BASILDON AND BILLERICAY u3a

NEWSLETTER No 395

OCTOBER 2026



October Colours

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Basildon & Billericay u3a will close in June 2027!

Why will it close? Because its members have chosen not to volunteer for committee posts.

Many years ago, we were a community of people willing to help run and organise events. Now we seem to be a group of people who are unable to do anything.
Both the treasurer and myself will have served five years on the committee; under Basildon & Billericay u3a Constitution this is the maximum we can serve.
We are currently in a healthy financial position and well organised financially, but this will not save us if no one is prepared to be counted.
I don't want to hear that any one is too old, there is no upper age limit, or that "I have retired now".
We have around 50 Groups so our members must be fit and able enough to attend those!!!

A big thank you to all members who are serving our u3a and those who have served in the past.

Chairman Basildon & Billericay u3a

MONTHLY MEETING 23rd October 2026

Speaker Phil McKinder

"Corpus Delecti"

This is the principle that a crime must be proven to have occurred before someone can be convicted of committing it. However, does it always apply?
A young woman travelling to England disappears on route and is never seen again.
A suspect is tried for her murder. Your u3a members are called up to be the jury for this trial. I tell the facts of the case, the case for the prosecution, and then the defence, and them ask them to decide on the guilt or otherwise of the prisoner. I then tell them the actual result.

Next Month 27th November 2026

Richard Bale –" Roman Dining"

Richard is an independent researcher and presenter, with a lifelong interest in the Romans. He is a regular speaker in support of the Roman Circus Visitor Centre, Colchester; and has presented at the Colchester Roman Festival, the Reconnecting Roman Britain conference and the Festival of Essex Archaeology & Heritage. He is a member of both The Society, and The Association for Roman Archaeology.

Richard is the Rayne Heritage Advisor, designing the Rayne Heritage Website and Trail.

RAILWAY JOURNEYS

TOUR OF THE CITY OF LONDON'S SQUARE MILE

We began our tour of the City of London's Square mile at Liberty Bounds, where 13 of us met Martyn Jones, our guide for the morning.
Martyn proved to be a very personable and knowledgable guide. Feedback was very positive and everyone seemed to enjoy this tour.
Martyn had worked in the city for many years and on retirement took a course run by the City of London to become a qualified city of London guide. He gave up his time to take on this tour especially for the u3a.
The tour was planned to take around 2 hours but after a lunch break, 8 of us continued for longer. We visited places we would normally pass by without a second glance and found out interesting facts and amusing anecdotes about them. One of the first places we visited was St. Olaves Church where Samuel Pepys and his wife worshipped and are buried. The churchyard was raised to bury around 357 victims of the plague, including Mary Ramsay who was falsely credited with bringing the plague to London.



Another visit was to The George and Vulture Tavern which Charles Dickens and Samuel Pepys frequented. It was also said to be a meeting place for the infamous Hellfire Club.

The photo submitted by Louise was taken at our last stop, showing old and new- the relatively new and ultra -modern Lloyds building in the background and the very old St. Mary Axe in the foreground. St. Mary Axe was the church that gave rise to the name of the street and the legend of beheadings. The actual name of the church that stands there now is St. Andrew's Undershaft, but everyone still calls it St. Mary Axe.



The weather was very kind to us and the consensus was that we had a great day out.

RAMBLING GROUP

For September's ramble we met around 10.00 at the H.O.M.E. hub in Benfleet where there were ample parking spaces. We had time for refreshments and catching up with everyone before we left at 10.30 for our walk along Benfleet Creek/ Sea wall.
Incidentally, the HOME hub is 'a community centre and well-being initiative which holds the belief that communities thrive when people support each other.' It serves the Castle Point community and has lots going on.



Sixteen of us set off walking along well-trodden earth and grass footpaths passing open salt marshes and mud flats. The walk was easy going, relatively flat and approximately 4 miles long. The gods were kind to us and the weather was perfect.
One of our group was testing out a route towards the nature reserve but had to turn back as he would have been stuck knee deep in mud.
Information was shared regarding the Benfleet Flood Barrier which was constructed in 1983 at a cost of £12 million, and Hadleigh Castle constructed a tad earlier around 1220. Unfortunately, only the ruins survived, splintering the landscape, as history tells us it was demolished by Lord Riche around 1551 and sold off as building material.
We didn't lose anyone and got to Leigh safely where there were many places to eat, drink and buy giant 99 ice creams.



