



BASILDON AND BILLERICAY

u3a

NEWSLETTER No 355

JUNE 2023



The Summer Solstice on June 21st at Stonehenge

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Sandra Randall

Well here we are again, the months just fly past. At this time of year the garden seems hell bent on growing faster than ever. Would be better if the flowers and shrubs you want to grow, grew as fast as the weeds in dry weather?

Our u3a also grows in strength, and is something for which we are all grateful. Part of the reason for our growth is recommendation by members, a good committee and, most important of all, interesting, varied and well organised groups

As we come to the beginning of a new u3a year we need to start looking for new and stimulating projects, and that is when you all can help by suggesting what you would like to happen in the coming year.

SECRETARY'S NEWS (from The Icelandic Sea/North Sea) **Andy Fletcher**

I'm writing this aboard the Sky Princess on our way back from an unbelievably spectacular cruise around the Norwegian fjords and Iceland. It has been wonderful to be back at sea for an extended time and, as all of us as members of the u3a know, it's wonderful to expand your knowledge of new places and to enjoy new cultures. I'm pretty sure that back in 1972, I would NOT have been made quite so welcome as we have been in this trip. I was aboard a Frigate defending our fishing fleet in the Cod War!!

I am extremely pleased to note, with our AGM coming up, that we have had some volunteers come forward to take up the vacant posts on the Committee.

See you all on Friday 23rd June.



GROUPS' FACILITATOR

Ann Fletcher

Some great news to start with. At the last monthly meeting we were able to start a new Birdwatching group. Thank you to Lynda who volunteered to take on the role as Co-ordinator. I am sure that you will hear more from the group in the future.

Now some sadder news. This is my last report as Groups' Facilitator. My five years in the role will be finished at the AGM. I have really enjoyed doing this job. I have met some really lovely people and had a lot of support from our members. I would like to say a big thank you for all that support. Volunteering is an amazing thing. Not only do you help others, but you get a great deal of self-satisfaction. Don't be afraid to volunteer - you will enjoy it!

ACCESSIBILITY SECRETARY

Aileen Burgess

Being a coordinator.

It's about seven months since I started the wellbeing group, and to be honest I was very nervous. However, it has been a great experience and I'm so glad I did it. I have made new friends, as everybody involved is very likeminded and we all get on well. We share the responsibility and everybody comes up with ideas. We have been restricted by the numbers, as finding a venue once a month proved impossible. However we are thinking about extending the group whenever we go out and about. We have been to new places and shared some great times.

If you are thinking you have an idea for a new group, make the decision and go for it. It is certainly not onerous and if you need any advice and guidance you can ask any committee member for a few tips.

MONTHLY MEETING

**2.30pm on Friday, 23rd June 2023
at the Canon Roche Centre, Billericay**

Basildon and Billericay u3a Annual General Meeting

**THIS IS A MEMBERS ONLY MEETING
Please remember to bring your u3a membership card**

Next Month's Meeting July 28th 2023

"Death (almost) in Paradise"

Speaker: Neil Sadler

Neil trained as a school teacher and worked on the Isle of Man before returning to England for a very brief spell as a civil servant based in Bristol. In 1978 he decided that an office based job was not for him and he joined the Sussex Police

He spent much of his 30 years' service as an operational officer in various ranks across Sussex, also working briefly in Hong Kong, Trinidad and Abu Dhabi....he even survived Bognor Regis, Haywards Heath and Crawley!

This talk recalls his times working with the police in Trinidad and life in Barbados, which is known as the fictional island of Saint Marie in the TV series.

"The answer's Rum, now what was the question?"

Visit to St Mary the Virgin, Bulphan 31st May 2023



On a bright but chilly morning, we met outside the church of St Mary the Virgin. We were greeted by Frank Woollard, Churchwarden, who escorted us around the church showing us the highlights and telling us the history.

The present church was built in 1560, however the first ministry recorded was in 1290 when Peter de Elm was “Parson of Bulewefan” (Bulphan).

The nave is of particular interest. It stands due east to west, but it is immediately noticeable that the axis of the Chancel, Nave and Belfry Tower are out of alignment. Some people believe that this architectural feature represents the drooping head of Christ upon the Cross. An alternative tradition maintains that the church was built this way so that the Devil did not have straight access from the west door to the altar.

The rood screen is of interest; tradition relates that the rood screen stood in Barking Abbey (Bulphan was under the jurisdiction of the Abbess of Barking) and arrived at its current location on the dissolution of the Monasteries. It is undoubtedly very old, and probably dates from the 15th Century. The decorated side of the screen faces the altar, what the congregation sees is, in fact, the back of the screen.

Of particular note is the 15th century structure which supports the bell tower, which is constructed entirely of heavy timber, divided by oak posts into four bays with side aisles.

We finished our visit with a wander through the beautifully kept graveyard which is tended by a group of village volunteers, admiring the “butterfly, bee and bug bed and breakfast” before adjourning to the Halfway House for lunch.

