



BASILDON AND BILLERICAY

u3a

NEWSLETTER No 353

APRIL 2023



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Sandra Randall

So – Spring has sprung, the grass has riz, now we wonder where the volunteers is.

Yes we are coming to the time of year when some committee members have reached the end of their term allowable on the Committee.

Ann Fletcher, as Groups Facilitator, has now served on the Committee for five years. She has done an excellent job in the role and has always been a valuable member of the committee. I for one will miss her.

Although you can stay on the Committee for five years, it's not compulsory; you can try for a year and if it's not for you, that is up to you.

Never been on a committee? Well now is the time to try and I am sure you will enjoy being involved. Our u3a cannot exist without a committee, so don't leave it to *"someone else"* Stand up and be counted.

SECRETARY'S NEWS - "From under the stairs"

Andy Fletcher

I trust everyone has had a great Easter. Wasn't it brilliant to have some decent sunshine at last?

It is now a miserable Easter Monday so I thought it would be a good idea to tuck myself away and get up to date by crossing off a few items on my "To Do" list.

As you will be aware, the time is fast approaching for our **Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Friday 23rd June 2023**. As with all similar organisations, there are always some formalities to complete so that our u3a complies with our own Constitution and that of the u3a National Office. This enables us to continue to provide all the facilities and activities Basildon & Billericay u3a enjoy over the year. Therefore, we always give members two months' notice of the date.

Your Committee, I am sure you will agree, works hard to ensure an interesting calendar of talks, events, and Interest Group activities. Each Committee Member, under our own Constitution, may spend 5 years in their post and, as you will note from the list that will accompany this Newsletter, some of these posts have either been vacant for some time, or are due to become vacant at this AGM.

I am fully aware that I have mentioned the following matter before, however it is well worth repeating. Basildon & Billericay u3a cannot function properly without some of its members being willing to volunteer to fill the empty or time-served Committee posts. From a membership of nearly five hundred, I do find it discouraging that we do not appear to have people amongst us that would be happy to spend a couple of hours a month to attend Committee Meetings and to assist at Monthly Meetings. Along with the Notice of Annual General Meeting, you will also receive a "NOMINATION FOR COMMITTEE" form. **All** standing Committee Members will also complete this

form, having obtained a Proposer and Second; their positions not being guaranteed. Members can be a Nominee for **any** of the posts on the Committee. PLEASE, for the sake of the continuation of our u3a, dig deep and consider taking an active role. I am reminded of an appropriate notice that a friend of mine, who runs the membership for Canterbury Rugby Club, has had put up around their ground. It says, "Before you complain, have you volunteered?"

It should be remembered that, if our u3a Group closes, **ALL** Interest Groups, Monthly Meetings, and other activities will no longer be covered by the u3a Group or be able to call upon the u3a's National Office's assistance, legal advice, and Insurance arrangements etc. Financial support for individual Groups for the hire of venues etc. will also become unavailable.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter, or as an attachment to it, you will find further information about the AGM. A Draft Agenda will also be sent out and I would request members to advise me, no later than **Monday 19th June**, of any items for discussion. Please send items to fletchu3a@yahoo.com. You will be pleased to hear that, there will be a Cream Tea available to all those who **book in advance**.

Right, enough of that!! I thoroughly enjoyed hearing the life stories of our speaker, Pauline Curtis, at our March Monthly Meeting. I am hoping she may return some time to continue her reminiscences.

We must thank "the two Peters," for a very well attended and fun Quiz on 1st April. I always enjoy a Quiz and you can normally tell how good it is by how close the eventual scores from all the teams are at the end. This one was no exception and we had to wrack our brains over ten rounds and a Marathon, all of which featured an answer which had a connection to Wildlife. Ingenious! Table 7 won by a couple of points after some inspired guesses and some good general knowledge. I can't wait until the next one.

