



**BASILDON AND BILLERICAY**

**u3a**

**NEWSLETTER No 328**

**MARCH 2021**

Covid – 19 edition 12



Daffodils

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Hello everybody.

Although it only seems such a short while ago since our previous one, our 2021 AGM is now ready to take place on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> of this month. I hope you will have received all the details by email or post by now, and the meeting will commence via Zoom at 2.30 pm.

We hope that as many of you as possible will attend this meeting. Voting will be by a show of hands to approve the various resolutions and new Committee members. We have booked a Speaker to entertain us after the completion of the business, details follow later in this newsletter.

It is very encouraging to see that a large proportion of our members have renewed their subscription to date. Those who have not done so are reminded that renewals should be sent in to our Membership secretary as soon as possible.

## SECRETARY'S NEWS

I think you may all agree what a difference a few weeks makes? Since the last Newsletter we have at last been given some guidance on how, if we are sensible and keep within the recommendations and restrictions, we can start to gently move towards some kind of normality. This will mark a return to some of the activities that we have all, mostly, been unable to pursue over the past exceptionally strange year or more. My 2021 Year Planner is starting to look really quite exciting now that we are reasonably sure restrictions will be lifted, and we have already planned Campervan trips in July. There are even a couple of music Festivals and it looks as though the Rock Concert we were looking forward to in 2020 at the O2 will now be going ahead in June, so everything is looking up!!

As u3a members we all, in some way, enjoy the outdoors, travel, study, socialising, sports, hobbies and other interests which bring us together with friends and family. I for one am really looking forward to June when, if we are good, we can resume all the things we have been missing. I really hope that will include all members supporting our excellent u3a Branch by attending the monthly meetings when they start again and, of course, by getting back together in your various groups in person rather than on Zoom !!

Due to the uncertainty about the resumption of normal u3a activities, Zoom was a little late in being set up. However, since the full Pro Zoom facility has been in use by our Branch, I believe it has proved invaluable. It will remain in place for everyone to use through Ann, the Groups Facilitator, should you need it for any extra meetings or activities that you may like to organise in addition to your usual meetings and pursuits. Some of you may find that you can expand your group activities, especially if some members are, quite rightly, a little more cautious about getting back into the full swing of things and may need slightly more time to adjust. The recent Zoom "Open Day" proved useful to some of you and during the 6 hours it was set up, a good number of members popped in for a chat and to understand a little more how Zoom worked. If you have any queries or you would like to set up a meeting for your group, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Ann or myself and we will be pleased to help.

Don't forget that it is the Annual General Meeting on Zoom on **March 26<sup>th</sup> at 2:30pm**, followed by a talk on Charles Dickens. You will find all the details of how to log in to the meeting **on Page 3**. PLEASE don't forget that your Committee still needs volunteers to fill the following vacant, or soon to be vacant, posts:-

Publicity Secretary & Website Manager.

**NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
OF THE BASILDON AND BILLERICAY U3A 2021  
TO BE HELD VIA ZOOM**

Notice is hereby given that the 32nd Annual General Meeting of the Basildon and Billericay U3A will be held VIA ZOOM (the online video conferencing facility) on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021, commencing at 2.30pm. All members may take part in this meeting. The Zoom Login details are as follows:-

You may join either by cutting and pasting the link (shown in red) into your Browser or by signing into Zoom using the Meeting ID and Passcode (shown in blue).

Topic: u3a Basildon & Billericay AGM

Time: Mar 26, 2021 14:30 London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85600531624?pwd=YjJyMU0wMnlOeGcwdGxzZmp5M0pQdz09>

Meeting ID: **856 0053 1624**

Passcode: **BBU3A**

Items for inclusion on the agenda must be submitted to the Business Secretary by Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

Nomination forms for election of Officers and Committee Members were received prior to the last AGM in October 2020 and these still stand.

The Committee Nomination form and Treasurer's report are being sent by email as a separate file, as are the Minutes of our last AGM (30<sup>th</sup> October 2020). Those without an email address will receive them by post.

Each committee member must be voted onto the Committee, by the members, and will then serve in that role for the following year. They can serve for a maximum of 5 years continuously. They can apply for a post on the Committee again after a break of one year. There are 3 vacant posts still without nominations.

