



BASILDON AND BILLERICAY

u3a

NEWSLETTER No 359

OCTOBER 2023



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Sandra Randall

Hello Everyone.

I hope you have all enjoyed our lovely summer and have made some good memories. As a member of our u3a I assume you have been busy trying new adventures and meeting new friends.

For those of you who are new to our u3a you will be receiving an invitation to join the next New Members Meeting. However, if you have been a member for a little while and have missed a new member's meeting please let us know so that we can invite you to come and join us.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Linda Anderson

Last month we sent out information about two study opportunities offered by other u3a groups. I would be interested to know if anyone took part in them and what you thought of the content.

I had a look at the recent Third Age Matters and noticed some interesting activities and study groups available online. To access them go to www.u3a.org.uk then go to the drop down menu at the top right and click on **LEARN** or **EVENTS** for the links.

So, if you're a fan of puzzles, there is a Logic puzzle each month (solution the following month) a Maths Challenge with a new quiz every Thursday (answers the next week) Aileen's Game, which is a word game, and a short course on how to do Cryptic Crosswords. There are courses on Mindfulness, Family History, Astronomy, Science, live Cookery Demonstrations, Artists and even Laughter Yoga!

Did you know that there's a u3a radio podcast with new episodes on 17th of the month?

If you'd like to share what you've been doing in your interest groups there is, for example, u3a Walkers' Exchange for walking groups.

If you're interested in writing, the u3a Poetry Competition 2023-2024 will be announced on 8th November; in All Our Yesterdays, you are invited to share memories from the 50s and 60s or for creative writing, 'Write a Letter to your Younger Self'.

For those who enjoy painting, drawing or photography, there is the Nature Photo Gallery or the u3a Eye (a photography project) and Paint or Draw (a themed monthly online art gallery to which you can submit a photo of your artwork).

There's a lot going on online in the winter months, so have a look, there might be something of interest. Suggestions for new activities can be made by emailing learning@u3a.org.uk.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BASILDON AND BILLERICAY u3a

Wednesday, 8th November, from 2 pm to 3.30 pm

The Mayflower Room, Emmanuel Church (almost opposite the Canon Roche Hall where our monthly meetings are held). Free parking is available behind the Church.

Have you have joined our u3A within the past year or have not yet attended one of our introduction meetings? Would you like to know more and meet other members?

Some of the topics covered will include:

- The background to the u3A
- u3A groups, how to join and what's available. Including a chance to talk to some of our group co-ordinators.
- Monthly meetings - what happens?
- How to become more involved

This meeting is also open to those who have not yet joined, but would like more information.

There is no charge and refreshments are provided.

To book a place please email our Membership Secretary, Stuart King. All places will be confirmed.

MONTHLY MEETING

**2.30pm on Friday, 27th October 2023
at the Cannon Roche Centre, Billericay**

Speaker Bobbie Darbyshire

**“A Beginning, a Muddle and an End:
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”.

Next Month’s Meeting

Friday, November 24th

Speaker Phil McKinder

“The Edward Wallace Case”

The perfect murder. In Liverpool in the 1930s, Edward Wallace is an insurance clerk who is accused of murdering his wife. Phil will explore the prosecution and defence, and encourage the audience to decide the outcome of the trial.

VISIT TO ST CATHERINE'S, WICKFORD

30TH AUGUST 2023



On a beautiful sunny day, the group stood on the highest point in Wickford where we had come to visit St Catherine's Church. We were greeted by Richard, the Church Warden, who gave us a very interesting talk about the church. No firm facts emerge about the building until 1154, when Robert of Essex gave the church in Wickford to Prittlewell Priory, which he had recently founded. However, the church we view today was rebuilt in 1876 on the site of the building that had fallen down in 1875.

St Catherine's originally stood in the centre of the community. However, the coming of the railway in 1889 brought about a shift of Wickford's population from the high ground near the Church to the lower ground near the High Street and the river.

St Catherine's Church boasts a 15th century font, two 15th century bells which were cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, a splendid 15th century Chancery Roof with Tudor Rose bosses, possibly donated from Prittlewell Priory, and an organ built by JW Walker and installed in 1905. The stained glass is one of the Church's most striking features.

After the talk we returned to the serenity of the graveyard where we wandered around enjoying the peace and quiet.

