



BASILDON AND BILLERICAY

u3a

NEWSLETTER No 357

AUGUST 2023



The Great British Summer 2023

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Sandra Randall

As we anticipate another busy month, we can look forward to our August picnic. Don't forget to bring your chair and picnic food, and for those of you who missed last year we also enjoyed some outdoor games.

There is still time to book for the trip to Green Island Gardens. This is a fantastic chance to visit these spectacular gardens, and as the cost includes coach transfer, entry to the Gardens and a guided tour by the owner, it is also great value!

I know we do not currently have an Aviation Group, (we used to have one) but if you would like one the following could be of interest to you.

Maldon u3a Aviation Group are planning a group visit to Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome on Friday 28th Sept. If you would like to join them, you are more than welcome. Contact me for details.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Linda Anderson

Hello Everyone

This is my first contribution to the newsletter as Secretary.

I only joined Basildon and Billericay u3a in March, and I must say that everyone I meet is very friendly both at the monthly meetings, in the interest groups I attend and, of course, on the committee.

The range of interest groups is broad and new ones seem to be popping up all the time. With this in mind, did you know that u3a week is taking place 16-24 September? It is an annual celebration of the learning and fun within the u3a movement. During the week, u3as host events in their local community to raise awareness of the benefits of being a u3a member. It would be lovely if members would like to invite a friend along to our meeting on Friday 22nd September, where we hope to show the wide range of interest groups we have to offer.

I have spoken to people who have considered joining u3a, but haven't because 'The groups are always full'. My experience is that the groups I wanted to join were full, but I went on the waiting lists and very soon I was invited to join - and there's always the possibility of new groups opening. So, unless you sign up, you won't have the chance to get involved.

Alongside this, there will be a programme of **online** events that any u3a member can attend

On **Tuesday 19th September** Heléna Horklotts, Older People's Commissioner for Wales, will discuss how she is working towards a Wales where older people are valued, rights are upheld and no-one is left behind. The u3a movement has been part of the campaign calling for an Older People's Commissioner in both England and in Scotland - and this is an opportunity for members to hear from someone with that role and how it can bring about change.

On **Wednesday 20 September**, John Tucker from The Woodland Trust will lead a discussion on how u3a members can get involved in supporting wildlife and the environment. The talk follows on from the movement's achievement of planting almost 10,000 trees in our anniversary woodland last year.

On **Thursday 21st September** award-winning writer, activist around ageing and TED speaker Carl Honoré will be giving a talk about how to embrace ageing as a privilege and adventure.

Find out more and book your place on these events on [our u3a week page. www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)

AUGUST MONTHLY MEETING - SUMMER PICNIC

FRIDAY 25TH AUGUST – 2.30 pm



July was cool, August is proving soggy, but we hope the sun will shine for our **Summer Picnic**. 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, and parking is available at the site.

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

Next Month's Meeting (on the 4th Friday of the month, not the last Friday!)

**2.30pm on Friday, 22nd September 2023
at the Cannon Roche Centre, Billericay**

Adrian Tindall

Mr Soane Came to Breakfast; Two Georgian Gentlemen and a house in Bury St Edmunds

How did "Mr Bury St Edmunds", James Oakes, persuade renowned architect Sir John Soane to design an extension to his home in Guildhall Street, Bury St Edmunds in 1788? This illustrated talk will describe this unlikely collaboration and show the evidence of it that can be seen today. Adrian is an archaeologist of forty years standing, an accredited Green Badge Guide and Chairman of the Bury St Edmunds Association of Registered Tour Guides.



**Places
still
available**

u3a Excursion to

GREEN ISLAND GARDENS

Wednesday 6th 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 Southern Hay 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, by email

GROUPS' REPORT

Ann Fletcher (former Groups' Facilitator)

Well, I was hoping for a long break from my role as Groups' Facilitator, having retired from the position at the AGM. Andy is going to take on the role, but we have been so busy over the last few months that I am a bit behind with the task.

The groups all seem to be carrying on well without my help! We have a new birdwatching group, which is starting to meet and scan the skies for our feathered friends. I had a very exciting time on our cruise to Norway and Iceland. I have always wanted to see puffins, but never been in the right place at the right time. While we were in Iceland, we took a wildlife boat trip and, we saw puffins, hundreds of them! They are fantastic little birds, a lot smaller than I imagined, and they flap their wings so fast when they fly. The other birds we saw were great too, but the puffins topped the lot.