Any paid up member of the Basildon and Billericay U3A may stand for election to any of the posts on the Committee.

THE U3A COMMITTEE CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING POSTS:

CHAIRMAN -Standing for re-election

VICE-CHAIR - Standing for election

TREASURER – Standing for re-election

BUSINESS SECRETARY –Standing for re-election

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY - Standing for re-election

GROUPS FACILITATOR - Standing for re-election

NEWSLETTER EDITOR – *vacant (currently being covered)*

WEBSITE EDITOR - *vacant*

SPEAKERS SECRETARY- standing for re-election

PUBLICITY SECRETARY - *vacant*

ACCESSIBILITY SECRETARY –Standing for re-election

If you feel you could fill one of the vacant posts, you will be warmly welcomed by the Committee. Further information about any of these posts can be obtained from the Business Secretary

## NEWS FROM THE THIRD AGE TRUST

### Transcript of the message from CEO of the Third Age Trust to u3a members 5 March 2021

“Hello there,

I just wanted to have a catch up with you. It’s really encouraging now that we have a hopeful way out of lockdown and returning to face to face meetings.

What a relief that is for all of us. It will be great to see each other again in real life and not just virtual life.

And great that it’s coming when spring is upon us and summer is around the corner. It really feels like a new beginning.

We’ve learnt a lot over the last year about keeping in touch. We’re not going to forget any of that. However, as we come out of lockdown we’re going to be following all the advice and guidance from all the governments from the four nations. The first bulletins giving advice will be coming out later this month.

It’s great to be on the next phase of this u3a journey and I’m looking forward to it so much.”

Contact u3a by

- calling 020 8466 6139
- emailing [info@u3a.org.uk](mailto:info@u3a.org.uk)
- Visiting our website [u3a.org.uk](http://u3a.org.uk)

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### Year of Lockdown

March 23 marks a year of pandemic restrictions and levels of lockdown across all the regions, nations and Islands of the United Kingdom. The year has demonstrated more than ever the resilience and creativity of u3a members as we have adapted to new ways of connecting. u3a will be taking part in the [National Day of Reflection](#) on 23 March and would love to share thoughts, poetry or experiences of u3a members about the last year so [do get in touch with us](#).

### Slow Ways



The Slow Ways Project aims to create a network of safe, easy, and enjoyable walking routes that connect towns, cities, and villages across Great Britain once lockdown is lifted.

u3a walking groups have responded positively to the project.

Dan Raven-Ellison and Rob Bushby from Slow Ways have offered to host two webinars for u3a members, on Tuesday 20 April and Monday 17 May

[Book a place via this link](#) (copy and paste)

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScouji78hXA6ntulLxOSTTUWVKDITQwAjkRCXyVhXOcZ1LZXQ/viewform>

If you are a u3a Walking Group and want to register your interest in this initiative - go to [slowways.uk](http://slowways.uk) or contact Third Age Trust Chair

## **SPEAKERS' SECRETARY**

On February 26<sup>th</sup> we welcomed David Williams, a City of London Guide who presented a very interesting zoom talk on The Great Fire of London.

The talk took us through how the fire started and spread, living conditions, the desolation left and the rebuilding of London. Approximately 64 members joined the zoom talk. This number is fairly consistent each month and we always welcome any members who would like to join us to enjoy these presentations.

**Our next speaker will be Mark Mitchels who will speak on Charles Dickens.**

**Join the Zoom Meeting on March 26, 2021 at 14:30hrs**

**The talk will take place on directly after the AGM.**



Here is the link and password to join the talk:

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85600531624?pwd=YjJyMU0wMnlOeGcwdGxzZmp5M0pQdz09>**

**Meeting ID: 856 0053 1624**

**Passcode: BBU3A**

## **GROUPS' FACILITATOR**

### **Roadmap to Groups Restarting**

Now we have heard from the Government about the roadmap to recovery, I am sure that people are wondering when our groups can get started again. I am not an expert, but reading between the lines, this is what I think can happen.

No earlier than 29<sup>th</sup> March certain organised outdoor sports can resume. I know that golf courses should be allowed to open from that date. So that would indicate that our Golf, Petanque and Tennis Groups should be able to restart their programmes from then. However there still seems to be a rule of no more than six people meeting outside. This is, of course, dependant on the Government sticking to that date.

