



BASILDON AND BILLERICAY

u3a

NEWSLETTER No 327

FEBRUARY 2021

Covid – 19 edition 11



Chinese New Year
The Year of the Ox

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Hello everyone

Thank goodness that the freezing cold spell is hopefully behind us now and we can venture outside in relative comfort. The days are pulling out rapidly now, snowdrops and crocuses are in flower and the daffodils are showing their buds well above the ground; a promise of brighter things to follow in the coming days.

Our Committee is expanding the use of the Zoom facility. Any group can now book a slot via the Groups Facilitator, Ann Fletcher, which is not time limited and you may consider encouraging your group members to participate or maybe set up a new group which could operate online. Details follow below from Ann about the groups which have taken up the challenge to date, and Andy will explain about a new open meeting to be organised shortly which we hope will encourage members to get involved. (See below and page 4)

Included with this newsletter are the Minutes of the January Committee meeting and also a leaflet from the Trust which contains much information and useful links, so please take time to read it – it may give you some ideas.

SECRETARY'S NEWS

I'm sitting in our Home Office, a bit like Harry Potter under the stairs, and looking at the 2021 Year Planner we pinned to the wall on January 1st. Of course it was totally blank and we wondered how long it would be before we were able to start filling up the dates with interesting things to look forward to. The latest Lockdown didn't seem to offer much hope of being able to plan days, weekends or longer periods away and I can hazard a guess that some of you, like us, have postponed already booked breaks or events and have our fingers crossed that events booked for later in the year will still go ahead. For instance, we are waiting with a great deal of hope that we will be able to visit the O2 in June to see one of our favourite Rock bands and then in August take a trip away to a festival in our Campervan and a cruise in September. In the meantime, we are starting to fill up the Planner with online chats, wine tastings, virtual events & u3a talks and meetings.

Pre-COVID we were able to attend our monthly u3a meetings to socialise and our various Interest Groups could arrange their own meetings, events and visits. We are now relying much more on our computers to keep us virtually in touch with one another. To provide and promote, at least, some of the activities of the groups and allow the Committee to meet monthly to attend to the day to day running of our Branch, we now have a Zoom Pro Account. This can be used by any of you who would like to set up meetings of your own. Our Groups Facilitator, Ann, has given more details of this elsewhere in the Newsletter, on Page 4.

You will remember that, in the last Newsletter, I asked for some feedback from you about the use of Zoom and whether some of you would like a little practice at using the facility. Thank you for all your replies they were very useful. As a result, I have set up an **Open Zoom "Meeting" on 4th March 2021** so that you can log on for practice or ask questions or, if you agree a time to log on together, you may like to have a chat and a coffee with friends you may not have seen for a while. As long as your computer, iPhone or Tablet has a camera and microphone, I'm sure that those of you that may

be a little worried about using Zoom will find it very useful and it will encourage you to join in the excellent monthly talks, the **AGM on 26th March** and, maybe, attend Interest Group meetings. If you don't have Zoom on your computer there is no need to download it, just copy and paste the link into your Browser. Otherwise, if you are already on Zoom, type in the ID and Passcode.

Here are the Login Details, it will be open for 6 hours from 10.30 am:-

Topic: U3A Practice and Chat

Time: Mar 4, 2021 10:30 London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81469089590?pwd=bTlaSUlvVE1rVzFwOHNONGd3NnhBdz09>

Meeting ID: 814 6908 9590

Passcode: U3ACHAT

Your Committee still needs volunteers to fill the following vacant or soon to be vacant posts:-
Vice-Chair, Publicity Secretary & Website Manager.

Please remember that a U3A Branch is not allowed to run without there being a Chair, a Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. It would be a great shame if, from over 500 members, Basildon & Billericay U3A folded because these posts were not filled. I really can't believe that, from all the retired professionals out there, there isn't *someone* who would contribute to the success of our Branch by joining the Committee. It is not an onerous task and you will be made most welcome.

