



# BASILDON AND BILLERICAY

u3a

## NEWSLETTER No 356

### JULY 2023



#### **The King's Swan Marker, Swan Upping on the Thames.**

This census of swans takes place annually during July in a ceremony known as Swan Upping. Swans are counted and marked on a 70 mile, five day journey up the River Thames. The event commences on the third Monday at Sunbury and ending at Abingdon on the Friday.

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

**Sandra Randall**

### **Report from the AGM 23rd June 2023**

We now end one u3a year and start a new one. The last few years have sent us a few challenges and, as u3a members, we have all risen to the challenges and overcome them. Fortunately we have now been able to move on from meetings on Zoom and meet in person, which is what u3a is all about. We are fortunate in our membership that we have new groups being formed and members enjoying both outdoor adventure and indoor activities. As the Coordinators will know we even had a Billericay climbing group for a short time, which some of you joined!! Perhaps we could try this one for real. In 2022, for the first time, we had a picnic meeting in the Emmanuel Hall grounds, with a tree conveniently growing in the right place to afford us some shade from the sun. But this country being prone to the odd shower, we did ensure the Hall was available for us to have a picnic in its original form indoors.

The committee will always appreciate suggestions for new adventures or groups from any of our members. Most important of all, the committee would like to offer our thanks to all the coordinators for their dedication and hard work in keep the groups going, often overcoming a few obstacles on the way.

We all owe our thanks and gratitude to the dedicated team of Committee members who work unseen, and mainly without recognition, for the hours they put in to make our u3a the best it can be. We will particularly miss Ann Fletcher who has supported the Groups and Coordinators for the last five years, and is now stepping down. Margaret Way is another member who puts in many unseen hours keeping our accounts up to date and legal, and Linda Stewart, who joined us this year, and has provided us with some extremely interesting speakers. Stuart King, our membership Secretary, greets you at the door at the Monthly Meeting and works very hard unseen, keeping us all on our toes. Aileen Burgess, our Inclusion Officer, whose friendly face greets you at the door, and another face to be seen regularly is Andy Fletcher, our Secretary. Finally, Debbie Wood who jumped in at the last minute to take the notes for you. Debbie keeps our website looking polished and professional, and has this year spent many hours dragging us all into the future with Beacon.

We also owe a big thank you to Janis Horsley, who does an excellent job of editing our newsletter and keeping us up to date with our u3a news, and Mary Tibenham, without whom we would not get our delicious tea and coffee at the end of the monthly meeting.

Lastly, but by no means least, is Linda Butcher who single handedly sets up a display of books for you all to choose from and enjoy.

I am sure you will all join me in saying welcome to the two new members joining the committee this year Linda Anderson and Nihal Paul.

### **Basildon and Billericay u3a Committee 2023/2024**

POST	
CHAIRMAN	Sandra Randall
VICE CHAIRMAN	Nihal Paul
SECRETARY	Linda Anderson
TREASURER	Margaret Way
GROUPS FACILITATOR	Andy Fletcher
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	Stuart King
SPEAKERS SECRETARY	Linda Stewart
WEBSITE MANAGER AND BEACON ADMINISTRATOR	Debbie Wood
INCLUSION SECRETARY	Aileen Burgess

## **BASILDON AND BILLERICAY U3A ACCOUNTS FOR 2021**

Questions have been asked as to why the accounts for 2021 were not available.

The current Chairman and Treasurer were not on the Committee during this period, but have collated the facts.

The Treasurer at the time reached the end of their term in office and, after a short delay another member volunteered to take on the role. Due to Covid restrictions, the committee were not able to meet in person for several months, but then resumed meetings via Zoom. Unfortunately the member who had volunteered to take on the role, did not attend any of these meetings and finally resigned, having not taken any active part as Treasurer. There was then a further delay before another member volunteered to take on the role, which they were only able to perform for a short time before resigning. This explains why detailed accounts were not available for this period.

The main income for our u3a is from membership fees and our Membership Secretary took on the role of banking all membership payments during this period.

The Charities Commission was supplied with up to date information by our Business Secretary, who also updated u3a national records.

Our current Treasurer has done an excellent job of getting the accounts up to date from the date she took over.

We will print the bank statements, for the period during which detailed accounts are not available. These will be available to all members to see, on production of their membership card, at our next monthly meeting. If you would like to view them, could you please contact our Treasurer, who will then arrange this.