I am very much looking forward to our Monthly Meeting on Friday 28th April which is an illustrated talk about the social and political satire of Gilbert and Sullivan by Bernard Locket. As an Associate Member of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company when I was a LOT younger, and having seen nearly all their Operettas a few times, I will be trying very hard not to sing along with some of their wonderful music, especially Ruddigore and Iolanthe! See you then.

p.s. Did I mention that Ann and I were on Table 7?, along with Graham and Aileen, David, and Aileen's pal Gill.

GROUPS' REPORT

You find me a bit annoyed this month. I had hoped to tell you about a New Groups' Meeting that I had arranged for the beginning of next month but, due to the Easter holidays, I have been unable to book a room for the meeting. I could try to re-organise the meeting for later in May or the beginning of June, but I have other commitments that I must consider, so that is impossible.

I have come up with, what I hope is, a good solution. At the end of the May monthly meeting, anyone interested in joining one of the new groups suggested by members can get together to discuss forming a new group over their cup of tea. I thought that I would make it the May meeting to give people time to plan to come to the meeting. Of course, if you would like to join one of the groups and can't make it to the May monthly meeting, then you can give me your name and contact details and I can forward them on.

The two groups that have been suggested by members are Birdwatching and Crib (or Cribbage).

If you would like to join either of these groups, try and attend the May monthly meeting on 26th May and I will get interested people together. I believe that the talk that month is about Essex Wildlife, which should be very interesting. I will remind you of this proposal in the next newsletter too.

I would like to say a quiet hurrah this month too. The Essex Churches group was at a bit of a loss after the sudden death of their Co-ordinator, but now they have a new Co-ordinator and are planning lots more visits to some of the interesting churches in our county.

Talking of interesting churches, Andy and I joined in with the Essex Villages Group visit to Saffron Walden last week. We had a very interesting, guided walk around the town which included a visit to the very large parish church. This church was built on the wealth that came from the local wool and saffron farming. They claim that it is the largest parish church in Essex, larger even than Chelmsford Cathedral, and that the spire is taller than the one on the church in Thaxted!

Visiting these places makes you realise what an interesting county that we live in. There is so much history here. My Dad, who was born and bred in Wiltshire and only came to live in Rayleigh when I was a schoolgirl, used to say that he thought Essex was one of the country's best kept secrets!

I hope that you feel the same way too about our county, and that you can get out and visit some of its interesting places over the coming months. I know that several groups have got trips organised. So, let's hope that the weather improves and we can do our exploring in the sunshine!

NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BASILDON AND BILLERICAY U3A 2023

Notice is hereby given that the 33rd Annual General Meeting of the Basildon and Billericay U3A will be held in the Canon Roche Social Centre, 21 Laindon Road, Billericay on Friday 23rd June 2023, commencing at 2.30pm. Items for inclusion on the Agenda must be submitted to the Business Secretary by email or Royal Mail by Friday 26th May 2023.

Nomination forms for election of Officers and Committee Members should also be returned to the Business Secretary at the address below by Friday 26th May 2023 at the latest.

The Nomination form is being issued as a separate form (and attached in a separate file for those receiving their Newsletter by e-mail) as are the Minutes of our last AGM (June 24th 2022). You will need to keep these for reference at our AGM on 23rd June this year.

The U3A committee consists of the following posts:

Chairman – Sandra Randall - standing for re-election
Vice Chairman - vacant
Treasurer – Margaret Way -standing for re-election
Business Secretary – Andy Fletcher - standing for re-election
Members Secretary – Stuart King - standing for re-election
Speakers' Secretary – Linda Stewart (co-opted candidate for election)
Groups Facilitator – vacant
Newsletter Editor - vacant
Website/Beacon Manager – Debbie Wood - standing for re-election
Publicity Secretary - vacant
Accessibility Secretary – Aileen Burgess – standing for re-election

Further information about any of these posts can be obtained from the Business Secretary.

