



**BASILDON AND BILLERICAY u3a**  
**NEWSLETTER No 369**  
**AUGUST 2024**



Promenade Concerts at the Royal Albert Hall, London

19<sup>th</sup> July – 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

As the summer holidays are in full swing and heatwave follows heatwave, we can be assured that many of our groups will be out and about. Hopefully we can leave our brollies at home and enjoy our day out in the sunshine. All the walks, villages, towns and various places visited look so much more interesting in sunlight. I, like you, will enjoy reading about them all in this newsletter.

This month's meeting is The Picnic held at the Emmanuel church site in the area to the left of the car park. Bring your own picnic and chair.

(The Emmanuel church is opposite the Cannon Roche Centre in Laindon Road, Billericay)

Our new Group's Facilitator has been working hard on your behalf, so look out for the details below.

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Hello everyone,

I hope you enjoyed the Olympics and also the hot weather. Here is a reminder about our next coffee morning.

### **BBu3a coffee morning**

**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September**

**10.45 - 12.30    50p per person    Ample Parking**

**A great opportunity to meet other members and have a chat.**

**At the Emmanuel Hall, Laindon Rd, Billericay**

**Almost opposite the Canon Roche Centre.**

## **GROUPS FACILITATOR**

### **NEW GROUPS MEETING**

10:30 to 12:30 Friday 6<sup>th</sup> September

Mayflower/Pilgrim rooms, Emmanuel Church Billericay

We have requests for new groups for Spanish, Four Mile Max Rambling and Chess. I have also received a suggestion for a straightforward "Walk in the Park" group which would be suitable for those who are only able to commit to a short walk on flat easy going paths.

If you are interested in any of these or have any ideas for other new groups, please join us at this meeting and we will help get you started. If you are interested but not able to attend, please contact me (via the website) with your details and I will let you know the outcome of the meeting.

# AUGUST MONTHLY MEETING - SUMMER PICNIC

## FRIDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> AUGUST - 2.30 pm

**Please Note** August is a **FIVE** Friday Month. As always our Monthly Meeting is on the **FOURTH** Friday



We hope you will all enjoy another picnic under the tree in the field next to the Emmanuel Church. Bring your own picnic food and chair or picnic blanket. Tea, coffee and soft drinks will be available as usual. 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

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Speaker - John Lane

“The Magic and Mysteries of the Peruvian Andes”



The talk will include Cuzco and Machu Picchu of course, the Incas and the earliest ancient civilisations of Peru, the Colca Canyon and the Condors, the Railway to the Moon and El Tren Macho, Choquequirao - 'Last Refuge of the Incas', Chavin de Juantar, the music and the cuisine.

## ESSEX DISCOVERY GROUP

### VISIT TO ESSEX & HERTS AIR AMBULANCE

Essex & Herts Air Ambulance has two bases in Essex; we visited the base at Earls Colne, the other is at North Weald. We were greeted by a team of welcoming and knowledgeable volunteers. It was explained that the organisation receives no Government funding. They even have to pay the NHS for the medical team that is seconded to the service.

Stationed at the air base are two land ambulances, or rapid response vehicles, that can be deployed if appropriate. In fact, a land ambulance mission had just returned to base when we arrived.

As the helicopter was not out on a call, and after a safety briefing, we were able to go and view the machine and chat with the crew. This is comprised of a pilot and co-pilot, an emergency doctor and a critical care paramedic. They each enabled us to view their respective sets of equipment and showed us how the space inside the aircraft is used to its maximum potential.



Returning to the centre, the volunteers then explained more about the service and provided an audio-visual presentation showing likely scenarios of attended incidents.

We were told that it costs approx. £2800 for each helicopter mission, and more than £1 million a month to remain operational. Each crew expects to be called out seven times a day and is available 24/7 although the helicopter is unable to fly at night or in extreme weather.

No wonder the volunteers spend a lot of time fund-raising!

This was a very interesting and worthwhile visit. We were not charged but we all left donations to help support the excellent work done by this service.

Lunch was enjoyed at the Essex Golf Club, also based at the Earls Colne Business Park

## **GOLF GROUP**

### **JULY REPORT**

The east London courses of Epping and Theydon Bois have recently found favour with the Golf Group, possibly because of the hilly terrain (different from our other venues) and that they are short courses of about 5000 yards off the yellow tees, which suits some members.

At Epping on 18th July four members enjoyed a lovely sunny day where the course was in good condition and there was plenty of ball-run on the dry turf.