If all goes well, then from around 12<sup>th</sup> April gyms and indoor leisure will reopen, but this is for individual activities, so I don't think that Table Tennis will be able to start then. The rule of six meeting together will continue outdoors, but there should be no mixing indoors. Does this mean that the rambling and walking groups will be able to start again, if they split into smaller groups for their walks? Solo Uno Sunday group could possibly meet up in a park or garden, but ensuring that if there were more than six of them that they divided the group into more appropriate numbers.

Organised indoor adult sport should be able to start from 17<sup>th</sup> May, which means that the Table Tennis group should be able to start. Other outside groups could be larger, as there will be a thirty person limit.

Then, from around 21<sup>st</sup> June it looks like everything could start working again as there will be no legal limits on social contact and larger events can start to take place.

There has been no advice, as yet, from the Third Age Trust, so I will have to keep an eye out for what they say. Plus, everything is still dependant on what instructions come from the Government. The dates could still change if Covid numbers have not decreased enough.

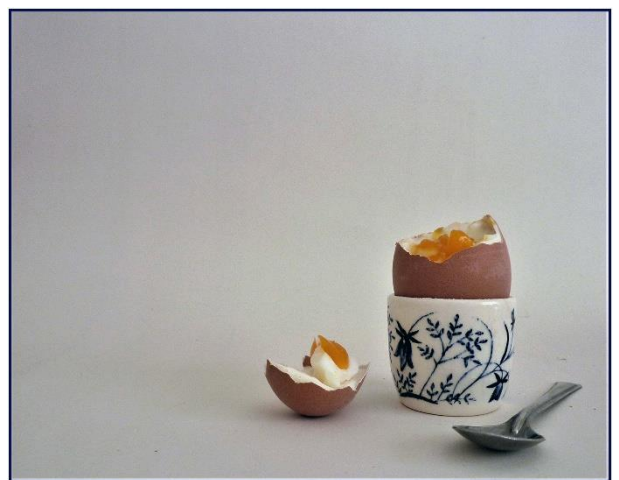
Individuals and groups will have to feel confident about meeting up, especially once we start meeting up indoors again. If you are not sure about meeting together, leave it for a month or two. You can still keep meeting online for as long as you like. If you need to arrange to hold meetings on Zoom, please let me know and I can do this for you. We probably won't be having monthly meetings until at least September, because the Canon Roche Hall will not be opening until earlier that month.

## PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

Like many other U3A groups, the photography group has not been able to meet in person since we had a couple of socially distanced get togethers last summer, but aside from that we've had zoom meetings twice a month since last June. Under normal circumstances, one meeting a month would have been an outing, and I'm really looking forward to when we can get out and about again. In the meantime I have managed to substitute that with tutorials on taking and editing images, which the members seem to enjoy. Each month, I have set the group a topic for their photography and in February the topic was Minimalism. I know some members found this challenging, but everyone had a go and came up with some great images, and you can see a few below.



Seagulls



Boiled Egg Minimalist



Split Personality



Dancing Trees



## JAZZ APPRECIATION GROUP

# BESSIE SMITH (1894-1937)

In the USA in the 1920's an amalgam of traditional folk blues and urban theatre music became hugely popular amongst African Americans. The artists were black women who, usually accompanied by pianists or small jazz combos, toured the southern states of the US on the tent show circuit. The tent shows featured a variety of acts dancers, wrestlers, jugglers etc. A brass band would parade round the town to advertise the shows. The stage would be on boards with gas lights and no microphones, so the singers needed to have big, powerful voices and a stage presence to command attention. They were often the only venues available to black performers.

The blues they sang were firmly embedded in the lives of African Americans in the South reflecting the poverty, discrimination, tragedies and other social issues of their lives. They also brought a raunchy, libidinous element to the blues they performed.

The records they made proved immensely popular and were released on 'race records' labels to distinguish them from records marketed to white audiences.