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

Andy Fletcher
Secretary

FROM THE EAST OF ENGLAND u3as

Pilot Session – Family Photos and Family Histories Wednesday 14th June 10.30 am On Zoom

Most of us have collections of photos, however small, that show our families' lives in the past. Photos are often the most common and sometimes the only record we have. This pilot session will explore how to make the most of family photograph collections. The session is led by social historians Laura King (University of Leeds) and Jane Hamlett (Royal Holloway, University of London). Both specialise in the history of the family in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The pilot session is a part of a new project that Laura and Jane are developing that explores the way families document their lives and experiences through personal photography. The session will provide an initial toolkit for exploring the meanings of personal photo collections. Laura and Jane will give a short talk about the topic, before there's some time for discussion and sharing a photo. Themes will include:

- Thinking about the choices people made about which photographs to keep and how to preserve them – how do the ways our relatives assembled their photos affect how we understand them today?
- Interpreting relationships and reading emotional meaning in family photographs – how can we interpret pose and facial expression? Who is included in family photos and why?
- Understanding the social context of family photos – what can photos tell us about how our relatives experienced home life, work and leisure?

If you would like to, please do bring a family photo to share with us online for discussion. Click here to enrol: <https://forms.gle/ink1DMdjLCRXEReb6> or email Maggy Simms at slp@u3a.org.uk



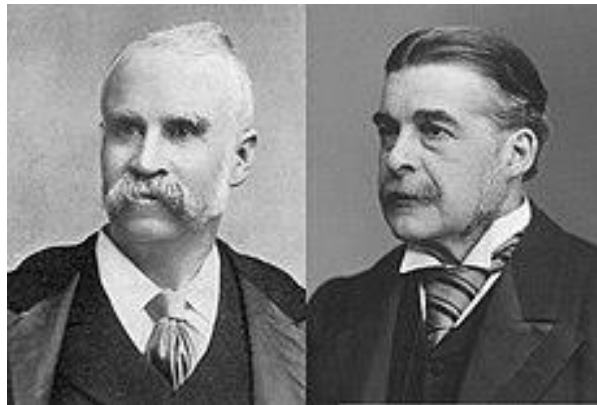
Get to the enrolment form via the QR code if you prefer using your mobile

MONTHLY MEETING

**2.30pm on Friday, 28th April 2023
at the Cannon Roche Centre, Billericay**

Speaker Bernard Lockett

**Gilbert & Sullivan – Illustrated talk about the social and political satire of
Gilbert and Sullivan.**



Bernard is an author and a lifelong Gilbert & Sullivan enthusiast; two of his books are about them. Since 2007 he has been a Trustee of the International Gilbert & Sullivan Festival. Bernard's talk begins as an historical background, and then an assessment and overview of the shows. It is followed by a look at the vast amount of social and political satire in the works, and finally he assesses the worldwide popularity of G&S in the 21st century, and modern production values.

Next Month's Meeting is on Friday 26th May 2023

Speaker Liz Huxley

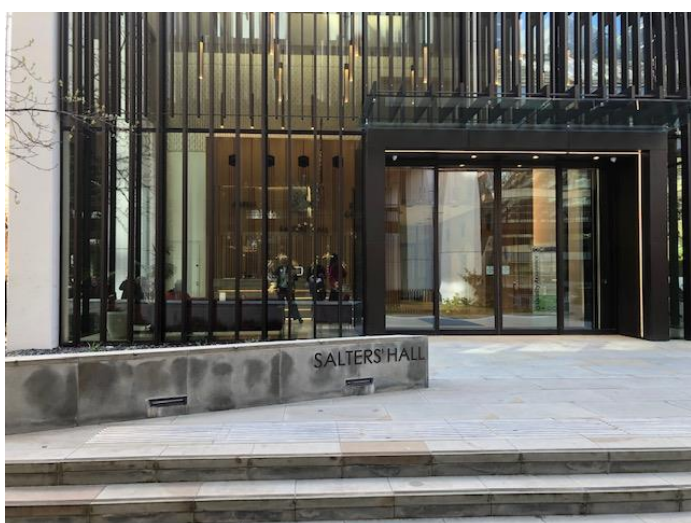
Essex Diary (wildlife of Essex through the year)

APRIL VISIT TO SALTERS' HALL IN LONDON

On the bright sunny morning of April 4th, twenty seven of us met up at Liverpool Street station for a walk past Moorgate to London Wall, and the Salters' Hall.



