castle Methodist Church

Tutors and Topics:

Rosemary Williams on The Battle of Waterloo 1815

Mark Mower: 'Murder, Mystery & Mayhem' - a social history of
crime and justice

Margery Wilson and Julia Jones: Spy and Detective Fiction: a
history and a critique.

**Chelmsford: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 29th, 30th June &
1st July at Essex Records Office**

Tutors and Topics:

Rosemary Williams on The Battle of Waterloo 1815

**Stephen Norris: 'Changing Chelmsford (1880-1914)' - an industrial
history**

Michael Baldry: 'Post-Impressionism - a shock to the world'

AUTUMN 2015 ONE DAY SCHOOL, SATURDAY

14th NOVEMBER

The three topics will include:

Edith Cavell, with tutor **Nick Miller**, Cavell website manager and
keeper of memorabilia for St Mary's Church, Swardeston, Norfolk, and

A History of the Silent Film, with **Laurence Staig**.

**SUMMER REGIONAL COUNCIL SATURDAY 6th June – hosted
by Hertfordshire Federation**

**ESSEX FEDERATION AGM SATURDAY 10th OCTOBER –
Keene Hall, Galleywood**

**AUTUMN REGIONAL COUNCIL and AGM SATURDAY
7th NOVEMBER – Cambridge**