If you would like to start a new interest group, please get in touch with Andy, the new Groups' Facilitator. He is just starting to learn the job, so I will support him for a bit. You can contact him on: fletchu3a@yahoo.com

I would like to say a big thank you to all the Group Co-ordinators who made my role such a pleasant one. You are lovely people and you are doing a brilliant job!

NEWS FROM OUR u3a GROUPS

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 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.

Monday 2nd October - South Woodham Ferrers, Clements Green Creek. Park in Creekview Road, CM3 5GU
From the B1012 at end of SW bypass, take 2nd exit on roundabout and the first exit in next roundabout, which is Creekview Road

VISIT TO OLD LEIGH



The Essex Villages group visited Old Leigh this month. We based our visit on the Leigh Heritage Trail which includes two walks, and gives information of sights along the way.

The Domesday Book shows Leigh as having a small community of five smallholders involved in fishing. At one time Leigh was a forgotten backwater, due to the silting up of the harbour, but it was revived by the coming of the railway, which allowed produce to be sent quickly into London. One of our most interesting visits was to the Heritage Centre, which is full of different exhibits. Unusually the centre also includes Plumbs Cottage, an original cottage from the 1850's, which has been taken back to show life as it was during those times for a poor fishing family. The cottage is very small but was last home to a family with ten children, although the older ones had moved out before the younger ones were born. It had no piped water and a primitive toilet shared with the other cottages in the yard.

Fishing, mainly for shellfish, is still carried out in Leigh today, and a small number of local fishermen are allowed to fish for three days in any week.

Visit to Norwich



Twenty two of us arrived at the grand Victorian Norwich Thorpe station to be met by Paul Dickson our Blue Badge Guide. Some of the group had been to Norwich many times, and for a few it was a first visit. Eighteen of us set off on the gentle walking tour with Paul, who told us that Thorpe was one of three stations in Norwich, and despite being the furthest from the city centre it is the only surviving station. It was originally built to serve Great Yarmouth to Norwich, and all the original trains and carriages were sent by sea to Great Yarmouth.

We commenced our walk along the River Wensum (meaning winding river) and stopped at Pull's Ferry. This is a 15th century mediaeval arched water-gate, under which an even more ancient canal was dug by hand by the monks in the 12th century to transport heavy goods, including stone for the building of the Cathedral.



Moving along the now filled in ditch we arrived at the south close of the cathedral, and heard of stories of riots, and how the penance for the riots was to rebuild a gate with a chapel on top. The impressive spire (2nd tallest in England) was built of stone and dates back to 1480, replacing the original wooden structure.

RAILWAY JOURNEYS continued



We then meandered through the mediaeval streets of Norwich. Paul told us that the footprint of the mediaeval streets is the largest in the UK but, because of numerous fires over the centuries, many of the original buildings were destroyed and the predominating buildings are Tudor. At the time when the population of Norwich was only 10,000 there was one pub for every day of the year, and this remained the case for many years. They also had more than 52 churches, so one for each week of the year.

Many of the names of the streets and squares go back to the time when there was an influx of 5000 Flemish weavers. On our walk we passed the Bowhill & Elliott retail shoe shop, which is the only surviving shoe maker left in Norwich. Just after the Second World War there were over 20,000 people involved in the shoe manufacturing industry in Norwich. Paul also told us stories of the other lost industries, such as Rowntree Mackintosh, chocolate manufacturers, and how Rolos and Munchies were invented in Norwich. Of course we heard about the famous Colman's Mustard, and although the factory is no longer in Norwich, the seed is still grown in Norfolk.

We passed through the now permanent market in Norwich and stopped in the Memorial Gardens beneath the 1930's City Hall, which still receives criticism and praise in equal measure. From the garden, Norwich Castle is clearly visible and again Paul told us many stories of its creation and history. After a very enjoyable 2 hour walk our tour of Norwich with an excellent guide we continued the historical theme by retiring to the The Old Bell for lunch.

There was time after lunch for some independent exploring, and some took advantage of the time to enjoy Norwich's numerous shops, before the short downhill walk back to the station.