There are more than one hundred Livery Companies in London and we picked one of the original companies to visit. The Salters' Company is one of the oldest Livery Companies in the City of London, and is one of the Great twelve livery companies. It was established in 1394 and has been located in seven different Halls. The previous hall in St Swithin's Lane was bombed in 1941, and the present building, designed by Sir Basil Spence, was completely refurbished in 2016. Our Guide said that this was a most unique Livery Company Building,



Entrance to the Salters Hall



The Company's Motto
"Sal Sapit Omnia" - Salt Savours All

The Company was originally formed to market and distribute the sale of salt, but now it is set up as a charity. It manages some Alms houses and has formed a chemical institute to promote chemistry in education. It carries out a great deal of charity work, and the Salters' Charitable Foundation upholds this philanthropic tradition by distributing grants and donations to a wide range of causes. Each year they chose new wardens and a Master, and on two occasions has their Master become the Mayor of the City of London. In more recent years, three ladies have held the position of "Master" of The Livery. There are three categories of membership; Apprentice, Freedom and Livery. The building also holds a large wine cellar and a big archive room with their oldest document dated 1216. It also has a lovely garden, which anybody can access, and is right next to a part of the original London Wall.



Our leader, Mick Healey, then showed us some other local places of interest before we adjourned for a late lunch.

Report by Brian Parker

HALF RAMBLE

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 1st May - Langdon Nature Discovery Park (Plotlands)
Lower Dunton Road, Basildon. SS16 6EJ

Monday 5th June - Little Burstead Laindon Common CM12 9TA. Park in public carpark at start of Laindon Common Road

SOLO UNO SUNDAY

Margaret Way



Solo Uno Sunday had a great day out at Hedingham Castle for their Spring Bulb Walk. There was also a display of peoples' super cars, which were extremely noisy when they finally drove away. The grounds were lovely, although a bit muddy in parts. Coffee in the Keep café and then some exploring up the dodgy staircases, but we all made it back down again with no disasters.

We then walked into the village and found a very nice pub where we enjoyed a lunch and a drink. It is such a pretty village and well worth another visit to explore it in more detail. The rain held off for us and we all agreed it was a good day out.

SCRABBLE FOR FUN

Carol Kersch

We are a small group of members who meet once a month to play scrabble. We meet on the second Wednesday of each month at the Canon Roche Hall in Laindon Road, Billericay for two hours from 10am to 12.

We usually play two games with a coffee break in the middle. We play for fun so there is no pressure and you are allowed to use a dictionary to help check spelling or meaning of a particular word. Beginners are most welcome too. This is a great way to meet people and keep your brain cells working.

If you are interested in joining our scrabble group please contact me by email or by telephone I look forward to hearing from you.



Essex Villages Group enjoyed a day out in Saffron Walden this month. We had a tour lead by a Blue Badge Guide and learnt a lot about the history of the village, right back from when it was a small Roman settlement. Walden became the centre of the Saffron Industry in the 1500s and so the name became Saffron Walden. It boasts the largest parish church in Essex, where we spent some time looking around and hearing more of its history. The Town Hall (pictured) is also a very impressive looking building. Of course there was a lot more information regarding the wealth and prosperous inhabitants of the past, but I can't remember it all. There were lots of interesting independent shops to browse around and spend some money, and a good Wetherspoons pub, where most of us enjoyed a good lunch before heading back home.



Report from Margaret Way

ROVING LUNCH

Stuart King



A new activity

group met today for the first time, with the idea of popping out to lunch in pastures anew. Instead of going to the usual familiar pubs and restaurants that we go to time after time, I thought it would be good to have a change of venue for a pint, a meal and a chat. So the best way to do that would be to have a mix of opinions and choices.