November Walk

This city walk, beginning at Liverpool Street Station, will take in various historical locations, including Spitalfields (19th Century Immigration - Jack the Ripper sites), London's first ever Council Estate in Shoreditch and to the adjoining sites of the John Wesley Chapel and Bunhill Fields Cemetery for Non-Conformists. The walk will finally take us through historic Smithfield Market and Postman's Park, near to St Paul's Cathedral.
We will meet at 9.20am on Wednesday 18th November to catch the 9.37am train to Liverpool Street. We will have coffee etc at Hamilton Hall, where those travelling to Fenchurch Street can meet us before starting the walk at 10.45.
Chris Cuff will be leading the walk to provide historical and cultural information relating to some of the sights we will be visiting.
Bring your u3a membership card with you and suitable city walking footwear. There is a "comfort stop" approximately half way round the 5 mile walk. Lunch can be purchased at the Lord Raglan Pub, near St Paul's, where the walk will end before returning to Liverpool Street.

ESSEX DISCOVERY

VISIT TO THE SOUTHEND PIER MUSEUM



A small, windswept, group of us visited the Southend Pier Museum this month. We had a very enjoyable time. The Museum is a hidden treasure – hidden behind a door beside the pier railway station and down some stairs to what used to be the maintenance workshop beneath the station. Who knew it was there?

It is staffed only by volunteers, and we were made very welcome. After we had been provided with tea or coffee, Richard Brown gave a presentation about the history of Southend, why a pier was needed and how it was developed and used. This was well illustrated and informative and Richard patiently answered all our questions.

We learnt about how the pier was commandeered by the Government in WW1 to be used for servicing the Navy, and as a route for interned citizens and PoWs. They were housed on aging cruise liners moored just off the end of the pier. In WW2, the Navy took back control. A boom was constructed across the estuary to the Isle of Sheppey to protect naval shipping and convoys. These would be loaded and unloaded while moored within that part of the Thames. In fact, hundreds of vessels used in the D-Day invasion were moored there.

We then viewed the many and various exhibits ranging from vintage rolling stock, signalling equipment, models of the different ships and boats that would have used the pier. There were also slot machines, tourist souvenirs, postcards and much more. There are story boards about different events including the good ones – the grand opening of the pier and Royal visits – and the bad ones such as the fires that destroyed significant parts of the pier at different times and the damage caused when a tanker smashed through the end of the pier.

We would recommend this as a place to visit, entry is free, donations welcomed.
www.southendpiermuseum.co.uk

DISCOVERING ESSEX VILLAGES

TOUR OF MISTLEY



On a blustery but bright October day, eleven group members met at “Tea at the Quay”, for refreshments, in preparation for our tour of Mistley. Our guides Phillip and Pat, from Manningtree Musuem & Local History Group joined us there.

The tour started in the lobby of the café, which is located in one of the oldest remaining wharf buildings on the quay. Phillip gave us a brief history of Mistley and the Rigby family before we started off on the tour.

First building on the route was the Robert Adams designed quayside building originally offices and storage, later a pub and now four houses. Typically grand and symmetrical, and with the Swan fountain in front, it was a great start to the tour. After an hour of interesting facts and anecdotes about the streetscapes, buildings, parks and bridge that we were seeing, we came to the Mistley Towers. These are all that remain of the very fancy but too small church that Richard Rigby commissioned Robert Adams to design in 1776. We were able to go inside one of the towers and saw the plans for how the church originally looked.

Our visit to Mistley ended with a wonderful lunch at the Mistley Thorn Inn, previously owned by Matthew Hopkins, the Witchfinder General of the 1600’s.

GOLF GROUP

OCTOBER 2026 REPORT

The weather has been more settled as we have played at Hainault, Maylands, Stapleford Abbots, Hartswood and Cranham, being chilly or hot but dry. The fairway grass is slightly greener after the dry summer but the water level in most lakes is still low.



Mick, Terry & Colin at Hainault



Stuart, Mick & Mike at Cranham

Stapleford Abbots is one of our favourite courses, although the roar of M25 traffic can be a distraction. It's one of the cheapest courses - especially when they include a free bacon roll. We have to arrive earlier than usual to enjoy it before playing, but that's a small price to pay. Last week there was slight consternation when the bread rolls had not been delivered, so it had to be a bacon sandwich instead of a roll. We managed to overcome the disappointment.