Anyone wishing to visit St Catherine's can do so on any day; it's open 7 days a week.

Editor's Note My apologies to this Group as this report should have featured in the September newsletter.

ARCHAEOLOGY 2 TRIP TO CHESTER.

Every year members of Archaeology 2 have a trip away to some place of interest both for a short break, and to include many Archaeology related visits and activities, and this September our destination was the north-west, and Chester.

So, on a Monday morning six of our group members girded up our loins and headed north via road and rail to see what the city had to offer.

Those of us who were travelling by car headed north having a lunch stop at Beeston castle which is defended by steep cliffs on three sides, earning itself the medieval title of “The castle of the rock”.

Needless to say the two men got to the top of the site while the two ladies stopped on the way and had a chat whilst waiting for the men to make their descent!

We then resumed our drive to Chester where we met up with our two companions who had travelled north by train.



The next morning, Tuesday, we decided to explore on foot and left our centrally situated hotel to walk through the nearby Newgate and visit the Roman amphitheatre which dates back to the first century AD, and which was the largest in Britain, but which was the scene of the UK's largest Archaeological dig in 2005.

After this we walked on to St John's Church which was the former cathedral of the city and where it was also time for a welcome cup of tea.

From here it was time to return to Newgate and make our way onto the city walls which date back to Roman times, and which we now followed in a clockwise direction only leaving the wall when it came to an end by the Roodee Racecourse due to modern roads having been built through it. This is the oldest Racecourse in the UK.

We were soon back on the walls and past Watergate and Northgate as well as King Charles's Tower where the Stuart Monarch watched his cavalier army defeated in the nearby battle of Rowton Moor.

We now left the walls to visit the Cathedral where we also had a much-appreciated late snack to stave off starvation, before returning to the walls to view the iconic Eastgate clock erected in 1897 to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Queen Victoria, and which is seen as the world-wide symbol of Chester.

A few yards further on and we were back at our starting point of Newgate, having covered over two miles, and we now headed down to the River Dee via the Roman Gardens where various Roman relics found around the city have been put. Once at the river we finished our afternoon with a boat trip which gave us a different view of the city.



Wednesday was wet, so of course we went on an open top bus tour! However we were cunning enough to get on the very front of the upstairs seats where the first four rows were undercover which meant we had the benefit of being able to view all the sights mentioned in the informative commentary whilst also keeping dry! This was an excellent guided tour which took us to the outer reaches of the city and lasted just over an hour. We got off just by our hotel which gave us the chance to pop back and dry off properly making our way to the nearby Grosvenor Museum, the rain having finally relented.

This has the largest collection of Roman gravestones and monuments in the UK many of which were only discovered during repair work to the Roman walls in the 1960's when they were discovered having been used as ballast in the foundations in the Medieval period. There was also an adjoining house which was decorated in Victorian and Edwardian style, as well as a large contingent of school children who, like us, were being educated!

After this we headed back to St John's church for some lunchtime culture in the form of a piano recital, after which we walked around Grosvenor Park, then some people went shopping, some returned to the hotel for a rest, and some of us visited the "Sick to Death" museum which was directly opposite the hotel, and which covered the history of medicine in somewhat gory detail. After all this excitement we rounded off the day with an excellent evening meal for our last day "oop north".

We parted company next morning with the two returning by train having an extra morning in the city. Those travelling by car headed for Stoke-on-Trent and the Potteries Museum to visit an exhibition on the Staffordshire hoard. We also visited a gallery featuring a Spitfire plane and an exhibition on its inventor, R.J. Mitchell, whom we learnt had been educated in the city, after which we headed south and homewards, after an excellent short break.



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 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

OCTOBER VISIT TO THE MUSEUM OF BRANDS, LONDON



From Billericay we travelled to Stratford where we changed to the Elizabeth Line to Paddington. This was the first time that our group had used this line, and it is worth remembering that there aren't any toilets on the train should you ever intend travelling on a long section.