Report from Carol Minter



May visit to Norsey Woods



Seven of us met with Ken and Chris, our guides, on a bright Friday morning. Fortunately, the weather during the preceding week had been dry so the footpaths were not too muddy. Most of us have walked within these woods for decades, but even so we were taken through areas that we had never ventured in before. We had features pointed out of which we were unaware and were encouraged to stop and look and listen.

Although the usual points of interest here are concerning the natural environment, even these were given an historical bias, such as when and why different trees were introduced into the woods and how creatures had adapted to changes over time.

The location and geology of the terrain obviously had an impact on the use that was made of the environment. In earlier centuries it was a primary source of timber, mainly sweet chestnut which is easily coppiced. There may have been more oak trees, but these would have been used in the construction of manor houses and warships in times long ago. Hornbeam and Larch are other species that have been introduced over the centuries. To protect the woods from deer invasion a Woodbank was built surrounding the area. Remnants of this can still be seen on two sides of the wood.

The woods were also excavated for gravel for road building during Victorian times which explains the several dips and hollows within what would otherwise have been a plateau broken only by river valleys.

Specific historical sites that we saw included the Tumulus – a Bronze Age burial mound; the supposed site of the Battle of Norsey Wood during the Peasants' Revolt; World War One practice trenches; structures of unknown purpose built for the Second World War.

We spent more than two hours being informed and educated by Ken and Chris and would have carried on longer except that we had a table booked at a nearby pub for our lunch. I'm sure that we will all return to Norsey Woods and enjoy them even more now that we have a better understanding of the environment.

Photo thanks to Ken Richmond, The Norsey Wood Society

RAMBLING GROUP

Brian Parker

Many thanks to Mark for running the May walk from Mill Green, Fryerning whilst I was out of action. Seven members enjoyed some great scenery including seeing lots of deer on the 5.9 mile walk around Highwood in good weather conditions. They then adjourned to the recently reopened Viper pub at Mill Green.



Group photo at fishing Lake at Highwoods.

In the distance, deer seen on walk



Our **21st June** walk is at Little Easton and joining details were in the May Newsletter.

An Ice House



Our July walk is a cross country walk starting from Pleshey, near Great Waltham. **We will meet at 10.15 on 19th July** in the car park of Pleshey Hall community centre. This is just past the Church in **The Street, Pleshey – CM3 1HE**. This is a 30 min drive from Billericay. From there, we will walk along grassy footpaths and a concrete path on a figure of 8 walk. This walk is 5.7 miles long and relatively flat. There are no stiles, but there no facilities on this walk until we get back to the car park. When we tested this route in April conditions were very good. This is a different walk to the one we did last August.

Please bring your u3a membership card. There are refreshments available in a nearby village.

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.

Our **16th August** walk will be at Westley Heights, Langdon Hills.

GOLF GROUP

Colin Perfect

On May 18th we returned to Castle Point Golf Course but found the long grass heavy going. The fairway margins were cut long and the loose grass cuttings hid our wayward balls which were difficult to find. Even on the fairways the grass was too long to progress easily. It seemed the burst of spring grass growth had outpaced the mowers. We hope for better conditions next time.

We found conditions at Stapleford Abbots on 25th much better. On the first hole Dave E played a delightful 9 iron high over the trees to land on the green and recover his score for the hole. At the 18th his long 12 ft putt gave us joy to see his round finished in style.



There were seven of us at Risebridge on 1st June on a lovely sunny day with cooling breeze. Here we are, posing for a photo at the first tee.

And putting out on 18th where Dave B got a rare “par” thanks to a 12 foot putt which is always welcome but not often achieved.



Last time we visited Hartswood on 6th April we had to abandon the venue because the course was waterlogged and no trolleys allowed. This time on June 8th the course was dry and the weather sunny with breeze. At the 15th par 3 hole Stuart had an extremely rare “chip in for par” from 30 yards, followed immediately by John’s equally rare chip in from 12 yards. That put a spring in our steps for the final three holes and tea on the clubhouse veranda.

We now have nine prospective players in the u3a golf group, although we have not yet all been present at one meeting. New members would be very welcome any Thursday. John, our fixture secretary, tries to get a tee off time of near 10:30am at a different Essex course each week. Our members have unofficial handicaps and decide their own scores (or none) to simply enjoy a four hour walk with some golfing action in the sun!

Report from Stuart Allen

THE ECONOMICS & CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP

Linda Hallett

The Economic Thoughts Group is changing its name to Economics & Current Affairs and currently has spaces available for new members. The Group has been meeting successfully since 2000. In recent years we have moved on from researching economic theories and famous economists to focussing on current affairs issues (not 'party politics') and, in particular, the economic factors which are influencing what's happening in the world. Sometimes we focus on one particular subject, and at other meetings our discussions are more general. We aim to agree subjects in advance for the next meeting and circulate extracts from newspapers, magazines and online articles for members to read. Occasionally, if a member has a particular topic in which they are interested, he or she may prepare a paper for discussion.

