



BASILDON AND BILLERICAY

u3a

NEWSLETTER No 362

JANUARY 2024



BURNS' NIGHT JANUARY 25TH

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Well, as we start a new year I trust we have returned with plenty of ideas for new groups and new events to try. Also new challenged to enjoy!

This year the Committee will lose some valued members who have served you for in excess of five years, so now it is your turn to have some input.

I would like to wish you all a Happy and Healthy New Year

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Happy New Year everyone.

Here is some exciting news about a new venture for the u3a.

u3a FESTIVAL 24

This year, the first ever **u3a Festival** is taking place at the University of York between **18-20 July**.

There will be a wide range of activities, from sport to music and workshops. We'll be sharing a programme in the next few months. To get a sneak peek of what to expect, read more [on the u3a Festival 24 page](#) and [watch our Festival vlogs](#) about the planning process so far.

Rooms are available to book **NOW** at £61.80 including breakfast.

Tickets for the Festival itself are not yet available to buy, but the cost of the attending will be as follows:

- Day 1, Thursday 18 July - £25 including buffet supper
- Day 2, Friday 19 July - £10 for the full day
- Day 3, Saturday 20 July - £5 for a half day
- Full festival to include all 3 days and a buffet supper on Day 1 - £35

If you decide to go to the Festival, our committee would be very interested to hear about your experience.

Learn something new

We run online learning events for u3a members and in January you can join in with yoga, meditation, mathematics - or learning about the French painter, Toulouse-Lautrec. See all these on the [events page](#) on the u3a website

MONTHLY MEETING

**2.30pm on Friday, 26th January 2024
at the Cannon Roche Centre, Billericay**

Speaker Tony Harris “Henry VIII”



Our Audience with Henry VIII is not to be missed. You will get the inside story of our most notorious monarch and his six wives direct from the horse’s mouth.

Actor/Historian Tony Harris brings Henry to life in a fabulous costume, and thunder will reign around the throne for his visit

Next Month’s Meeting

Friday 23rd February 2024

Speaker Gary Lewis

“Hitchcock’s Leytonstone”

Enjoy Gary Lewis’s bespoke illustrated talk on Hitchcock’s Leytonstone based on his own research and observations, and featuring slides of rare and exclusive photographs and documents.

Learn about Hitchcock's early life in Leytonstone from 1899 to 1907 and his return from 1914 to 1926.

See how Hitchcock's upbringing and early life influenced his later movie career.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Please note: In the interest of security Coordinators' contact details will no longer be published in the newsletter, unless specifically requested by the coordinator.

However, you may wish to contact a Group or Group Coordinator.

You can now do this via the website.

On the website, go to the Contact page and at the bottom of that page you will see a contact link to send an email message to the Groups' Facilitator.

At the top of your email, please say which group and or coordinator you wish to contact.

Then write your email as normal

Basildon & Billericay Groups List

You may still have a Groups list with contact details on it. Can you please remember that this list should never be seen by non- members of our u3a, and preferably be shredded when no longer required.

NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS

HALF RAMBLE

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 5th February - Wickford Memorial Park SS11 8JE. Southend Road from Wickford. Before shops turn left into Highcliffe and at the bottom as it bears sharp right there are gates into the car park or you can park on the road.

Monday 4th March - Warley Place Nature Reserve and Gardens, Brentwood CM13 8HT. Warley Road (B186) - turn right next to Thatchers Arms Pub. Park in grounds or in pub.

RAMBLING GROUP



Fourteen of us met up at London Bridge for our seven mile walk to Greenwich. We started with refreshments in Hays Galleria before our walk, then HMS Belfast and Tower Bridge were our first notable sights. There were so many interesting places to look at including the Mayflower Pub where the Mayflower ship sailed from. Its captain, Christopher Jones is buried in the church yard opposite.

We also saw the world's first ever underground tunnel built by Brunel in 1843 which is still in use today. We stopped for more refreshments at Surrey Docks Farm before reaching the statue of Peter the Great and the Cutty Sark. The South side of the Thames is well worth a visit.



The January London walk has just taken place.

Our walk on **Wednesday February 21st.** starts at Hampstead Underground Station, which is on the Northern tube line. Please meet at **10.45 at the station entrance.** We will wait if you let me you are running a little late.