From Paddington it was a short bus ride to Ladbroke Grove and just a few minutes' walk to the museum. It is described as a nostalgic journey through 200 years of consumer culture. It certainly brought back memories for all of us, whether from our own lifestyle or from that of our parents and grandparents. Starting with Victorian times, the Time Tunnel reflects how consumer society has evolved and how daily life has been transformed by the invention of the railway, motor car and aeroplanes. There are around 15,000 items on display and a million more are stored away in warehouses away from the museum. These illustrate the advances made over the decades from refrigeration, convenience food, entertainment, the introduction of self-service and the growth of plastics to the advances in technology.

Toys from the 1950's such as Mr Potato Head, dolls houses, Barbie dolls, board games, hula hoops and pogo sticks are just a small example which reflect an entirely different and simpler way of life which we have experienced, and a world away from today's expectations. It is a step-back-in-time experience with historical and educational context which reminded us of just how much has changed in the consumer world since we were young.



OCTOBER REPORT

The four golfers available on Thursday 14th September were quite content for a relatively easy day at the Rivenhall Acorns 9 hole, 3000yd course, followed by the par 3 Acorns course of 1000yds. We usually like to play a full 6000yd 18 hole course but the two courses at Rivenhall provide an inexpensive easy walking experience.

We hadn't played at Hainault for several years and booked the London Course for 21st Sept. When we arrived at the first tee for our 10.30 slot there was a long queue of what seemed to be "gatecrashers". After some discussion between our 6 players we went to the Old Course first tee where the queue was minimal. It is a demanding course starting straight uphill from the first tee, quite a change from the flat terrain at Rivenhall the previous week. The views from the higher parts were interesting and we were pleased to get back at the 18th to just miss a rain storm whilst we sat in the café.

The next week, 28th September, we arrived at the Hainault London Course and there were no queues at the first tee for our 10.30 tee off time. This course was not as hilly as the old course but still had enjoyable views with very fast greens.

At Hartswood Brentwood on 5th Oct. we were pleased to welcome our biggest turnout for several years with seven u3a golfers on a sunny and breezy day. The new club house is now in full swing and the landscape around the first tee is nearly complete. Tea on the elevated terrace above the course and bowling green makes an agreeable end of round event.

The weather forecast for our visit to Blakes at Ongar indicated risk of rain so the six of us dressed appropriately and put up umbrellas at the first tee.

Fortunately the rain held off and we had an enjoyable dry round finishing with tea in the clubhouse.



Our list of played courses now extends to 19 venues and we welcome u3a members any Thursday to join us on our "Essex golf tour" at a tee time around 10:30. We usually finish for tea and a chat around 3-4pm and assess our own scores and highlights of the round.

Report by Stuart Allen

RAMBLING GROUP

Brian Parker



We were lucky again as rain was promised for our September walk, but we got back to our cars before it started. Nine of us met up in Willingale for a 5.5 mile circular walk. It is an unusual village with no shops or pub, but has two churches built next to each other. It was an extremely windy day and oddly, for most of the walk, the wind seemed to speed up our progress. Unfortunately the local farmers had ploughed recently making it difficult in places and at one point we had to take another route, where we picked up the Essex Way to return. For refreshment we had booked the tea room in Blackmore, and although it was packed, the service and food was excellent.



Our October walk in Thorndon South and North will already have taken place when you read this.

Rambling continued

Our November walk is a cross country walk starting from Mountnessing Village Hall car park. We will meet at 10.15 on 15th November in Mountnessing Village Hall car park. This is close to the windmill, and almost opposite The Prince of Wales pub on Roman Road, and about a 10 min drive from Billericay. Post code:- Roman Road, Mountnessing, CM15 0UG. From there, we will walk across the main road and then Church Road onto a series of footpaths across fields towards Ingatestone Hall. This time you have the option of walking either 5 miles or 6.7 miles and both will be guided by one of us.

There are refreshments available in the Green Man where we finish the walk, but no toilets are available on this walk.

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.

SOLO UNO SUNDAY

Margaret Way

Solo Uno Sunday had a day out this month in Maldon and went for a boat trip along the River Chelmer. Unfortunately I couldn't go as I had Covid!! I was so disappointed.

I was sent an up-date on the day with these lovely photos taken by Anne Bass. Although it was very cold on the river, look at that beautiful blue sky.

I'm also told that they had a very nice lunch in a pub on the waterfront. We hope to do this trip again in the summer.



Newsletter Contributions

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

on Wednesday, 15th November 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)