



BASILDON AND BILLERICAY

u3a

NEWSLETTER No 348

NOVEMBER 2022



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Sandra Randall

It does not seem very long since the last report but quite a bit has happened since then. We have just had the Co-ordinators Meeting, which is informative for the Coordinators, but also gives them a chance to meet each other and exchange ideas. Being a co-ordinator can sometimes feel a bit overpowering. This meeting helps to dispel any fears for members new to the role, and also renew enthusiasm for the role. The important issue of new and interesting developments can also be discussed.

Most of you are aware that the u3a is a non-political and non-religious organisation, but please remember that we are also non-sexist and non-racist.

Please remember that this includes communication via emails and social media, for example: Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Messenger etc. As a u3a we cannot monitor the internet, but will not tolerate communications between our group members that contain comments that could upset others, however light-hearted these may appear to be.

ACCESSIBILITY SECRETARY

Aileen Burgess

Travel Buddies

As Accessibility Secretary I have received a couple of enquiries regarding getting lifts to monthly meetings. I know if someone loses their ability to drive, or any other reason that restricts their participation in activities, it can be very hard. Therefore if anybody would be willing to pick up another member to enable them to attend the monthly meeting could you let me know please? Obviously I would get people that live near each other to team up.

With winter coming I'm keen to find as many tools to help me to keep positive during the shorter colder days. I access a website called 'Action for Happiness' and download their monthly calendar. Everyday there is a positive action to do, to help us keep "positive."
Also look on the u3a website for online courses that may be of interest

EDITOR'S NOTE

As you know, the Newsletter is usually circulated on the weekend before the Monthly Meeting, which is always the 4th Friday of the month. However, in December this will be the Christmas Social, which to be held on the **3RD FRIDAY, Dec 16th**. (See Page 13)

The deadline for the December Newsletter will therefore be altered to

NOON ON WEDNESDAY 7TH DECEMBER

This may be too early for some Group's reports, but please continue to send in items ready for the January newsletter. Many thanks for your co-operation.

Janis Horsley (Editor)

The other day, while we were out shopping, I was finally able to lay my hands on a 2023 Wall Year Planner to put up on the wall in our little office here ready to replace the rather full 2022 one .

It's always a time of, mostly, happy reflection when looking back on all the different things we have done. It's even better looking forward to all the things we intend to do or have already booked. Of course, some of the first things we fill in are family events and any holidays which have already been booked, then the various u3a Committee Meetings, Monthly Meetings and Interest Group Meetings that Ann and I attend. The Planner is getting to look quite interesting already and we are not at the end of 2022 yet!! Before I fully retired, I must admit to not being fully convinced by people who told me that I would be busier away from the world of work than I was during my various careers. How wrong I was. This is due in some part to actually WANTING to continue being active and, to precis a saying from another organisation that I am pleased to belong to, "make a daily advancement in your knowledge". Maybe I'm not QUITE so good at that last bit to be honest, but I sincerely believe the u3a provides the opportunities to do just that. I'm sure you will agree.

So start filling up your own planners, diaries, calendars or Alexa reminders for 2023 and let's continue to have interesting and fun times with like-minded friends old and, hopefully, new.

One of the most important dates is our AGM on June 23rd 2023. This is the time to consider assisting our u3a by filling one of the vacant posts on the Committee. It has been said many times before that it is not a very arduous task to become, say, Vice-Chairman or Group Facilitator (posts that are presently or will become vacant). Don't forget, too, that you could consider becoming a Group Coordinator for a Group or, if you have a specific interest and you find that you would like to advance the knowledge of that interest to others, you could start a brand new Group. In some cases a Group you may be interested in joining has a full membership. There is nothing wrong in starting a similar group. I'm sure the other members would be pleased to assist. We are extremely lucky to be a thriving u3a, but it can only keep running with good administration. Please help, if you can.

Having seen some of the proposed list of interesting Monthly Meeting talks that Linda is presently putting together, I can assure you that there will be something for everyone.