Our Branch AGM is due to take place on Zoom at 2pm on 26th March 2021 and, due to COVID restrictions, you will agree that it is pretty difficult to get a Nomination Form signed by a Proposer and a Secunder. We have agreed that, for this year, Proposers and Seconders for both new and standing Committee posts can be requested to send an e-mail to me at fletchu3a@yahoo.com, stating the person and post they are nominating and that they agree to Propose or Second that person. For ease, you can cut and paste the following:-

I agree to Propose for the post of

I agree to Second for the post of

See you online!!

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Membership Renewal

Just a little reminder. By the time you read this it will be very near, in fact just a few days, before your membership runs out and you will need to renew it. If you have already done so, I thank you.

There is a form you can download on the website under "Links", and you may pay by cheque or bank transfer. If you are paying by transfer, will you please put your membership number ONLY in the reference box. If you don't know your number put your postcode, but again nothing else. Additional information in this box only leads to confusion.

If you have any problem with any of this please contact me:
Stuart King membershipu3a18@gmail.com or 07960 564707.

If you have any difficulty with the form down load, I can sort that for you if you contact me.

Wishing you all a busy year ahead and may our meetings soon be back again.

GROUPS FACILITATOR

ZOOM MEETINGS

I have had several enquiries recently about setting up a Basildon & Billericay u3a Zoom subscription to enable groups to have plenty of time to hold their Zoom meetings. After some research and discussion with the Committee, I have obtained a subscription to Zoom for the members to use.

For the groups to use this Zoom, I will have to set up the meetings and let the Group Co-ordinator know the passcodes. I will enable members to join 'before the host' and disable the waiting room. This will let the group members join in the meeting, but I won't have to attend. Only one group at a time can use the Zoom, so groups will have to book with me as early as possible. (I know that there is a facility to use 'different rooms' – but I haven't got the knowledge to do that yet!).

We will also be able to use this Zoom for our monthly meetings and any other meetings that are set up.

Some of the other u3a groups have set up specific Zoom groups, covering a range of subjects. If you would like to do that, please get in touch with me and we can advertise the group in the Newsletter. Or you could set up meetings or talks which could be accessed by the whole group.

If you, or your group, would like to have a Zoom meeting, but are not sure what to do, please let me know and I will see if I can arrange a Zoom tutorial.

WEBSITE MANAGER

NEW MANAGER REQUIRED

My 5 years in the role of Website Manger comes to an end at our AGM in March this year and therefore a replacement will be required.

I thought it might be appropriate to bring this to everyone's attention now as being a Website Manger might appear to be a very daunting task. In reality it is not. When I took over 5 years ago, I wasn't too sure what to expect as my knowledge of PC related work was, in my opinion, very basic. Word, Excel, Emails just about summed it up. I then discovered that maintaining/updating the site was in fact straight forward. The information sheets contained within the site are very comprehensive and my predecessor considerably helped me in the early days so I never felt alone. I will happily provide similar support to my successor as well as shadow him/her for the first few months until they are fully comfortable in the role.

So, if anyone has thoughts/desires to take on the role please contact me as I think that it would be quite beneficial to be familiar with the role in advance of the AGM.

SPEAKERS' SECRETARY

On Friday 22 January, we welcomed Peter Batty, a Qualified Tour Guide, who took us on armchair tour around London via Zoom.

We enjoyed an informative and interesting talk, taking us from St Paul's Cathedral via many places of interest such as the Old Bailey and Guildhall, and finishing at the iconic Walkie Talkie Building in Fenchurch Street. The talk was informative historically with places of interest well illustrated both internally and externally, accompanied by many factual points of interest and tales. The audience was given short quizzes of relevance throughout the presentation, and everyone was invited to ask questions at the end. We had approximately 52 members join the Zoom session.

February monthly zoom meeting

We invite all members to join us on for our next meeting on **Friday 26th February at 2.30pm** when our speaker will be **David Williams** speaking on

The Great Fire of London – Disaster or Opportunity.



To Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87808850024?pwd=c1RBbHBNQ1NyZXhYQ2QwUEZSMGoyZz09>

Meeting ID: 878 0885 0024

Passcode: 736883

JAZZ APPRECIATION GROUP

SIDNEY BECHET (1897-1959)

Sidney Bechet was one of the greatest jazz musicians and the first great jazz saxophonist. He was born in 1897 in New Orleans into a black Creole family. It was a very musical family and as a young boy he studied the clarinet with a number of older musicians, although he was primarily self-taught. He quickly became very proficient and by 1910 he was working with some of the incipient jazz bands in the city. In 1916 he left New Orleans to earn his living playing in touring shows and carnivals throughout the South and Midwest.

He was essentially a wanderer and spent much of his life drifting from New Orleans to Chicago, to New York, to Paris and London and back, playing in whatever musical contexts he found. Because he travelled so much he never developed a large popular following until later in life. He might have had that if he had chosen to emulate Armstrong and Ellington by leading a large band, or settling into a band where he could have exerted his musical influence. Armstrong and Ellington did this, although Bechet was undoubtedly their musical peer. He was certainly not temperamentally suited to the kinds of compromises that they made to achieve popular success. He was prickly, and demanding, with a prima donna attitude, always wanting to dominate any musical situation he was part of. This did not make him a well-loved figure among his fellow musicians and thus his influence tended to be indirect, achieved through his short period with Duke Ellington in 1924. Also in 1924/5 he made a series of recordings with Louis Armstrong which constitute one of the most important bodies of New Orleans jazz on record.



His passionate nature often got him into trouble. He was deported from London for getting into a fight with a prostitute and once spent 11 months in a French prison for a gun fight with another musician outside a Parisian cabaret club.

It was in London in 1920 that he acquired his first soprano saxophone which became his instrument of choice for the remainder of his life. The soprano saxophone suited his musical approach, as the big passionate sound he produced could easily dominate any group he was part of. By 1924 his style was fully formed and his playing changed remarkably little for the rest of his life. His playing is instantly recognisable with its broad vibrato, and its sharp cutting edge. It growls and rasps and has an endless flow of invention all with the driving intensity that characterised his style.

As early as 1919 the renowned classical conductor Ernest Ansermet heard him in Europe and said ***“there is in the Southern Syncopated Orchestra an extraordinary clarinet virtuoso.... I wish to set down the name of this artist of genius ... it is Sidney Bechet”***

Throughout the 30’s he continued to play and record, although by 1938 he was in retirement working in a tailor shop for a living. However in the early 40’s there was a renewed interest in the New Orleans jazz style and he became a celebrated, influential jazz figure in the traditional revival movement, playing regularly at concerts, on radio programmes and in the recording studios. In 1950 he settled in France where he became a much revered star entertainer and where he remained until his death in 1959.

He is now recognised as one of the greatest jazz musicians ever and Duke Ellington called him ***“one of the truly great originals”***.

You can hear his music, from the exuberance of **“Cake Walking Babies”** to the brooding melancholy of his classic blues **“Blue Horizon”**, by clicking on the link below.

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7cFXV7gYI46a50DDOj7TGK?si=7xWzO55DRZmDK9UBMnzdjQ>

JAZZ APPRECIATION GROUP ZOOM MEETING

The jazz group held their first Zoom meeting on the 16th Feb, with some trepidation. Many of the participants were zoom ‘Virgins’ and not sure if they would be able to join in successfully. In the event the turnout was good and the meeting proceeded without any hiccups.

Although no substitute for a real meeting, it was lovely to see everyone again and of course we started by catching up with our lockdown experiences. We shared our news about vaccinations etc. before moving on to sharing musical selections with anecdotes about the musicians featured. Members enjoyed it enough to agree to continue with a monthly zoom meeting whilst waiting for the longed-for return of normality.

I would strongly recommend that other groups explore the possibility of holding their own zoom meetings, although not every group lends itself to this approach. For instance the Table tennis group might not find it a viable method. If you contact Ann Fletcher, the group facilitator she will set the meeting up for you at the time and date you request.

WRITING FOR FUN

The group continues to write each month and communicate via phone and email.