At Theydon Bois on 25th July the weather was less favourable with umbrellas up for half an hour. The rain stopped after the 6th hole and the threatened thunderstorms never materialised, so early pessimism from the four members proved unfounded. The course was in good condition but with soft going in places. We enjoyed tea in the club house to finish.

“Go east” for dry weather is good advice in this part of the world, and so it proved at Garons Park, Southend on 1st August. The Golf Group had not played there for quite a while, possibly because the £29 green fee is at our top limit. Three members enjoyed sunshine all the way round the “South nine and West nine holes”. Maybe next time we’ll try and include the East nine holes. We took tea in the club house because it was too hot to be out on the terrace.

## **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 2nd September** - Westleigh Heights, Langdon Hills SS16 6HU. From Laindon Station follow the High Street to the very top of hill. The entrance to the car park is just after the Miller and Carter pub/steak house

**Monday 7th October** - Two Tree Island Leigh SS9 2GB. From the A13 take Thames Drive to Leigh Station. Follow the road behind Leigh Station over Creek Bridge. Park at the end of slipway facing Canvey Island

## **PRACTICAL ART GROUP**

We have been meeting now in the Small Canon Roche Hall for over 2 years. We meet monthly on the second Tuesday of the month at 2.30pm and finish at 4.30pm. We are taught by Carol Feltham, and she helps us with new techniques and ideas. We started from scratch, and always welcome someone interested in starting from the beginning, or just coming along to learn more and share ideas. We bring our own materials - things that Carol recommends if you are a beginner.

At the moment there are vacancies.

If you are interested in joining the Art Group please contact the Groups Facilitator via our u3a website (<https://u3asites.org.uk/bb>) and request contact details of the Art Group Coordinator.

## ARCHAEOLOGY

### VISIT TO SUTTON HOO

For our July meeting we had arranged for nine of us to visit Sutton Hoo in Suffolk. We had been there before in the "sunny days" that we enjoyed pre-Covid, and thought it would be well worth a return visit to see what had been happening there in the intervening period.

We met up in the cafe (where else?) and then went out onto the main site where we had a guided tour of the main burial ground which lasted just over an hour. This included access to some of the areas that were not usually open to the general public.

Our guide was excellent, being very knowledgeable about the site, as well as being very concise in imparting his knowledge. We learnt that the name Sutton Hoo derives from the Saxon word Sutton meaning southern, and Hoo for Highland, which describes the site exactly.

Our guide also referenced the recent film "The Dig" and told us which parts were accurate, and which were a figment of the screen writer's imagination!



One of the main differences to the site for those of us who had visited previously was the introduction of a new viewing platform which had been erected. You can now see right across the area where our guided tour had taken us, as well as down to the nearby Deben River.

After this we also visited the house where the owner Mrs Pretty lived, and where there was a film running of photographs from the 1930's of the original dig, as well as some of the original rivets found when the outline of the Sutton Hoo ship was first uncovered.

We then again made use of the excellent cafe, prior to visiting the museum which contained artefacts both from the site, and exhibits relating to the Saxon world as well as a reconstruction of the helmet found buried in the Sutton Hoo ship.

All in all we had an excellent day out which was enhanced by the fact that the weather- which at times was starting to look like it would rain - managed to hold off.



## RAMBLING GROUP



Nine of us made it to our ramble from East Hanningfield in July. Our route took us to Bicenacre and then onto Woodham Ferrers, before reaching a large area of vineyards close to RHS Hyde Hall with some great views to the south. This was a relatively flat walk, however a new housing development had meant a slight detour. On our way home we popped in to The Rettenden Belle which has just reopened with a new landlord and where we put the world to rights.



Our September event is a cross country walk starting from the car park of Roxwell Memorial Hall. We will meet **at 10.15 on 18th September** in the car park close to the church in the centre of the village. Post code:- **CM1 4PA The Street Roxwell**. This is a 30 minute drive from Billericay. From there, we will take a series of footpaths to Newland Osiers, then 2 large fishing lakes and the Essex Way. This is a 5.77 miles walk across fields and foot paths with 5 good stiles. When we tested this walk in early July, the walking conditions were good, apart from one small area which was overgrown, so I will cut back the vegetation on the day. This is a reasonably flat walk. There are refreshments available at the Bake House at Highwood after the walk. No toilets are available on this walk. As usual, please wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Boots help to protect your ankles. Where possible, please try to car share. All u3a members are welcome to turn up on the day. Please bring your u3a membership card.