However, we still have 2022 to complete, with our next Monthly Meeting on Friday 25th November AND watch out for information about our Christmas Meeting at **THE EMMANUEL CENTRE** on Friday 16th December 2022. There is still some planning to do at the moment but the full details will be sent to all members in good time.

The sun has just come out so, maybe, I can get into the garden and do the weeding I'd promised myself I was going to do!! See you on Friday 25th November for our next Monthly Meeting. The details for this are on Page 5.

GROUPS' FACILITATOR

Ann Fletcher

On Thursday 3rd November we held our first Co-ordinators' meeting for over two years. It was great to see a lot of our long-serving Co-ordinators again, and to meet up with a lot of new Co-ordinators who have taken on the role since our last meeting.

We started off by thinking about what our groups had achieved over the last couple of years and lots of good things had happened, even with the problems caused by Covid. Most groups were pleased that they had become quite expert at using Zoom, something that we hadn't heard of before March 2020! Then we went on to think about problems that the groups might be having. Some groups were concerned that their members were getting older and may not want to meet for much longer. Others agreed that one major problem was communication between the Co-ordinator and the group members, where the Co-ordinator would send out reminders about meetings and some people wouldn't respond. This meant Co-ordinators were unsure whether a member was attending a meeting or not. So, pull up your socks! Please reply to emails that you receive!

Aileen Burgess, our Accessibility Secretary, talked about her role and how she could help groups to sort out any problems with accessibility for their members. This could range from making a change of venue, finding different ways of travelling to venues and considering how best to present written material to those with limited vision. There was also discussion about how best to communicate with group members as not all u3a members are confident with electronic communications.

Debbie Wood, our Beacon Administrator and Website Manager, talked about the new Beacon system which has been introduced this year, which will help us to run our finances, record our membership and communicate with members. Each Co-ordinator will be able to put in the details of their group and then use the information to send emails to members. They will also be able to see if the members have renewed their membership each year without having to check membership cards.

Sandra Randall, our Chairman, and Debbie Wood have been working hard over the past month or so and have produced an up-to-date handbook for Co-ordinators. This was handed out to those Co-ordinators who had attended the meeting, but if you weren't there, for whatever reason, you will be receiving your copy sometime soon. Debbie will also be contacting you about Beacon.

At the end of the meeting we all agreed that it had been a very successful get-together and that it was great catching up with old friends and acquaintances. Let's hope that nothing stops us from meeting together again next year!

LIBRARY TABLE

Linda Butcher

Thanks to the committee we are now able to bring back our library, so please bring any contributions to the next meeting. I am really looking forward to seeing what everybody has been reading during the last three years and I can't wait to talk about books again.

There are already two bags of books to start the library off and they will be set out on the table when you arrive.

MONTHLY MEETING

**2.30pm on Friday, 25th November
at the Canon Roche Centre, Billericay**

Speaker Victor Knope

**“Boadicea, warrior queen in history and legend:
her links to the Essex area examined”**



“Everybody” knows about this famous queen – how she swept down through Suffolk, Essex and Hertfordshire in righteous vengeance to avenge the atrocities meted out to her by the Romans, and then was herself killed. Except that most of what we know is almost certainly untrue, or at least inaccurate. This talk tries to separate fact from fiction.

“Victor Knope is a keen historian with strong links to the local area. He is a trustee and experienced guide with the Copped Hall Trust, which is overseeing the restoration of the 18th Century Copped Hall Mansion and regularly lectures on topics of general interest.”

BEACON

The Basildon and Billericay u3a now uses an online membership management system called Beacon. We use this system to manage all aspects of personal membership, group membership and u3a finances. As a registered charity our u3a also needs to submit information to various official bodies.

Beacon is now used by over half of all u3a groups across the country and has been found to be the best way of compiling the information they need. It is very useful for our committee to be able to see how many individual members are taking part in groups. This enables us to plan for the future, open up new groups and make forecasts as to any financial help they may need. It also ensures that only fully paid up members of Basildon and Billericay u3a attend our groups and meetings.