Report from Colin Perfect

ESSEX CHURCHES

cathy

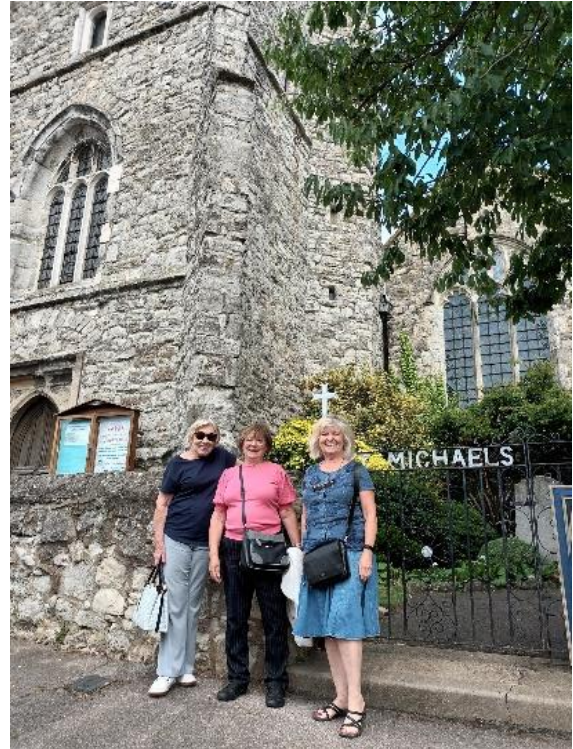
VISIT to FOBHING 26TH JULY 2023

On this lovely sunny day, the group visited St Michael's Church, Fobbing. St Michael's has stood more or less in its current form since the 14th century, although the nave dates back to the 11th century.

It boasts a number of outstanding architectural features including its 70ft tower which can be seen from miles around. From the top of the tower you can see the Thames Estuary and North Sea all the way into the heart of the City of London. St Michael's services the small community of Fobbing, from its foundation as a riverside stop on the way to London through to the present age, as a village sandwiched between the river and ever expanding industry along the Thames.

The tower contains a peal of eight bells, four of them being installed in 1629, and the tenor bell being hung in 1724. By 1900 the bells and bell frame had fallen into disrepair, but the bells rang out again in 1931 after 30 years of silence when, through the efforts of the parishioners, they were recast and installed in a steel frame. A sixth bell was installed in 1934, followed by two more in 1935, completing the peal. There are many interesting features to be seen in the church including an old barrel organ, restored in 1974, which plays hymn tunes.

An interesting visit was followed by lunch at the White Lion which has been a pub for nearly 300 years. Previously, the building has been a coaching inn and a sail loft, amongst other things! The main building itself can be dated back to the Peasant's Revolt in 1381. Jack Straw, second in command to Wat Tyler, lived in a cottage in the village.



Report by Carol Minter

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 15th** 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 still 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.

AUGUST REPORT



On July 20th we had a perfect weather day at Cranham with sunshine and no wind. It's a relatively easy flat course and the greens were perfect. We achieved several long putts between us.

Six u3a golfers were at Notley on 27th July to challenge the River Brain valley course with its fairways which go up and down the sides of the valley. It is in a scenic mid Essex location where several of us found the terrain physically challenging. There was a sense of achievement on completing the long uphill stretch to the 18th green and the reward of tea on terrace to finish our visit.

On 3rd August, feeling ready for another hilly challenge, we returned on a hot breezy day to Epping Golf Club for the second time this year. In places it's not obvious where the next tee is but we've now learnt the layout and got to know our way around this delightful course.

Seven u3a members gathered at Mardyke on 10th August.



They were not expecting the excitement on the 16th hole, 340yard par 4, when Dave Elam's second shot holed out from 160yards for a very rare "eagle" result.

Dave collects his ball to verify that it really happened!

We welcome new members 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

RAMBLING GROUP

Brian Parker



Ten of us braved the weather last month for our walk around Pleshey, and although the clouds were threatening to drench us, it rained for less than five minutes at the start of the walk. This was the first time that we have done a figure of eight walk. We passed two large lakes and many fields of wheat and barley, before arriving back in the village with its thatched roof cottages. All the pubs seemed very busy, but we did find space at the White Hart at Little Waltham for refreshment.



Photos from Mark and Brian

Rambling Group continued

Our August walk at Langdon Hills will have taken place when you read this.

Our September walk is a cross country walk of 5.8 miles, starting from The Street in Willingale near the Village Hall. **We will meet at 10.15 on 20th September** on The Street, close to the two Churches ensuring there are no parking restrictions, or further down near the Village Hall car park in **The Street, Willingale – CM5 OSN**. This is a 30 min drive from Billericay going via Blackmore. From there, we will walk along well used foot paths including the Essex Way. We walk along four roads mainly at the beginning. The walk is relatively flat and no stiles, but there are no facilities until we get back to the car park. There are refreshments available in Blackmore.

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.

Our **18th October** walk will cover both Thorndon South and North and no parking Fees.

Newsletter Contributions

**PLEASE NOTE THE EARLY DEADLINE DATE AS THERE ARE FIVE FRIDAYS IN
SEPTEMBER 2023**

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

on Wednesday, 13th September 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 bbu3anewsletter@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)