Our October walk will be in Warley, before we start a series of London Walks.

## SOLO UNO SUNDAY GROUP



Solo Uno Sunday went to Maldon in July for a boat trip on the Blackwater. Maldon was very busy and the weather was just right. There is of course a lot of history there, such as The Battle of Maldon. This took place over a thousand years ago in 991 and was immortalised by an Old English poem which depicts the events of the battle (but I haven't found out what that poem is). This hard fought battle was ultimately a Viking victory, and it is said that they had difficulty manning their boats to leave. In the aftermath of the battle, 'Danegeld'\* was paid to the Vikings for the first time and marked the beginning of a new era of successful Viking raids in England. The Captain of our boat told us that the locals re-enacted the battle a few years ago and the Vikings won again - Ha ha.



We had lunch in a nice pub overlooking the Blackwater and then a wander around the shops.

\*I've looked up Danegeld and it says "Dangeld was a tax raised to pay tribute or protection money to the Viking raiders to save a land from being ravaged"

## DISCOVERING ESSEX VILLAGES

### VISIT TO BRIGHTLINGSEA



On arrival, we went first to the museum, where we had time to look round and meet our guide for the day. The tour centred on the harbour and surroundings, and included many interesting facts about the area.

Brightlingsea was first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 where it appears as 'Brictriceseia'. In 1995 an early Neolithic pot dated 4000 to 3100 BC was found in a D-shaped enclosure with a ditch on a farm nearby. Other early remains in the area date from the Bronze Age, Roman and Saxon periods.

The town lies at the mouth of a promontory surrounded by the River Colne and its marshes and creeks, and grew up around two areas - the first around the parish church and the second close to the shore where a port had developed. Trade was in oysters, fish and copperas – (a green pigment of iron (II) sulphate used locally in brick production

By the 1790's Brightlingsea was a busy fishing port with oyster beds along the Creek. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, it had more advertised oyster merchants than anywhere else in England, with oysters transported to London where they were a staple part of the diet of the poor. During the Great War the anchorage was sometimes used by a squadron of battleships, including HMS Dreadnought.

Between 1869 and 1939 Brightlingsea was the winter laying-up and repair station for many large steam yachts owned by the wealthy. Brightlingsea has one of the oldest established sailing clubs on the East Coast, with its origins stretching back to the 1870's.

We finished with a very enjoyable lunch at the Yachtsman's Arms.

## RAILWAY JOURNEYS GROUP

### AUGUST VISIT TO EPPING ONGAR RAILWAY

During the 1950's, attempts were made to improve the steam service between Epping and Ongar. It was eventually decided to give the line light electrification; this avoided the need for a sub-station at Blake Hall. Modification was made to the rail and signals in 1957 allowing two 4-car trains or one 8-car train to run on the branch line. However, in practice, the short platform length made the use of the 8-car train unworkable.

Due to reduced passenger numbers, Blake Hall station was closed on Sundays and a reduced weekday timetable implemented from 17th October 1966. In the same year Central Line 1962 stock replaced the two 4-car trains on the branch line. Continued decline in passenger numbers led to the decommissioning of the passing loop and signal box at North Weald in 1976, and complete closure of Blake Hall station on 31st October 1981. A reduced service operated on the rest of the branch line. In 1989 an attempt was made to run an all-day service. It was unsuccessful and London Transport closed the loss-making section on 30th September 1994.

Today the Epping Ongar Railway has 6 full time employees and over 300 volunteers including our own Jeff Mesnard. The EOR is six and a half miles long and is the longest preserved railway in Essex, also the nearest preserved railway line to London. The line was reopened in 2004.

For the first time since our u3a Railway Group was set up, 30 members travelled from Shenfield on an ex-London Transport Routemaster bus to Ongar where we took the Epping Flyer to North Weald.



Here we were treated to a guided tour of the signal box where the signalman explained the measures taken to prevent any incidents. This is done by using any of the 21 levers and message bell system to notify the Ongar signal box of a train on the single-track line.



Then it was back on the train to Ongar where we were served with Fish and Chips, and some entertainment.



We returned to North Weald where a class 20 1968 built diesel engine was put on the back of the train to take us under the M11 motorway towards Epping. As you can see in the photo, some members managed to get on the footplate of our 1927 Swindon built steam Engine, so I hope that was covered in the Risk Assessment!

## **Newsletter Contributions**

Please send any items by **12.00 Noon on Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> September 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](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>

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(Editor)