

u3a

BASILDON AND BILLERICAY

u3a

NEWSLETTER No 358

SEPTEMBER 2023



2nd – 6th September 1666

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Sandra Randall

Well, here we are again, still enjoying the lovely weather and getting out and about. For those who made it to Green Island Garden, we had a fantastic day out with very good company in a wonderful setting and lunch. What more can you ask?

We will put on more events like this so please keep a look out in the newsletter. It will usually be a full page flyer, so any suggestions are welcomed. Don't worry about the details, we will do that bit.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Linda Anderson

U3a week is taking place from 16-24 September. There will be a programme of online events throughout the week.

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 upheld and no-one is left behind.

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.

On Thursday 21st September award-winning writer, activist around ageing and TED speaker Carl Honoré will be giving an exclusive talk for u3a about how to embrace ageing as a privilege and adventure.

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

Interest Groups Online Fair

Interest Groups Online, the online u3a community that gives you the opportunity to join groups, courses and talks from the comfort of your home, is running a week of free taster sessions between **Monday 2nd and Friday 6th October**.

This gives you the chance to try groups before deciding to join, either in addition to your local u3a membership or on its own.

There will be three sessions each day, covering topics from Film Studies to Journeys into Space. The full schedule can be seen on the u3a website.

GROUPS FACILITATOR'S REPORT

Andy Fletcher

Back under the stairs in a new post!!! You are all probably aware that I have handed over my Secretarial duties to Linda and taken on the role of Groups Facilitator, following the retirement from the Committee of my wife Ann. She has been, and is currently, assisting me by handing over the "mysteries" and responsibilities, and I'm happy to say all seems to be going well.

Thank you to all of you that continue to send in their Risk Assessments. Although, sometimes, these things appear a bit bureaucratic and time consuming, we must be compliant with the requirements of the u3a fraternity in general. It is always the BEST way to feel safe in whatever pursuit you are taking part in.

Should any of you need any help or explanation of anything to do with running and coordinating your group, or you would like to set up a new Interest Group, please don't hesitate to have a chat when you see me or give me a call. Stay safe and, above all, ENJOY whatever you are doing

MONTHLY MEETING

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

Speaker 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 the 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.

Next Month’s Meeting

Friday, October 27th

Speaker Bobbie Darbyshire

Where do novelists get their ideas from?

In a light-hearted, informative talk, Bobbie will explain how the complex world of character, location, plot and sub-plot arrives in a writer's mind. Bobbie is the author of four novels, including 'The Posthumous Adventures of Harry Whittaker'.

COACH TRIP TO GREEN ISLAND GARDENS

Our coach trip to Green Island Gardens, which was open to all our B&B u3a members, was a great success. We marvelled at our driver who manoeuvred his coach down an extremely narrow lane where we all breathed in!!

It was a very hot day, but there was plenty of shade under the trees and in the marquee where we had our lunch.

There are 20 acres of private gardens, which have been professionally designed by the owner, Fiona Edmond. She gave us an informative talk when we arrived, and told us all about how her family came to purchase the place when making a move from London. The land is laid out as a series of structured gardens displaying a huge range of unusual trees, shrubs, perennials, and bulbs.

We departed the gardens at 4.00 and were back at our first stop home at around 5.00. Some of us enjoyed a welcome cold drink in the pub before making our way to our homes.

Report from Margaret Way



ESSEX HISTORY 2 TRIP TO PURFLEET HERITAGE AND MILITARY CENTRE

This fascinating Centre is based in an old Gunpowder Magazine No. 5 sited on the banks of the Thames. Manned by volunteers, we were treated to a private group tour and could not have been better welcomed.

Built in 1760, the building itself is interesting and its construction was well explained and supported by photographs of the parts that are currently inaccessible. It is now a Grade 1 listed building and so many original features are easy to see.

There are several different collections housed inside, mostly of a military nature, land, sea and air services, but also the Home Guard, evacuees, the Land Army and many artefacts of a domestic nature to tell the full wartime story.