For those of you coming on the Greater Anglia line, we will be catching the 09.31 from Wickford, 09.37 from Billericay and 09.46 from Shenfield, travelling to Liverpool Street Station. An Off Peak return ticket with a senior rail card from Billericay to Hampstead via Liverpool Street is £14.90. It is a 5 min walk from Liverpool St to Moorgate Station.

For those coming from Basildon and Laindon, the train times are at 09.35 and 09.38 respectively so travel to Fenchurch Street station and then walk to Bank Underground Station for the Northern Line, making sure you get on the train towards Edgware.

I will be at Billericay Station at 09.20 if anyone wants to meet me there.

From Hampstead Station, John and I are leading the walk to Parliament Hill Fields and Hampstead Heath. This is hilly in places but well worth the walk and predominately on paths. However it was muddy in few place when we tested the walk in January. Distance is 5.5 miles.

Please wear appropriate clothing and ensure you bring your u3a membership card.

All u3a members are welcome.

TABLE TENNIS GROUP

Table Tennis, every Wednesday from 2-4pm at Hannakins, Rosebay Ave, Billericay.

We're a very friendly group of mixed abilities, everyone is welcome to play and we all get a fair time at the tables.

The first session is free, then its £5 per session, and you'll need to join Hannakins for about £15 per year.

There is plenty of free parking and I recommend bringing a drink of water with you.

Here's our recent photo after our session with our Christmas nibbles



GOLF GROUP

2024 January Report

Our first meeting in December was at Belfairs Park on 7th with four members enjoying the cheap price of £13. The weather was overcast with prospect of rain which held off until we finished our round at 2:30 and escaped to the pub. Belfairs is a busy dog walking area through woods and we were pleased at the 11th hole when a dog found one of our balls and gave it back. On previous occasions a dog has run off with balls!



Thursday 14th was our annual lunch date at the excellent Alma Arms, near Stapleford Abbots golf club. We finished our round on the golf course in “soft going”, overcast and windless conditions, before changing our muddy shoes for the lunch.

Reflecting on an enjoyable year’s golf in 2023, we noted we had played on 17 different courses (Stapleford Abbots 6 visits, Cranham 5 visits, Dunton Hills 4 visits, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rivenhall, Hartswood, Risebridge, Belfairs, Epping, Basildon, Notley, Mardyke, Blakes, Hainault Old, Hainault London, and Belus Park). We were totally rained off on only two Thursdays.

After the two week Christmas recess the New Year 2024 started for u3a golf on Thursday 4th January, a bright sunny morning. Three members met at Cranham golf course, carrying clubs around to preserve the good ground conditions, as trolleys were not allowed in order to minimise the risk of churning up the surface. All 3 players were delighted to make par 3 on the tricky 143yd 16th hole over a ditch. Meanwhile two members, who didn’t fancy carrying a bag of clubs three miles round Cranham, went to Dunton Hills where trolleys are always allowed. It was heavy going in waterlogged long grass and muddy conditions with no “run” on the ball.

On 11th January six u3a players met at Mardyke Valley, with winter wheels on their trolleys, to enjoy another bright sunny morning. The course had multiple temporary fences to prevent trolleys running into soft ground and churning up the course. At the short 300yd 8th hole with a lake and very soft ground in front of the green, an innovative temporary mat system was in operation to try and prevent the area becoming a quagmire. A few of us eventually reached the green and putted out with scores well over par.

We welcome u3a members any Thursday to join us on our “Essex golf tour” at a tee time around 10:30 and a finish about 3pm for tea and a chat.

RAILWAY JOURNEYS GROUP

DECEMBER VISIT TO CHRISTMAS MARKETS, LIGHTS & HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

After our lunch in Gracechurch Street, we walked over to the south bank for a look around Hay's Galleria and then regrouped at London Bridge station for the Jubilee Line to take us to Westminster.