We meet on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 14:30 and meetings last for approximately 2 hours. As they take place in members' homes, we have to limit our numbers to what can comfortably be accommodated. But, as one or two members may be away on holiday etc, we aim to keep a 'waiting list' of potential new members in order to invite them to meetings whenever possible.

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 3rd July Galleywood Common Park in Heritage Centre car park,
Margaretting Road, CM2 8TR
From Stock go over A12 roundabouts to top of hill and turn left at traffic lights

Monday 7th August Meet at The Greyhound pub, Magpie Lane, Little Warley CM13 3DZ. From the Brentwood Road take the Avenue past Thorndon Park.
At junction of Hartswood Road and Childerditch Lane turn left and after half a mile bear right onto Homefarm Road and then left onto Magpie Lane.

June Visit to St. Albans in Hertfordshire.

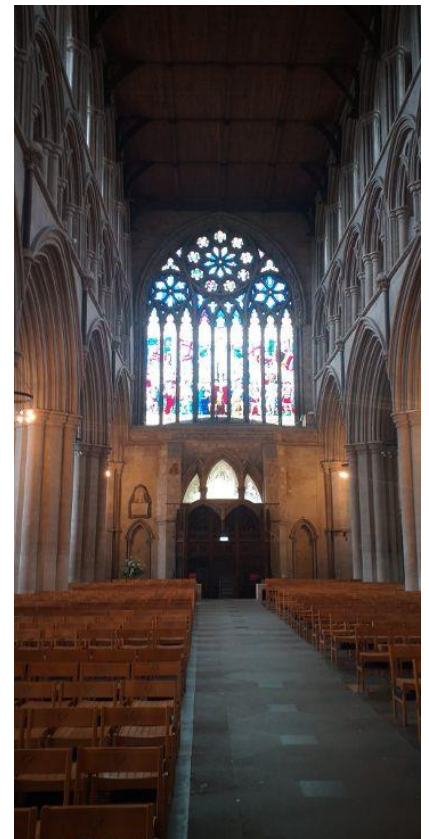
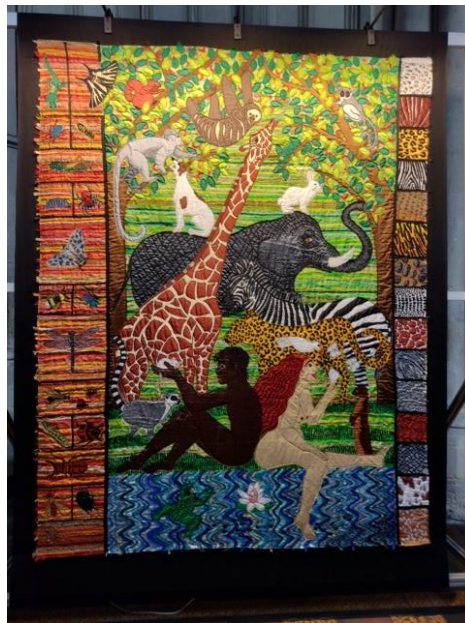
On a bright but slightly chilly day on the 6th June, twenty three intrepid venturers from Basildon and Billericay met at Liverpool Street station for our trip to explore the historic city of St. Albans. We travelled by tube to Farringdon, and then took the overground Thames link train to St. Albans City, followed by a short bus ride into the town

By this time we were all in need of a rest and some light refreshment, and headed for the St. Albans Museum and Gallery. This is positioned in the old town hall and has a cafe set in what was an old octagonal courtroom. It was a very interesting place to visit with lots of the old courtroom features still present including the prison cells which had been repurposed into toilets facilities.



Everyone had been provided with trail maps of the city and some of the group decided to explore independently. However, the majority of us headed to the Cathedral where we met Laurie our tour guide who told us about the long and interesting history of the Cathedral. This included the history of St. Alban who was the 1st British Martyr.





The cathedral is surrounded by beautiful parkland which unfortunately we did not have time to see.

After the tour many of us went to the Waterend Barn, the local Weatherspoon, which was comprised of two former listed barns. Afterwards we all made our way back to the station for our journey back to Essex.

There were lots of other interesting things to see in St. Albans but unfortunately one day was not long enough, but they do say you should always leave something to go back for.

Report from Kathy Carpenter

Photos from Margaret Harrison and Mark Elliott

DISCUSSION GROUP 2

Joan Lee

There are a couple of vacancies in our group at the moment. We meet on the second Monday of the month at the Old Kings Head, Stock Road Billericay, at 12.15pm.

Please get in touch if you would like to join us.

SOLO UNO SUNDAY GROUP

Margaret Way

The Solo Uno Sunday group were out and about at Paper Mill Lock last week. It was a very hot day and there were lots of people on their boards on the canal (or should I say Navigation). We managed to find a table in the shade for lunch after a long walk along the navigation. Lunch was very nice indeed. There were lots of dogs and children in the water having a great time. Seems to be a favourite spot for families.



Newsletter Contributions

If you have any items please send them by **12.00 Noon on Wednesday, 19th July 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

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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Janis Horsley (Editor)