Purfleet has a particular affiliation with the Gurkhas, as many of them have lived in the area, and an area of the Museum holds a great deal of their regimental memorabilia.

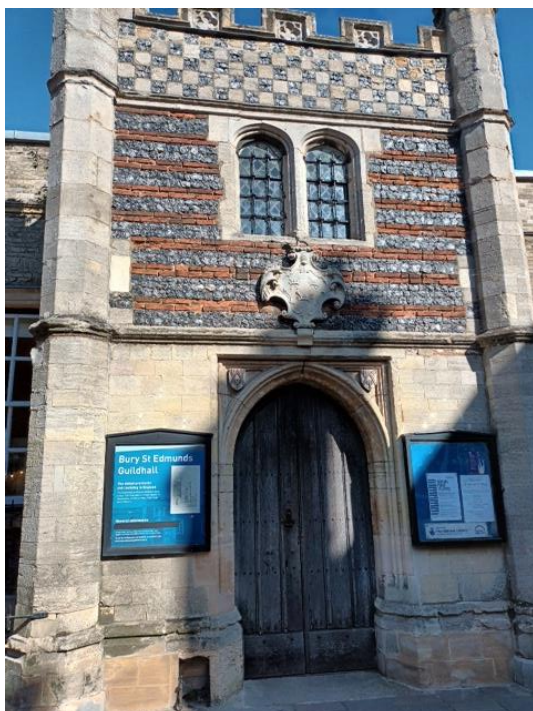
Purfleet also has its own interesting history – Van den Burgh, Dracula, King Edward VII, Samuel Whitbread the brewer, Thames Board Mills; all have a connection. Ships that would have been provisioned at Purfleet include “Victory”, “Bounty” and “Beagle”. All these topics are featured within the Centre.

We would thoroughly recommend a visit to this hidden gem. It is open 10 – 3.30 Wednesday, Thursday, Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays. Group visits by arrangement.
Purfleet Heritage and Military Centre, Centurion Way, Purfleet on Thames RM19 1ZY

BURY ST EDMUNDS, SUFFOLK



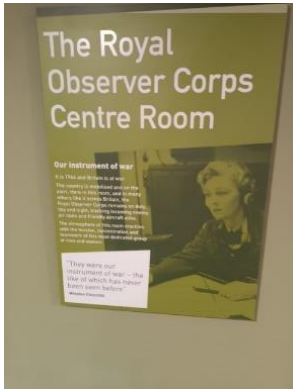
On a lovely sunny morning in early September, sixteen of us set off for a visit to Bury St Edmunds. The historic market and cathedral town takes its name from St Edmund, the original Patron Saint of England and King of East Anglia. The town boasts 1,000 years of history, playing a role in the Magna Carta, and is the final resting place of Mary Tudor, Queen of France and sister of Henry VIII.



We walked from the station to the town centre, and after lunch some of us headed off to the Guildhall (pictured here) for our pre-booked tour. Dating back to 1279, it is the most continuously used civic building in Britain. On our arrival we were made extremely welcome by the volunteer staff and given lots of interesting facts while visiting the courtroom, banqueting hall, Tudor kitchen and the sensory garden.

RAILWAY JOURNEYS continued

Finally, we went to the WW2 Royal Observatory Corps Control Centre, the only surviving room of its kind in Britain. Our guide, Peter, enthusiastically demonstrated how enemy planes were plotted using the information provided by the spotters in the observation posts scattered around the region. They reported every plane they saw or heard, and reported back to the plotters in the control room. Using triangulation the plotters could then identify the type, height, speed and direction of aircraft, whether hostile or friendly, and transferred this information onto the plotting table using coded markers. The spotters were expected to learn how to identify every aircraft and were regularly tested. Both spotters and plotters came from all walks of life, and it is estimated that 5,000 allied airmen's lives were saved in the war by the Guildhall WW2 Ops Control Room.