Colin had booked us a guided visit to the Houses with Parliament, and on arrival we were fortunate that there wasn't a queue. After being handed our security passes and then going through airport-type security we were left with plenty of time to have some refreshments in the café. Our tour started in Westminster Hall where our guide, David, told us that this was the oldest building in Parliament, commissioned in 1097 under William II, the son of William the Conqueror, and completed two years later. It was built to impress his subjects of his power and the majesty of his authority. The Hall has been used for a fascinating variety of ceremonies and events and its past is a journey through 900 years of our history. As David led us to the end of the Hall and to the top of the steps we could appreciate its sheer size and magnificent Gothic medieval timbered roof. We continued into the Central Lobby which is at the heart of the Palace of Westminster and was designed as a meeting place for both Houses and where MPs can meet their constituents. It forms a crossroads where the corridors from the Commons, Lords and Westminster Hall meet. Over each of

the four exits from the Lobby are four large mosaic panels depicting the patron saint of each of the four constituent countries of the United Kingdom. Members of the public do not need to make an appointment to meet or lobby their MP although it is recommended to do so, and this is the origin of the term 'lobbying'.

We then entered the House of Commons with its characteristic green upholstery. Seating here is on a 'first come first served' basis, but backbench MPs can use 'prayer cards' to reserve their seat for the rest of that day. To do this, they must get a card from the attendant in the Chamber and place the card in a small brass slot on the bench to show their intention to use that seat and be seated there for prayers which are read by the Speaker's Chaplain before Sittings. Members must only speak from where they are called and not from the floor of the House between the red lines, The phrase 'toeing the line' is said to originate from deterring opposing parties attacking each other when a speech is in progress, so the two red parallel lines are marked, two sword-lengths apart from either side and the tradition continues today. The Bar of the House is represented by a white line across the width of the Chamber beyond which guests and visitors may not pass when either House is at work. The House of Lords, easily identified in red, plays an important part in the UK Parliament. Its members come from all walks of life and work on behalf of the UK public as they scrutinise and challenge the work of the government and consider legislation. The Bar of the House in this Chamber is represented by a railing. Both the House of Commons and House of Lords have public viewing galleries to watch the debates. We returned to Westminster Hall to conclude our tour where there were useful leaflets to take away and remind us of our visit. David was an amazing guide and gave us so much information and facts and figures and the work of Parliament itself which held our interest for a full 75 minutes.



Next it was time to see the Christmas lights, so we all managed to squeeze onto a rather tightly packed bus passing Winter Wonderland in Hyde Park, and onto Oxford Street and Regent Street. We walked through Carnaby Street, which was very busy with Christmas shoppers, then started to head for home after what had been a very enjoyable day.



WELL BEING GROUP COORDINATOR AND ACCESSIBILITY SECRETARY

Happy New Year Everybody!

Although it is really cold at present the sunshine is certainly a welcome visitor after all the rain we have had. I am looking forward to the early bulbs and the longer days.



As I am very interested in wellbeing, the article in the last Third Age Matters magazine - 'To Boldly Go' by Carl Honore was really good. It is well worth reading.

He says 'What should define us now is not the year we were born, but our interests and outlook, the way we choose to live and the things that matter to us. It means we have the potential to have fun and be engaged right through our lives.'

It gives us 12 rules for ageing boldly. I'm going to make sure to take all these tips on board.

DISCUSSION & LUNCH GROUP 1.

When we open our papers, increasingly we find issues that unsettle us. It is part of modern life and sometimes it can be very difficult to absorb some of the events taking place in countries barely a few hours away.

Is this "progress" we ask ourselves? Our discussions might include matters needing consideration to make a fairer society, a change in the Law, a system for accountability of politicians, policing, etc. There are matters which affect us all and engender diverse views and opinions for solutions.

In Sept. 2020 Diana Rigg, suffering from cancer, made a plea for assisted dying. The u3a Discussion Group 1 have taken the view that there was no subject that was "off the table". In the last year subjects have ranged from the NHS, assisted dying, the House of Lords, litter, the Monarchy, and included some personal hobby-horses. Quite a range of topics has been examined and touched on, providing food for thought and further discussion.

We have a core group of eight people and enjoy a monthly get-together in Stock. We enjoy the quiet of a separate room and seating is around one table. On arrival each member chooses from a fairly wide menu, suitable for all tastes.

If you are interested in coming along for a taster session please get in touch with the Group Coordinator and we will hopefully be able to include you in our spring meetings on the third Monday of each month in Stock. 12.15 – 2.30pm.

Newsletter Contributions

If you have any items please send them by **12.00 Noon**
on Wednesday, 14th February 2024

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>

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.

(Editor)