Please be assured that Beacon complies fully with Data Protection regulations. Only the designated Beacon Administrator can access every area of the system. Other individuals i.e. our Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Groups' Facilitator can only access those areas that they have a personal responsibility for. Group Coordinators likewise can only access information pertaining to their group, and this information is limited to names and certain contact details.

In future Group Coordinators should send all emails to members of their group via Beacon. (These emails can be seen only by that Coordinator and their group members, they are not visible to any other persons, including the Beacon Administrator.) This will ensure that no group member will have access to another member's email address, a requirement of Data Protection, and also helps to protect you from unauthorised access from any dubious contacts. Ongoing support will be readily available for all Coordinators should they require it.

A BIT MORE FROM ANDY FLETCHER!

Last year, in the November 2021 Newsletter, I wrote this:-

QUOTE: Elsewhere in this Newsletter, you will see that there are some spaces appearing on some of the Interest Groups, and the possibility of new groups opening. Prompted, I guess, by my musings on Remembrance, I wondered if there would be any interest in forming an "irregular" Group for like-minded ex-Servicemen and women? I would be perfectly happy to be the Coordinator if there is enough interest. The idea would be to get together socially somewhere appropriate for lunch, say, once every two or three months to share a couple of hours together. Please let me know if you are interested and send me an e-mail with any ideas. **UNQUOTE.**

I am VERY sorry that I have not followed up on the replies that I received; other things took over I'm afraid!! I'm still very happy to hear from anyone and perhaps we could get together and swing a few lamps.

October 2022 Report

We are a friendly non-competitive group with handicaps 13-28 who would be pleased to see more golfers join us and enjoy the great outdoors in winter. How can we be non-competitive but have handicaps? Some members choose to keep a record of every round they play on the free handicap site Golfshake, whilst others don't and just turn up for the fresh air, exercise and tea afterwards. If you are interested please contact our coordinator or any of the golf group members.

On September 15th six of us collected a loyalty stamp at Stapleford Abbots towards the five needed for a free round at our Christmas game and meal.

A lovely sunny autumn day on September 22nd saw us at Mardyke Golf Club, South Ockendon, where the course was busy with some queuing slowing progress to play at several holes. We prefer to have the course to ourselves! We still got round in our usual 4 hours 10:30-2:30 with time for tea afterwards.

We enjoyed another sunny Thursday at Risebridge Golf Club on September 29th where the course improvement works had been completed and the greens and fairways were in excellent condition. This gave Colin his best ever round, with 9 pars and a birdie and a drop in handicap to 13.3.

On 6th October we went "north" to Notley Golf Club to spread our venues beyond South Essex and experience the hills and valley along the River Brain. It was quite a breezy day which made 8 holes more challenging than usual to get the ball from one side of the valley to the other, over the river Brain.



Photo of u3a golfers at Notley showing the pylon next to the 17th green on the far side of the valley. Millionaire's Golf with no one in front or behind us.

GOLF GROUP (continued)

The 13th October was one of those “rain early, fine later” sunny days at Stapleford Abbots. We collected another loyalty card stamp from a round which is very reasonably priced at £14.

Winter started for us with a seriously wet day at Dunton Hills on 20th October. The course layout returns players to near the clubhouse after the ninth hole, so one member took advantage of an early exit from the rain whilst the remainder enjoyed a dry back 9.

Another “rain early, fine later” day on 27th October was enjoyed in sunshine at Basildon Golf Club. There are three seriously “blind” holes on this course, which members find challenging. It needs prior experience to know how to get on the greens when you can’t see them until close up. Despite the difficulties John came close to a rare birdie at the 18th and settled for a par.

On 3rd November back to Stapleford Abbots for the last loyalty stamp. However, the early rain with more forecast, reduced our numbers to two players. After teeing off half an hour late, it turned out the rain cleared after playing 3 holes, and we enjoyed a calm overcast round with almost no-one else on the course. At the par 3, 160yard 6th hole Dave E drove into the pond, then chipped the recovery shot straight into the hole for a most unusual par result – the only par of the round!