This chain of events pre-empted the decision to transfer all our membership and accounts to Beacon, which is the management system currently used by over 50% of u3a's in this country. This ensures that all records, as required by law, are kept safe and secure. It also enables easier transition from one committee member to another as they reach the end of their term.

So in conclusion although the situation was less than ideal, everything is now up to date.

Sandra Randall

Chairman Basildon & Billericay u3a

# MONTHLY MEETING

**2.30pm on Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2023  
at the Cannon Roche Centre, Billericay**

## 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?"

## **AUGUST MONTHLY MEETING - SUMMER PICNIC** **FRIDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST - 2.30 pm**



After last year's successful event we hope you will all enjoy another picnic in the field next to the Emmanuel Centre. Bring your own picnic food and chair or picnic blanket. Tea, coffee and soft drinks will be available as usual. We hope to have some gentle garden games for you to enjoy. Of course, we are all aware that this is Britain and if it rains we will use the Emmanuel Hall in good old British fashion!! No booking is necessary, just turn up and have a nice afternoon in the sun!! (Hopefully!!)

**Emmanuel Centre, 66-68 Laindon Rd, Billericay CM12 9LD**



**NEW  
EVENT**

**u3a Excursion to**

**GREEN ISLAND GARDENS**

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

**Green Island Gardens are private gardens, open for the public to visit in  
Ardleigh near Colchester, Essex.**

**Professionally designed by its owner, Fiona Edmond, Green Island Gardens  
are laid out as a series of structured gardens displaying a huge range of  
unusual trees, shrubs, perennials, and bulbs.**

**£11.50 per person**

Cost includes coach, entry and guided Tour (Subsidised by B&B u3a)

This is your chance to visit without the drive, and with your u3a friends

Booking will be on “first come, first served” basis

**Coach pick up points**

Depart 9.30 am Southernhay Basildon

Depart 9.45am Billericay Station

Depart 10.00am Stock Village Hall

**PLEASE STATE YOUR PICK UP POINT**

Lunch will need to be pre booked, a menu will be sent to you after booking

To book your place contact the Treasurer, Margaret Way,

## **RAMBLING GROUP**

**Brian Parker**



**The group at Great Easton church**



**Inside Titly Church**

**Photos taken by Mark and Kathy.**

Nine of us made the journey to Little Easton, just north of Great Dunmow for a wonderful walk led by Olivia that included three amazing churches, one old WW2 air-drome and many planes flying over to land at Stansted. Once again the weather was in our favour, although perhaps the number of stiles we encountered was not so good.



**Landscape we were walking through for part of the time.**

At the end of walk we all enjoyed refreshments at the recently refurbished pub called The Stag. This was the furthest we had travelled for a cross country walk. The next three walks will be nearer to home.

Our July Walk at Pleshey will have taken place just before the July newsletter is issued.

Our August walk is a cross country walk starting from Westley Heights, Langdon Hills. We will meet **at 10.15 on 16<sup>th</sup> August** in the Car Park just after the Millar and Carter Restaurant, at the top of Laindon High Road. **Langdon Hills Country Park – SS16 6HU.** This is a 15 min drive from Billericay. From there, we will walk along well used footpaths. This walk is 5 miles long and hilly in a couple of places, and will be led by Kathy, our local expert. There are no stiles. This is a different walk to the one we did in May last year and certainly not as hilly.

There are no facilities on this walk until we get back to the car park. There are refreshments available in the nearby Millar & Carter.

Please bring your u3a membership card. 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 car share.



## **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 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.

**Monday 4th September** - Meet in car park of South Hanningfield Tennis Club, Downham Road Ramsden Heath CM11 1PZ

This is midway between White Horse and De Beauvoir Arms.

## **PRACTICAL ART GROUP**

**Margaret Dunn**

We have been meeting regularly at the Canon Roche Hall once a month, and although the group is full, we have a short waiting list. On 6 July a group of seven of us from the class had an outing to Blackmore. Here we did outdoor drawing and painting in the garden of Judi Wood of Magarry's Antiques and Teashop. We also had a very nice snack lunch in the garden, and the weather was perfect. The class has been well attended during the year, and we are enjoying being led by Carole Feltham.

## **ESSEX HISTORY GROUP 2**

**Jacky Hathaway**

### **Proposed visit to Copped Hall**

The Essex History 2 Group is planning a trip to Copped Hall, near Waltham Abbey, Essex, for its **Friday September 15<sup>th</sup>** activity. We have booked a private tour of the available rooms in the house, the cellars and stables, as well as the grounds including the walled garden. The charge is £15 per person and this cost is based on a group of 20 people to meet the minimum charge. We have space for more u3a members to join us. Please let me know if you would like to be part of this trip. Contact details above.