This month the topic was dancing. Members produced some lovely work which involved detailed descriptions of dance lessons, youth clubs, discos and church halls. All types of dancing were explored including ballroom, the twist and ballet. Some accounts dealt with an inability to dance, while others talked of the joy of dancing. One member wrote a delightful fairy story, while another wrote a romance.

The topic created a lot of memories of dancing to particular tunes, making us feel quite nostalgic. We wish we could meet up but whatever happens we will continue to write and stretch our brains as we all enjoy being creative.

GREENFINGERS GARDENING GROUP

GERTRUDE JEKYLL

I decided to research Gertrude Jekyll as I had heard of her in connection with some of the old established gardens. There is so much information on the internet plus huge numbers of articles and books written by her, or written about her. I've only really just brushed the surface so far.

She came from a wealthy family and was very accomplished woman. She started being a painter but her eyesight deteriorated and so she turned her attention to gardening and plants.

She travelled widely abroad and also in the UK, and brought back many plants and introduced them to gardens like many other plant collectors of the time.

She had a long association with Sir Edwin Lutyens, the famous architect. They collaborated on many houses and gardens over the late 19th and early 20th century.



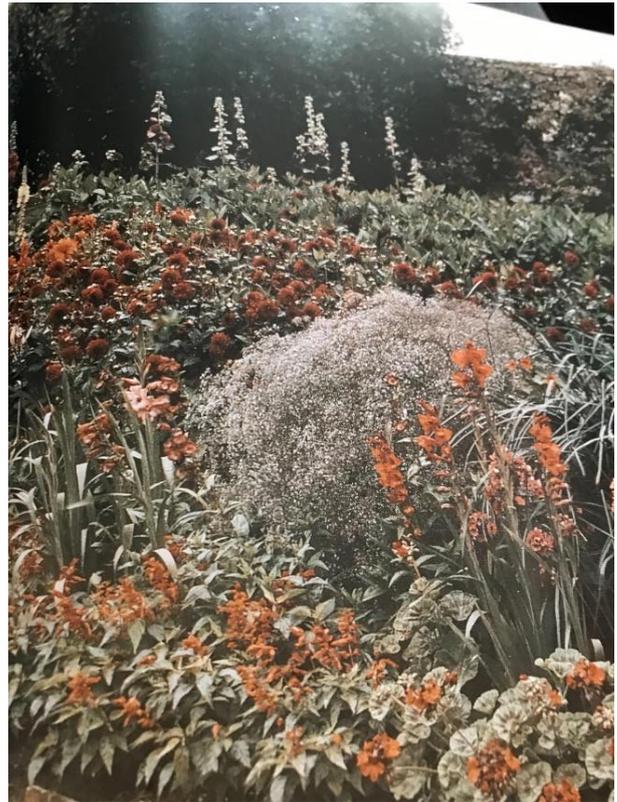
She was influenced greatly by the Arts and Crafts movement, developing a sympathetic relationship between house and the surroundings. **Knebworth House** in Stevenage features work by her and Lutyens.

This picture shows the gardens at **Hestercombe**, Taunton, which were designed in 1903. The Formal Garden is arguably the finest example of her collaboration with Sir Edwin Lutyens.

Other examples of her work are **Munstead Wood**, Godalming, that was her home, and the RHS site at **Wisley** which was developed by George F Wilson with help from Gertrude Jekyll.

This picture shows the Red Border at Munstead Wood

There are many plants associated with her and there is a rose named after her.



Gertrude had a great influence on many later garden designers including Christopher Lloyd whose most famous garden is **Great Dixter**.

For more information visit Gertrude Jekyll -the official site of the Jekyll Estate

Newsletter Contributions

If you have any items please send them by **12.00 Noon on Wednesday, March 17th 2021**

I am always happy to receive your report or comments at any time before the cut-off date.

Please send all items in editable format to **bbu3newsletter@gmail.com**

if you are sending photos please send them separately in JPG format.

Only send photos that you have taken yourself. We cannot use photos or pictures that have been downloaded from the internet, unless copyright free.

All contributions will be acknowledged.

Current and past newsletters can be viewed on our website <https://u3asites.org.uk/bb>

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Editor