Report by Stuart Allen

HALF RAMBLE GROUP

Joan Lee

We meet on the first Monday of every month at 10.30am. Walks are open to all u3a members, just turn up on the day. We walk for about one hour at a leisurely pace, mainly on flat ground, but it can be muddy. We always hope to finish with coffee (or lunch) and a lively chat to round off the day.

The aim of our group is that individual members will take a turn in choosing, planning and leading a walk on an occasional basis.

Monday 5th December Hockley Woods SS5 4RN. Park in the Bull Pub, Main Road B1013

Monday 2nd January Post Christmas lunch at the Running Mare, Galleywood CM2 8PN.
Please contact me if you have not booked

Monday 6th February Crondons Park Golf Course. CM4 9DP.
Meet in Stock Village Hall car park CM4 9LY

NOVEMBER VISIT TO THE THAMES BARRIER



Our visit commenced with a very informative presentation by our guide, Pam, who told us how and why the barrier was built. It has been operational since 1982 to protect London from exceptionally high tides and storm surges. Although it had been discussed for decades that London could be susceptible to flooding, it was 1974 before work started. It has so far survived 12 collisions from ships without sustaining any serious damage.

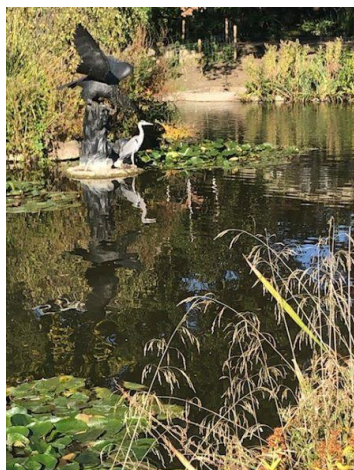
After Pam had given us a huge number of amazing facts and figures and some history of the Thames before the barrier was built, she took us outside to take a closer look and told us that the stainless steel covering on the shell shaped structures have never required any maintenance since they were built and which still look like new. Up to ten years ago visitors were allowed on the barrier but now it is a very high security area and access is strictly controlled. The decision on whether to close the barrier gates rests with one person, the Thames Barrier Duty Controller, as it is considered that committees can never agree on a decision. Amazingly there are 125 species of fish in the Thames, even seahorses. We finished in the Information Centre downstairs where there is a working model of the barrier, film presentations, technical information and displays about flooding and the environment. Pam's enthusiasm and knowledge was impressive and we all hope that we will be able to retain even a small amount of the information she gave us.



RAMBLING GROUP

Brian Parker

Our November walk has not yet taken place at the time of writing this.
I took these photos when trying out the December walk which will take place on
Wednesday December 21st...



Heron in Regents Park



The view from Primrose Hill



Gasometer near King's Cross

We will be walking from Baker Street Underground station through Regents Park, onto Primrose Hill and then along the Regents Canal to Camden Lock and Kings Cross. The distance is 6 miles.
If you do not wish to do the walk up to see the view from Primrose Hill, you can wait by the canal and we will re-join you about 15 mins later. At Camden Lock there are plenty of places to eat including a Wetherspoons. From here, you can either continue with us to Kings Cross or catch the Underground at Camden Town changing at Moorgate.

Please meet at **10.30 am** by the statue of Sherlock Holmes outside Baker Street Station, which is next to the Planetarium. We will wait for a short a time but let me know if you are running late.
For those coming from Billericay, you should get the 9.37am train to Liverpool Street and then get the Circle, Hammersmith and City or Metropolitan Line direct to Baker Street. The train from Billericay costs £20.10 off peak, or £13.25 with a railcard. Using a contactless bank card is the best way to pay on the underground, and will cost £5.00 for the return journey.
I will be at Billericay station at 9.20 if you want to travel with me.
For those coming from Basildon and Laindon, the train for Fenchurch Street is at 9.35am and the fare is £15.30 or £10.05 with a railcard. This arrives at Fenchurch Street at 10.09am.
Take the 5 minute walk to Aldgate Underground Station and pick up the same underground lines to Baker Street.