The group went to the Gardens of Easton Lodge this month. They were celebrating WW1 and WW2 with live entertainment, stalls, and vintage cars; the gardens were also laid out beautifully. The music was great and the couple who did the entertaining got everyone singing along. You can see some of our group members in the treehouse and also looking at the cars and army vehicles from the war. There was a beautiful Italian Garden and Daisy's refreshment area did a good trade. The weather was kind to us too. Some of the stallholders were very knowledgeable, especially the man who told us all about the field hospitals and showed us items that would have been used.





## **GOLF GROUP**

**Colin Perfect**

### **June Report**

On June 15<sup>th</sup> seven u3a golfers gathered at Southend's Belfairs Golf Course in sunny and breezy conditions. After some discussions and directions we all eventually found our way from the two car parks through the woods to the starter's cabin. We were pleased to see Caroline back from injury and hoped that her recovery will be permanent. On our previous visit we had been troubled by wayward dogs picking our balls off the fairway, but that didn't happen this time so we may repeat a visit this year.



On 22<sup>nd</sup> June we were delighted to meet in the warm sunshine at Epping Golf Club. This was a "new course" for us and we enjoyed the exhilaration of a first visit. The six golfers were faced with quite hilly terrain near the junction of the M25 and M11. Thankfully for some the yardage was shorter than usual.

Having enjoyed the hills at Epping, we tried the hills at Basildon the next week on June 29<sup>th</sup>. These two are similar courses with "blind" holes which frustrate some members. We started in drizzle, with some pessimists dressed for a wet round, but the weather soon cleared to give us a sunny afternoon. On 6<sup>th</sup> July we returned to Stapleford Abbots, a regular favourite which is usually in good condition, easy to book ahead and then pay on the day. It was another stamp on our loyalty cards for a free round after five visits.

Cranham is quite difficult to book up because of demand for this easy flat course but by thinking ahead we visited on 13<sup>th</sup> July and booked for 20<sup>th</sup>. There are plenty of water hazards on this course, culminating in the 18<sup>th</sup> par 3 with a 140yd drive to a green surrounded by water. It's always a challenge to u3a golfers!

New members would be very welcome any Thursday at a tee time around 10:30 to finish for tea and a chat around 3-4pm. We enjoy a different course each week and assess our own scores and highlights of the round.

**Report by Stuart Allen**



## **THEATRE GROUP**

### **The King and I Cliffs - Pavilion Southend.**

Having seen the West End production of the King and I starring Yul Brynner and Deborah Kerr many years ago, we had not expected the revival and touring show to live up to the same standard. However, we were very pleasantly surprised and enjoyed an excellent show with all the familiar story line and songs we all know so well.

Helen George as Anna unfortunately had injured herself during the Thursday performance but on the Saturday performance her understudy, Maria Coyne, took the leading role and was brilliant. It wasn't until the interval that we discovered that Helen was not actually taking the leading role that night, as no verbal announcement had been made prior to the show.

The 10lb dresses worn by Anna must have been extremely difficult to wear, act and dance in throughout the whole performance but caused some amusement with the audience as one would expect! Women nowadays should be very grateful that this fashion is consigned to the Victorian era – fancy trying to travel by bus or train dressed like Anna, let alone walk down the High Street!

The children stole the show, their acting, dancing and singing skills were perfect.

A talented cast throughout, stunning costumes and wonderful music made for a most enjoyable and memorable evening, every bit as good as the original had been all those years ago. Understandably, the scenery, although excellent for a touring production, was not quite as elaborate as the long running West End show had been in the 1970's.

**Report from Helen & Chris White**

### **The Sleeping Beauty Ballet – Live Screening in Basildon**

This age old Ballet was first performed in Russia in 1890. The theatre company commissioned Tchaikovsky to write the score and Petipa to choreograph. Sleeping Beauty was their first ballet together followed by The Nutcracker and a revival of Swan Lake.

This production was performed by the Royal Ballet Company in London accompanied by the Orchestra from the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden.

The curtain raised at the christening of King Florestan's new daughter Princess Aurora. The fairies had all arrived to give their gifts to the new Princess when in came Carabosse, the Wicked Fairy. She was angry at not being invited and gave Aurora a spindle, saying that one day the Princess would prick her finger on it and die. The Lilac Fairy still had her gift to give, so she promised that Aurora will not die but fall into a deep sleep, only to be woken by a kiss from a prince.