We only scratched the surface on our visit. There are many buildings of historical interest and with the award-winning Abbey Gardens and the ruins of an 11th century Benedictine monastery, and not forgetting the modern-day Greene King Brewery, there is something to interest everyone.

SOLO UNO SUNDAY

Margaret Way



Solo Uno Sunday went to **Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome** this month. It was very quiet on our day trip; I think the very hot weather kept visitors away, but we had a nice volunteer giving us a tour around the grounds, buildings and hangars. We had a delicious lunch in the Officers' Mess and a walk around the museum.

Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome has a unique history, and its story covers 100 years. It is the largest known surviving group of RFC buildings on a WWI aerodrome which was not adapted for further military use later in its history. It hosts a growing collection of objects directly related to the site and its activities. Originally opened in 1916 as home to B Flight of No 37(HD) Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, the aerodrome saw the birth of the Air Defence of Great Britain in response to the first raids by Zeppelins and Gotha bombers on London and the South East. The Aerodrome played a key role in the Battle for Britain (the first London Blitz) the following year. It was at Stow Maries that No 37 Squadron transitioned from the Royal Flying Corps to the Royal Air Force on 1 April 1918.

SEPTEMBER REPORT

It's been sunshine all the way for u3a golfers this month, starting with a breezy day at Blakes at Ongar on 17th August where seven of us gathered on the course we hadn't played for several months. The fairways and green were in good firm condition and nothing like the heavy going mud some remember from a winter visit.

On 24th we ventured a return visit to Stapleford Abbotts when light early rain soon gave way to the sunshine we are expecting these days. We hoped the course would be better than our July visit but unfortunately the greens were significantly bare or brown and need some time to recover. However despite this disappointment we did get our loyalty cards stamped which will give us a free round before Christmas!

Our visit to Hartswood on 31st produced a couple of good shots. Mick chipped into the 6th hole from 70 yards for a birdie on the par 3, and Stuart sunk a 12 yard putt for a par on the sixteenth. We like to record outstanding shots because we don't see many!



U3a golfers at the first tee at Risebridge in the hottest ever temperature of 32 deg. We started off at 11am enjoying the sunshine but four hours later through the closing holes it became a bit of an endurance test in the heat.

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.

VISIT TO CLARE

Late August saw our Archaeology 2 group meeting fall on the summer Bank Holiday, but undeterred by the thought of Bank Holiday traffic, seven members of the group sallied forth to the town of Clare on the Suffolk/Essex border.

Clare is a compact town which flourished over the centuries, and was a major player in the medieval cloth trade. Later the Castle and Manor became part of extensive Royal lands and the town's prosperity gradually dwindled in the general Agricultural decline felt by much of East Anglia.

We decided to follow the Town Trail starting at Clare Castle Country Park at the old Railway buildings, the original line having been a victim of the Beeching cuts in the late 1960's. From here we climbed up a steep hill to the castle on the top. This also gave us excellent views over the town and surrounding countryside, including of the church.



From the excellent information boards we learned all about the construction of the castle under the Normans, and its history in the Middle Ages before it fell into decline. We then descended and carried on through the Park turning right onto Market Hill. This took us past St Peter's and St Paul's church which had been built on the profits of the wool trade, and which was well worth a look around. The wool influence is also seen in the local place names with modern day Callis street having derived from Calais Street, as it was here the sheep drovers and wool traders met before taking their goods to France via – you guessed it – Calais.



ARCHAEOLOGY 2 continued

From here we visited the small but exceedingly interesting Museum which is housed in an ancient building, which itself dates back to 1473.

By this time we were all feeling decidedly peckish so stopped for lunch, after which we continued along the Trail to the old Clare Priory, pictured here. This was originally the mother Priory of the Augustinians, before being closed under the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII, although in the late 20th century, it was sold back to the Augustinians, and now houses a small religious community once more.