Please contact me if you have any questions. All the above are dependent on there being no strikes. So please check

The January walk is also planned. This will be on **Wednesday 18th January 2023** and a good way to start the New Year.
This will also be in London and the walk will start from Liverpool Street and Tower Hill Underground stations and we will be walking alongside the River Thames to Canary Wharf. So relatively flat and only 5 miles.
Any ideas for our February walk would be appreciated.

SOLO UNO SUNDAY

Margaret Way



Solo Uno Sunday had a day out in Southend on Sea. This is us on the train going down the longest pier in the world I believe. The new trains were very comfortable and smooth running. Looks like someone in the next carriage approved of our photo! We had coffee at the end of the pier and a good chat. There was quite a thick mist so visibility wasn't too good but it did clear as the day went on, even the sun came out. We had one of the best fish and chip meals we had ever had in a small restaurant under the arches, then a nice walk along the top road with a great view of the gardens below and out to sea. We didn't make it to the arcades, but maybe next time.

WELLBEING GROUP

Aileen Burgess

We have been meeting for 5/6 months now. If the weather is fine we tend to meet in lovely open spaces. We have met at Lake Meadows, Hannngfield Reservoir, The Thameside Nature Reserve at Mucking, down at the Thames near Stanford le Hope and this month at the nature reserve at Dunton/Langdon Hills.

What lovely places, quite a dramatic view of the Thames, you can see the Coryton Container Port and wading birds at Mucking, and the Plotland Museum at Dunton, as well as lovely walks. There are lovely coffee bars at both sites. We will definitely be going there again, getting out in the fresh air and seeing lovely countryside really helps with our wellbeing.

We talk about how we maintain our wellbeing and exchange ideas. We've discussed favourite books and places, and its great meeting new like- minded people. There are still a couple of spaces if anybody is interested.

CANASTA GROUP

Eileen Line

The canasta group has been going for a year now and we seem to have settled at nine or ten players. We play at 2 pm every Thursday afternoon at my home. Some members were beginners, others could remember playing years ago, but we've all got the hang of it now. A number of the players have other commitments that means they miss a day or two, or other things may crop up at any time. We can manage ok, but it would be useful if we had 1 or 2 new players.

The Canasta group is a very welcoming group for anyone who would like to come along and try it as a new game, or even refresh an old memory of having played previously.

PETANQUE GROUP

Lewis Paul



The Group particularly enjoyed playing during the warm, sunny summer, and were pleased to welcome many new members. Attendances at both our Monday and Thursday meetings have been good and reached record numbers in the past few weeks.

New members are always welcome. If anyone wishes to join or maybe just give it a try, we play all year round, with bad weather rarely causing us to miss a session. We meet at Lake Meadows on Mondays at 10.15am and Thursdays at 2.30pm. You can just turn up and we can fit you in. If you don't have any boules we can provide some, but please telephone or email in advance.

At the end of October we welcomed Ongar Petanque Club to Lake Meadows for a friendly match. The Billericay micro climate was kind to us and six pairs from each side enjoyed a pleasant morning with some very close and exciting games. The final outcome depended on the final throw of the match..... Basildon and Billericay u3a winning by 10 games to Ongar's 8. The picture shows some of the action.

SAVE THE DATE!

OUR CHRISTMAS SOCIAL EVENT

Friday December 16th 2022

We will be holding our popular Christmas Social event again this year

in the **Emmanuel Hall, Laindon Road, Billericay**

Live entertainment by **"The Daisy Bowlers"**

Further details will be circulated to members very soon



Newsletter Contributions

If you have any items please send them by **12.00 Noon**

on Wednesday, 7th December 2022

Please note the early date

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 bbu3anewsletter@gmail.com

Please do not send any items in pdf format. I do not have the software to convert these items into Word for the newsletter.

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 personal details of individuals (address, email or phone number) have been redacted from the on-line versions.

Janis Horsley (Editor)