The theme would be that we could start afresh, with new people to get to know new destinations from a mix of people's experiences instead of the well-trying and tested, so we will take it in turn to choose a venue and see where we get.

We started the ball rolling with a pub just outside Billericay called The Old Windmill in South Hanningfield. It was a very pleasant pub; I had been there before but never with the new group of friends. We seemed to get on well together and got to know each other very quickly. I think it will be taking us to new venues and experiences over the coming months and years. The group started off with eight members, two were on holiday as it happened, so six of us met up on this occasion. That was good, because next time one of the six will be off golfing, but the two that were on holiday should be able to come, so we will have a new input. Also a change of scenery as it will be a different venue as well.

We will have to keep the numbers low because it's difficult to book large tables in pubs. So few can accommodate party-size tables, and you are too far apart to chat, but we'll see how it goes and adapt accordingly.

All in all, I thought it was a good start.

GOLF GROUP

Colin Perfect

March 2023 Report

We were rained off at Risebridge on 9th March, so we rebooked for 16th when three of us turned out under grey skies with some sunny periods. We seemed to find the going quite heavy and were grateful for a lunch break on the comfortable bench at the 10th tee.

With some members back from holiday there were six of us on 23rd at Stapleford Abbots. This is one of our favourite courses - good condition, easy to book, inexpensive and a loyalty card to give us good reason for returning, to get six rounds for the price of five. We returned on 30th March for another stamp on the loyalty card.



On March 30th, a windy showery day saw u3a golfers queuing for a start on the first tee at Stapleford Abbots.

We booked for Hartswood on 6th April but when seven turned up for a 10:30am start we were told it's "carry only" - no trolleys allowed because of soft going due to recent rain. After discussion and some traffic problems along the way, four of us adjourned to Dunton Hills which is our "go to" venue when there are problems elsewhere.

On April 13th the group went to Mardyke Golf Club where we hadn't played since last September. There was heavy rain the night before we played and we arrived expecting to see standing water and mud. What a lovely surprise for the six golfers to see the course in immaculate condition. No water, no mud and greens which were fast and true. On the tricky Par 3 4th hole Dave B had a rare opportunity of a birdie but alas it wasn't to be, perhaps the bantering encouragement didn't help!

We would be pleased to see golfers join us on Thursdays with a tee off time of about 10:30am at a different Essex course each week. Our 8 members have unofficial handicaps ranging from 33 to 14 and we play non competitively, leaving the scoring (or none) to individual choice.

Report from Stuart Allen

March outing to the Secret Bunker

Eight hardy souls set out to a secret destination on a rainy and cold day in March. We had our co-ordinates, a compass and satnavs at the ready, well prepared and wearing the correct clothing, camouflaged against the dangers ahead.

However, we need not have worried. It was a sign posted on Ongar Road "SECRET BUNKER turn Left" it said. We turned down this well-marked unsurfaced road and following the signs, saw a small bungalow set on the side of the hill.



Venturing in the front door led us to a downhill slope in a tunnel. Finally at the end, because of the slope and the fact that it was at the base of a hill, we found ourselves four or five floors underground in a concrete structure of immense size, and protected by huge metal doors weighing several tons.

Inside, the equipment was bewildering. Firstly we had air cleaning and filtering gear that would keep 600 people with safe clean air for months.



There were beds in rooms and dorms. Margaret Thatcher was asleep in one of them, and many rooms were full of equipment that would keep everybody inside informed about what was happening outside, having suffered a nuclear attack. There was a bank of teleprinters connected to every major city and town in the UK, radios, radar and typewriters. Don't forget, this was in the 1950s before word processors. Huge maps were on glass illuminated walls that you could see from both sides, all backed up with film shows and propaganda films of how it was, and how it will be.

They had no idea in those days what a nuclear attack would be like.

You were told to stay indoors for a couple of days and wash your boots before coming indoors. All sorts of things like that, as if you would still have been there if it had happened. Probably best not to have known in retrospect.

