



BASILDON AND BILLERICAY

u3a

NEWSLETTER No 383

OCTOBER 2025



Autumn Toadstools

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The summer seems to be over and the clocks go back at the end of this month. Now is the time to think about all the new and exciting things we are going to do this winter.

There has been good response to the suggested new groups, but still chance to join in!

The Groups are:

Beginners Bridge	Bird Watching	Botany	DIY
Keyboard	Looking Back	Pickle Ball	

Contact me for further details or to be added to the group's list

MONTHLY MEETING

**2.30pm on Friday, 24th October 2025
at the Canon Roche Centre, Billericay**

Speaker

Judith Hood

“Living with the Paranormal”

Judith lives with her husband Paul in Maldon, Essex. She has a passion for communication in any form, and very much enjoys public speaking.

Judith has lived with the Paranormal all of her life and to her it was completely normal, but on meeting her second husband 17 years ago, she discovered it was far from normal.

Remember there are FIVE Fridays in October. We always meet on the FOURTH Friday

NEXT MONTH

Friday 28th November

Speaker

Tony Harris

The return of one of our favourite guests.

Now featuring as **Margaret Thatcher** – another alter ego of Tony's!

In the past Tony Harris has brought Henry VIII and Winston Churchill back to life for us: now he dons the two-piece blue suit and brings his handbag to Billericay as Mrs T. We'll learn what she kept in the bag, why she didn't pursue a career in music and all the highlights (and low lights) of her time in Westminster.



ESSEX DISCOVERY

AUGUST VISIT TO RHS HYDE HALL



A small group of us made the journey to Hyde Hall on a very hot and sunny day. We arrived at 11am and took a long walk around the garden, via the children's play area and the lake, stopping in shady spots when we could. We then made our way to Hilltop Lodge to partake of a coffee or soft drink.

We happened to be there in good time so that we could take part in the minutes silence at noon to commemorate VJ day. We thought that we had got our timing wrong when suddenly we heard a loud, explosive bang 15 minutes early. It turned out that this was a sonic boom created when a flight of Typhoons was scrambled to escort a plane that had lost contact with air traffic control, and not a warning for the minute's silence!

We did carry out our planned silence at noon but were disappointed to find that no other garden visitors took part.

Now refreshed we carried on touring the gardens by visiting the Hilltop Garden and the Global Growth Vegetable Garden. Then we decided that we were getting over warm, and took a slow stroll back to the car park and finished our visit.

SEPTEMBER VISIT TO SOUTHEND PIER



A small group of us visited Southend Pier. We had hoped to visit the RNLI station and hear about the activities there, but had been unable to make a booking.

We decided to carry on with the trip to the pier anyway, and we were fortunate enough to coincide with, probably, the last day of the summer weather. Glorious blue skies and no wind encouraged us to stay at the pier end, sit and enjoy watching the boats out on the water and reminisce about childhood treats and family fun.

To continue recreating those good times we went to Tomassi's for our lunch, finishing up with a selection of ice cream sundaes and knickerbocker glories to honour long gone grandparents who would indulge their small people so well.



GOLF GROUP

2025 OCTOBER REPORT

There were six u3a golfers on Sept 18th at Hartswood facing quite a windy day in the sunshine. The leaves were falling from the tree lined course which, although an attractive autumn scene, nevertheless hindered finding balls under the leaves. Some players found the wind tiring and were glad to enjoy the usual cup of tea sheltered in the clubhouse.

On Sept 25th five u3a golfers enjoyed the course at Risebridge in good summer weather. The greens were in immaculate condition and with the dry weather continuing, the fairways provided 'Summer Bounce' which resulting in good scores all round. The only downside was that the course was very busy, resulting in slow play. However we joined out tees together to play as a five ball without holding anyone up.

On October 2nd four u3a golfers enjoyed a cool breezy day at Stapleford Abbots where the course was in good condition with fairly fast greens and firm fairways. Some players got another stamp on their loyalty card for a free round before Christmas.



Six golfers turned up at Garons on October 9th playing the East and West 9 hole courses. The second 3 ball group were astounded to "see" an eagle on the 17th – a long 491yd par 5 hole where Mike chipped his third shot straight into the hole from about 100 yards to score a two under par "eagle" result. In the

clubhouse we all congratulated Mike and accepted his generous offer of teas all round!

We now have two members of the group who have made this outstanding achievement for amateur golfers.

The courses still feel very firm and we would be pleased to welcome golfers who would like to enjoy some mud free golf before winter. We are out every Thursday at 10:30 on a course near you.

Looking towards the weekend of 19th October, we have seven u3a golfers accompanied by their wives looking forward to two private games of golf at Ufford Park Woodbridge, whilst their partners enjoy the hotel facilities and the delights of Woodbridge on this private event.

ARCHAEOLOGY 2 GROUP

Mid-September saw six members of the Archaeology 2 group take their Annual Trip away in Cirencester.



We travelled up in two cars, meeting at lunch time on the Monday at the Vale and Downland Museum in Wantage. We spent a couple of hours there viewing the various exhibits which focus on the history of the Vale of the White Horse, before going for a walk around the centre of Wantage itself. This is possibly best known as the birth place of King Alfred the Great as evidenced by a statue in the Market Place. The town dates back to Anglo-Saxon times, and nowadays has plenty of Georgian and Victorian buildings on show.