From here we headed back along the river, following the path of the former railway, to where we had parked our cars, where we parted company and headed home, after a very informative and enjoyable day out.



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 2nd October - South Woodham Ferrers Clements Green Creek Park, Creekview Road CM3 5GU. From the B1012 at the end of South Woodham bypass take the second exit on roundabout and then the first exit on the next roundabout into Creekview road. Drive to the southern end of road and park as near to the mini roundabout as possible.

Monday 6th November - Watt Tyler Country Park, Pitsea Hall Lane, SS16 4UH. Park in second car park near café building

Monday 4th December - Christmas Dinner

Monday 1st January - Hanningfield Reservoir Visitor Centre in Hawkswood Road Downham CM11 1WT

VISIT TO FINCHINGFIELD



The Essex Villages group visited Finchingfield in the middle of the September heat wave. It is often called the most beautiful village in England, a "picture-postcard" village and one of the most photographed. It has a duck pond and village green surrounded by Georgian and medieval cottages; a Guildhall; St John the Baptist Church on the hill; an eighteenth-century windmill and three public houses. It has often appeared in television programmes, films, and commercials, as well as on chocolate boxes, biscuit tins, and other products.

On arrival we had coffee and cake in the Guildhall where we were given a talk by members of the Finchingfield Historical Society. This included an in depth look at Spains Hall, built in the fifteenth century, with many different owners over the years, but now owned by Jamie Oliver.

After a walk around the village we had lunch in Winners tea rooms, which is certainly recommended for day time refreshments.

RAMBLING GROUP

Brian Parker

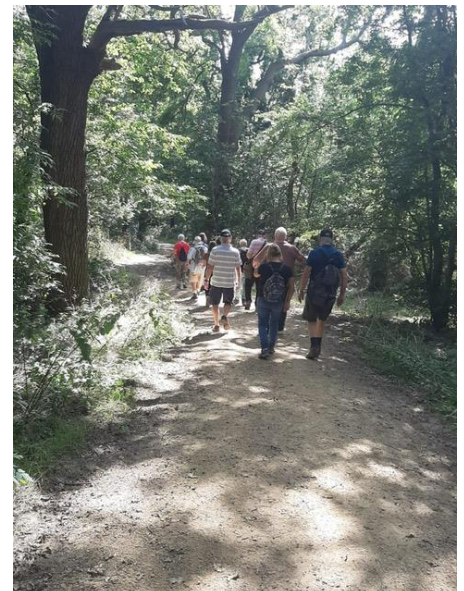


We had a nice sunny day for our walk and twelve of us set out from Westley Heights on a circular trip of about 5 miles.

This was a gentle walk and included passing through Coombe Wood, Old Hill, Great Sutton Wood, Northlands Wood and Willow Park.

We mainly kept to shaded areas, but did have to cross three fields that had been recently mowed. This made it a bit challenging as the path had disappeared!

Report from Kathy



Photos from Olivia

RAMBLING continued

Details for our forthcoming **20th September** walk from Willingale were in last month's newsletter.

Our **October** walk will be a cross country walk starting from The Green Man pub, Herongate. We will meet **at 10.15 on 18th October** in Herongate, but please to not park immediately outside the pub. There is also parking in Donovan's Garden on the right, opposite The Boars Head. Post code is **Cricketers Lane, Herongate, – CM13 3PZ**, and this is a 15 min drive from Billericay. From there, we will walk across the main road and then straight into Thorndon South country Park where we will do a circular 5.2 mile walk to include the visitors centre at Thorndon North. There are refreshments available in Thorndon and Herongate. Toilets are also at the visitors centre.

Please bring your u3a membership card, and where possible, please try to car share. 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.

URGENT

Volunteers are needed to serve the tea and coffee at the September Monthly Meeting on Friday, September 22nd. If you can help, please contact Sandra.

Thank you

Newsletter Contributions

If you have any items please send them by **12.00 Noon**
on Wednesday, 18th October 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)