The second act starts at Aurora's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday when four princes come to vie for her hand in marriage. However an old woman appears and gives Aurora a spindle on which she pricks her finger and falls asleep. The Lilac Fairy then casts a spell over everyone and causes a thick forest to grow over the palace.

A hundred years later Prince Florimund and his court are hunting when the Lilac Fairy shows him a vision of Aurora and he begs to be taken to her where she sleeps. He is stunned by her beauty and awakens her with a kiss. At last the spell is broken and Carabosse is vanquished for good.

A truly spectacular ballet with fantastic costumes and scenery, most of which were made at the Thurrock Centre. The work put in by the performers had brought life to this spectacular ballet.

A truly memorable night out, enjoyed by all. If it is shown again we can highly recommend going to see it.

**Report from Margaret Harrison**



**The group at Bures station**

Our July train journey with twenty one members was to Bures, which is actually two villages on the Essex/ Suffolk border. Bures Hamlet is in Essex, Bures St Mary is in Suffolk and they are separated by the River Stour. There is a very small station on the line from Marks Tey to Sudbury.

I think our group was surprised by the history they discovered. There is a medieval church with eight bells that has recently been renovated with Lottery funding. However, we were going on a one mile walk to see some hidden gems that are close together on the edge of the Dedham Vale.

First stop was at the Chapel of St. Stephen's which is a private chapel of the Manor of Tany and has effigies of three Earls of Oxford. The Archbishop of Canterbury dedicated the site in 1218, but building fell into disrepair and later became a school and a barn. In the 1930's it was restored by the Probert family. There is a lot of reading material in the chapel with pictures of its historic past.



**External view of St Stephen's Chapel**

**The view from the balcony of the Chapel**







Around the corner we then saw the Bures Dragon carved into the field. This legendary dragon terrorised the village in the Middle Ages and was first recorded in 1405 by a local monk. Apparently its skin was impenetrable. It was recreated in the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2012.

We then turned round to see a large boulder. Here is where it is believed that 14 year old Edmund was crowned in 855. He became King of East Anglia on Christmas Day. He died in battle against the army of the Danes in 869 for refusing to renounce his faith. He was martyred and eventually buried in 903 in the newly named Bury St Edmunds.

After all that history, it was time to go back down the hill to the aptly named Eight Bells pub, where they served some excellent food, before catching the train back.

**Report from Brian Parker**

**Photos from Mark Elliot**



## **KNITTING AND NEEDLEWORK GROUP**

**Margaret Dunn**

We recently met at my home, the first meeting since COVID, and had a very enjoyable meeting with someone who explained how to make Twiddle Muffs. These are muffs for dementia patients to keep their hands warm and give them something to do with their fingers as they twiddle with buttons, uneven knitted surfaces etc. She also suggested other knitted items we might like to make, like hats for premature babies. Our numbers are few and if anyone would like to join us please get in touch with me. We are going to meet once a month on a Friday morning at 10.30am and our next meeting is on Friday 28 July at 10.30am. We will arrange Friday meeting dates to suit members of the group.



**Visit to Nayland**



The Essex Villages group visited Nayland last month. Nayland lies on the northern bank of the River Stour, which divides Essex and Suffolk, so we had just crept over the Essex border for this trip. The name Nayland means an island, and the village developed on the higher ground above the lower river flood plain, which means that it is surrounded by a river.

Before the 17<sup>th</sup> century the wool trade brought prosperity to Nayland, and the merchants built many fine Tudor houses, and also an impressive church.

Once the wool trade declined many of the merchants moved away leaving behind their picturesque dwellings. The town dwindled into a quiet backwater, full of pretty historic buildings that hinted at its busy medieval past. This period of relative poverty prevented the beautiful old houses being knocked down to provide smart new homes, and so Nayland still possesses its Tudor and Stuart streets.

The church of St James is unusual in that it boasts a painting by John Constable, a Suffolk native who painted many of his most famous works in the Dedham Vale, just a few miles to the east of Nayland. St James also appeared in several of Constable's paintings. The painting 'The Christ Blessing the Bread and Wine' is set behind the altar, and was commissioned in 1809 by Constable's aunt, who was living in Nayland at the time. The painting was stolen in 1985 but recovered by the police and returned to the church.

Nayland is a lovely little village and well worth a visit as it is only a few miles beyond Colchester.

# **Newsletter Contributions**

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

**on Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> August 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](mailto: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 personal details of individuals (address, email or phone number) have been redacted from the on-line versions.

Janis Horsley  
(Editor)