After this it was time to head on to our hotel for the next three nights, but with a side visit to see the White Horse itself. This is the highest point in Oxfordshire, and from there you can see up to six counties. The White Horse has been dated to the Bronze Age, with Uffington Castle an Iron Age rampart and ditch hill fort at its summit. We could also make out Dragon Hill where legend has it is the spot where St George slew the Dragon. It is not known who created the White Horse or why.

Tuesday morning and a favourable weather forecast saw us decide to visit a number of outdoor sites in and around Cirencester, starting with the nearby Roman Amphitheatre. The massive earthworks mark the site of one of the largest Roman amphitheatres in Britain, and was built in the 2nd century A.D. when Cirencester - known as Corinium - was second only to London/Londinium in size and importance with a population of over 10,000. The amphitheatre could hold up to 8,000 spectators, and once the Romans left Britain in 410 A.D. it was fortified against the Saxon invaders.



Following this our afternoon was spent at Chedworth Roman Villa, which is one of the largest, and most elaborate Roman villas so far discovered in Britain. It was rediscovered by the Victorians and provides a unique insight into life during the Roman period in Britain. This includes extensive mosaic floors, hypocausts and bath houses, as well as a small museum displaying some of the finds from the various excavations that have taken place there.

On Wednesday, as rain had been forecast, we spent the morning in the centre of Cirencester, and having initially followed a town walk led by Allan we ended up at St. John's church. A guided tour was taking place here at half past eleven, and we had an excellent local guide. After this we made our way to Corinium Museum, which has a large collection of objects found in and around the area. Not surprisingly most are from the Roman period, but there are also items from as far back as the Neolithic period up to the late Victorian era.



Following this we drove to Rodmarton House which is a Grade One listed building constructed in the early 20th century in an Arts and Craft style. This was one of the last country houses that was built and furnished in the old traditional style, with everything done by hand with local stone, local timber, and local craftsmen.

Thursday meant it was time to head home, but en route we visited Fairford Church which is notable for having twenty eight Pre-Reformation stained glass windows, some of the best preserved in Britain. The windows display biblical scenes and were made between 1500 and 1517, each telling a different but related Biblical scene, which conveyed messages to the poor, most of whom were unable to read.



Our final stop before we headed back to Essex and home was to visit Coxwell Old Barn in Oxfordshire. This is the old surviving part of a thriving 13th century grange that used to provide for Beaulieu Abbey. The barn would have been used to store wool, seed, animal feed, and crops ready to be sold, and by using dendrochronology it has been dated to 1292 or thereabouts.

All in all, another excellent trip with plenty of Archaeology to look at, as well as good company and food along the way.

We are already talking about where to go for next year's trip!

RAMBLING GROUP



Our September walk was at Fryerning, and from there 10 of us set off towards Blackmore. Here we stopped for refreshments before a longer walk back, where we encountered a friendly herd of horses, and on two occasions we saw a large group deer crossing in front of us. Fryerning is a great place for spotting deer. Some of us were in need of more refreshments before our journey home.



Our final country walk of the year will have just taken place when you read this.

Our November walk is the first of 5 walks in London and this one starts from **Finsbury Park** station. **We will meet at 10.30 on 19th November by the barriers at the above station.**

From here we take the walk to Highgate and Alexandra Palace. The walk is 6 miles long and finishes at the nearby station. We will stop for refreshments just after we meet and also in Muswell Hill.

For those travelling from Billericay, it is best to travel to Stratford and then transfer to the Mid May line to Highbury and Islington and then 1 stop on Victoria Line to Finsbury Park. You will need to buy a return ticket to Alexandra Palace. The ticket price with a senior rail card is £11.90 but you have to say that you are travelling via Hackney Wick. I will be at Billericay Station at 9.15 if you want to travel with me.

For those coming from Basildon or Laindon, take the train to West Ham, then the Jubilee line to Stratford. Then take the same 2 trains as the rest of the group.

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, please bring your u3a membership card. Please contact me if you have any questions or require any more information.

THE FOUR MILE MAX

I did a recce this morning (16th October) with Brian for the intended walk on Thursday 23rd October in Stock. We got a little way around and found ourselves about to enter a field with cows and one nasty looking bull, which had its eye on us. I wouldn't enter the field!! OH NO – too scary. So Brian has very kindly volunteered to find an alternative walk. This will also be in Stock so please park in the car park in front of All Saints Church (postcode CM4 9BU). There are bollards, but cars can get in. Look forward to seeing you on 23rd.

GREEN FINGERS

VISIT TO BEELEIGH ABBEY



Our Group visited Beeleigh on Friday 26th September, which was their last 'Open' day of the year. It is now under new ownership and the improvements being made by the new owners are off to a good start.

Unfortunately this visit coincided with what was, no doubt, a very interesting talk at the u3a Monthly meeting. However, we enjoyed exploring the gardens and visiting the on-site cafe. Luckily the weather was on our side!

Newsletter Contributions

If you have any items please send them by **12.00 Noon**
on Wednesday, 19th November 2025

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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(Editor)