The greatest of these Blues singers was Bessie Smith, born in Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1894, and one of 7 children, raised in poverty. Her father died when she was a baby and her mother when she was 8 years old, leaving her sister to raise the younger siblings. By the age of 9 Bessie was singing on street corners for dimes and nickels. In 1912 her brother Clarence, who was travelling as a dancer with a vaudeville show, arranged for her to have an audition. Performing represented virtually the only alternative to share-cropping or manual labour if you were poor and black in the South. Although not a great beauty she was engaged as a dancer. She was taken under the wing of another great blues singer, **Ma Rainey**, and soon established herself as a singer and by the end of WW1 had become a star of the circuit.

Her big break came in 1923 when she embarked on her recording career with Columbia. Her first record was '*Downhearted Blues*' backed by '*Gulf Coast Blues*' which sold 800,000 copies in fewer than 6 months, and now the good times began to roll. She never made much money from the recordings, probably only receiving about \$150 for each one, but they brought her the adulation that enabled her to earn as much as \$2000/week for her public appearances.

For the next 8-10 years she alternated between theatres and travelling tent shows. She lived the life of a star travelling in a private railway car, which black artists often did to avoid the hassle of finding hotels and restaurants willing to accommodate black people.

Although she could be generous and affectionate she could also be cruel, with a violent temper often physically attacking people when drunk, and most of her troubles resulted from her alcoholism. Her sexual choices were indiscriminating, she was bisexual and made conquests of several girls in her show.





Sidney Bechet who had a brief affair with her said *'she always drank plenty... and sometimes after she'd been drinking for a while she'd get like there was no pleasing her. She had this trouble in her, a meanness that came and took over her'*

Bessie's rich magnificent voice coarsened over the years as a result of her turbulent lifestyle, but it resulted in many acknowledged masterpieces of recorded blues such as *'Young Woman's blues', 'Empty Bed Blues', Cake Walking Babies', 'St. Louis Blues'* etc. She was usually accompanied on these recording by some of the finest jazz musicians of the day. There is nothing pathetic or self-pitying about Bessie's blues, they are full of passion, they are the hoarse, angry cry of the wounded and disadvantaged, although many were humorous, and ribald.

Her career was adversely affected by the Great Depression and by the advent of sound movies, however she never stopped performing and singing in theatres and on the radio. In 1937 Bessie was critically injured in an auto mobile accident near Clarksdale, Mississippi. She was taken to hospital but died shortly afterwards. After her death a now discredited story emerged that she died because the 'white only' hospital refused to admit her. The truth is hardly less palatable. The sad fact is that no ambulance driver in the segregated Deep South would have even considered taking a black person to a 'white' hospital whatever the circumstances. Her funeral was attended by over 7,000 people but her grave remained unmarked until a tombstone was erected in 1970, paid for by the singer Janis Joplin.



Some of her recordings can be heard by clicking on the link below

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7JgdxrkoFziliOpsw8JbyJ?si=mkjz0q7CTKy9cmMnH8mBfQ>

## **PETANQUE GROUP**

After 3 months of lockdown 3, the Government roadmap to easing restrictions provides for organised sport outdoors to be resumed as from 29<sup>th</sup> March. **Unless there are changes to the guidance the Petanque Group will resume meetings at Lake Meadows on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March at 10.15am and Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> April at 2.30pm.**

Hopefully this will be the start of an enjoyable summer of petanque and social contact. The Covid virus hasn't gone away however and social distancing and hygiene precautions will still need to be observed as per the Play Petanque Safely protocol.

New members will be welcomed at any time and are asked to contact the Petanque Group Coordinator prior to turning up at Lake Meadows.

## **COMPUTER WORKSHOP**

Hi all,

I have taken on the Co-ordinator's position.

As it has been a while since we met, would you kindly contact me by email (see above) so that we can agree meeting times.

New members are very welcome to make contact.

## **HALF RAMBLE GROUP**

It is planned that our next meeting will be at Paper Mill Lock, Little Baddow on Monday 7th June at 10.30am.

This has been delayed for 13 months since first planned so let us hope it will be possible.

More details in the next Newsletter, but get in touch with me before then with any thoughts.

## **Newsletter Contributions**

If you have any items please send them by **12.00 Noon on Wednesday April 14<sup>th</sup> 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>

Please note that, in the interests of security, all details of individuals (name, address, phone number) have been redacted from the on-line versions.

Editor