We slowly made our way up to the top and exited the building at and above the back of the bungalow.

If you haven't been you should, it's an eye-opener.

Report from Stuart and Judith King



We had good weather for the twelve of us on our easy walk from Heybridge Basin in March. It took just two hours for the return trip with good views of Northey Island, Osea Island and, in the distance, the old Nuclear power station at Bradwell on Sea. On return to Heybridge, we all decided to go in the tea rooms for refreshment.



Our next walk on **April 19th at Terling** takes place just before the April News Letter is issued.

Our May walk is a cross country walk starting from Mill Green, Fryerning.

We will meet at 10.15 on 17th May at the Car park **Opposite The Cricketers Pub, Mill Green Fryerning CM4 0RH**

This is a 15 min drive from Billericay. There is a car park, but it has some holes in it as you drive in, so take care. From there we will walk along grassy footpaths and a concrete path on a circular walk. This walk is 5.9 miles long and relatively flat, although there are six stiles in reasonable condition. There are no facilities on this walk until we get back to the car park. When we tested this route in March we saw lots of deer, as you can see from the two photos.



Please bring your u3a membership card. There are refreshments available at The Cricketers or the re-opened Viper.

As usual, please wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Boots help to protect your ankles. All u3a members are welcome to turn up on the day.

Where possible, please try to carshare. Most of us did in March.

THEATRE GROUP



After a very long break we are again able to visit theatres and cinemas, and are now pleased to let you read what we have been up to recently. Many more trips are booked for the future.

'Sunshine on Leith' featuring The Proclaimers songs.

Sunshine on Leith is a musical about the lives of two veterans who, on returning home from a tour of duty, find it difficult to achieve some normality. Their families, loves and lives are not always plain sailing. A marriage proposal rejected, a move to the USA and a Call Centre job all happen whilst their parents war over long term infidelity.

This was an enjoyable evening with good seats and an extremely believable cast. The featured songs of The Proclaimers were executed well. This was a must see show put on by The Billericay Operatic Society in the Brentwood Theatre at end of March and beginning of April.

Report from Anne Bass & Margaret Harrison

'Jersey Boys' at the Cliffs Pavilion Southend.

Four ordinary guys get together to make music and that's when the excitement begins. From the very first note, nobody had ever heard such sounds and their harmonies onstage were perfect.

However, behind the scenes, it is a story of rags to riches and back to rags again. Debts from gambling, Mafia threats and family problems, together with personal clashes, make this an interesting story.

We had excellent seats and the music was phenomenal. This was an afternoon of great entertainment, and another must see show when it comes to a local theatre again.

Report from Anne Bass & Margaret Harrison

A third visit saw a small group going to Cineworld in Basildon to see the live screening from the Royal Opera House of **'Cinderella' the Ballet**.

Cinderella is an age old fairy tale brought to life with fantastic dancers and the music performed by the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House.

In three acts, it starts in the home of Cinderella as she helps her step sisters get ready for the ball. A mysterious woman arrives and asks for help but the step sisters send her away. Later, when Cinderella is alone the woman returns and reveals herself as a Fairy Godmother. She summons the fairies of Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter to transform Cinderella with their gifts, and send her to the ball with one warning "Leave by Midnight"

Act 2 is in the palace grounds where the ball takes place. When Cinderella arrives looking so beautiful nobody recognises her, and she captures the Prince's heart. Caught up in the magic of the music and dancing Cinderella forgets the warning, and as the clock strikes midnight she rushes from the ball and loses one of her slippers. The Prince finds the slipper and then vows he will find the young woman it belongs to, as he has fallen in love with her.

Act 3 is back in the family home with Cinderella carrying on with her daily chores but hiding a secret from the night before. She has the other slipper in her apron pocket to prove the night before was real and not just a dream. When the Prince arrives the step sisters try to force their feet into the slipper he holds, but to no good. Cinderella, in trying to help her step sisters, drops the slipper and immediately the prince recognises her as the beautiful princess from the ball. The Fairy Godmother appears and the lovers now reunited walk away in happiness.

A truly exciting production with scenery and costumes made at the Thurrock workshop. Later in the year we are hoping to visit there on a tour as well as having a backstage tour of the Royal Opera House.

Report from Margaret Harrison

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

Iris Donovan

It's been a quite a while since I contributed an article so here is a bit of an update on the last few months. In January we only had one meeting and that was to review winter/Christmas images. We had a variety of themes and you can see some below.

In February, because the weather was still unpredictable, our monthly "outing meeting" was held at my house where I provided 3 table top sets and a variety of vases, flowers and a copious amount of knick-knacks for members to arrange however they liked.

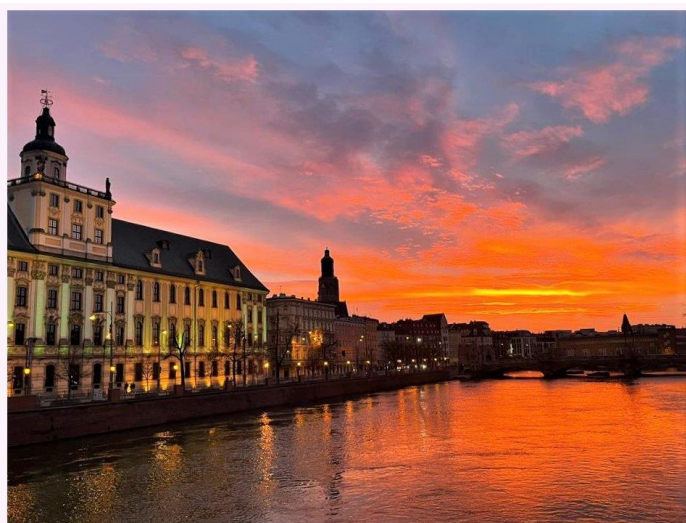
In March, our outing was to the Tate Modern where the aim was not to photograph "somebody else's art" but to look at the architecture or how members of the public were interacting with the artworks on display.

Finally, this month, we went to the Museum Of Power in Langford, Essex, where we were able to photograph various powered items as well as the surrounding grounds.

There is a selection of images below showing our recent activities.



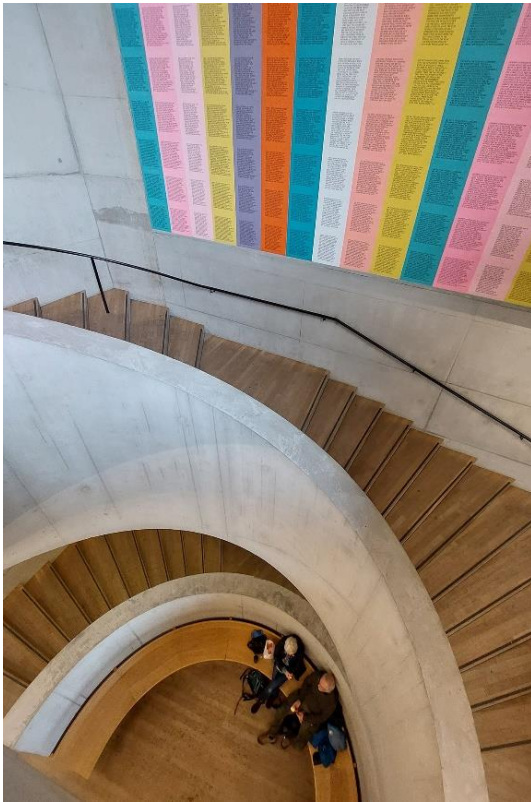
Frosty Leaf: Sula Smith



Winter Sunset: Val Hole



Snowfall: Uma Prasad



Tate Modern Architecture: Carol Kersch



Table top image: Uma Prasad



Museum of Power Grounds: Iris Donovan

Newsletter Contributions

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

on Wednesday, 17th May 2023

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

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)