On the 12th hole Mick chipped in from about 60 feet. He was so pleased to land on the green that he looked away and missed seeing his ball drop into the hole. He was surprised when told he had holed his shot for a birdie two. Amazingly, with the next shot on the same hole Richard also chipped in from about 20 feet. That's golf!

As we walked up Stapleford's 17th fairway a red kite circled quite low overhead - a wonderful sight in the sunshine.



Mick, Stuart, Colin, Richard, Mike and John on the first tee at Stapleford Abbots

At Cranham's difficult 18th hole Stuart decided not to try to drive over the lake, instead driving onto the narrow strip of grass alongside the island. The plan was good but when he played his second shot over the few feet of water to reach the green, he hit the far bank of the island.We all heard the unwelcome splash.



Mike took this photo of one of the many deer on Maylands Golf Course

It's good that some of the group are back playing after spells of incapacitation. Dave is still recovering from his knee replacement and we hope to see him playing again in the not too distant future. Sadly, Dexter, one of our more recent joiners, has endured a lengthy spell in hospital and has just reluctantly decided that he is no longer going to be able to play. We will all miss Dexter and we wish him all the very best for the future.

Report by R.B.

ARCHAEOLOGY 2

For our Annual three night trip away, the Archaeology 2 group had decided that this year's chosen location would be the relatively close north Kent coastal region. On a Monday morning in late September six members of the group made their way across the Dartford Bridge and onto Faversham, where we had arranged to meet up at the Visitors' Centre.

We started our visit by having a guided tour around the adjacent Charters Museum, which houses an impressive collection of Royal charters issued to the town over the centuries, and included a copy of the 1300 Magna Carta. Our guide was at pains to point out that this copy was the one on which many of our modern day rights were based, not the 1215 version. That version contains lots of specific clauses drawn up by the Barons, which were only relevant to King John.



The exhibition also included a charter with a portrait of King Henry VIII dating from 1544, the Moot Horn which is still used on ceremonial occasions, and two early 17th century maps of Faversham creek which at the time was one of the most important ports in England.

After this appetiser we sent off in the "capable" hands of Allan S who had downloaded the self-guided walking tour of Faversham. Amongst other places, this took us down Abbey Street which is lined with buildings dating back to Medieval times, and onto the Quayside area, which in recent years has been revived through new shops and eateries. Here we decided to stop for lunch.



Our walk then took us back via Arden House, where in 1551 Thomas Arden, a rich merchant whose sole interest apparently was to make more money, was murdered by his wife and lover. From here we visited the small Psychic Garden, and then the church of St. Paul which contains a beautiful painted pillar from the 13th century. (see photo)
Mention should also be made of the industry that dominates the town, and which dates back to 1698, this being the Shepherd Neame brewery, but where both the small Gift Shop and the Brewery Tours were unavailable on a Monday.
From here we now drove a couple of miles to Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park where gunpowder was produced from the start of the 18th century. We followed one of a number of Heritage trails around the site, and past the remains of numerous buildings, the main ones being marked with information boards, telling us of the history of the site up until its closure in 1936.
Having been suitably educated we now headed off to our hotel on the outskirts of Herne Bay.

On Tuesday, the first of our two full days in Kent, we had decided we would make our way to visit Dover Castle, run by English Heritage, and where we spent the entire day. We started our visit at the Roman Pharos or lighthouse, and the adjoining Saxon Church before making our way to the Medieval part of the castle, starting in the Great Tower. This is a magnificent 12th century Anglo-Norman keep built under the auspices of Henry II, and which at over 25 metres tall, dominates the landscape. Subsequently we also visited the Queen's Regiment Museum, and a few of the hardier

souls braved the Spur tunnels which run underground for 130 metres, and which include both medieval and Georgian defences. Emerging out on the spur we had a magnificent view looking back at the castle.



Before leaving, Allan and Peter went on a guided tour of the World War Two tunnels that housed a military hospital. The rest of the World War Two tunnels were currently being closed for "maintenance".



On Wednesday we had decided to visit sites slightly closer to where we were staying, the first of these being the **Reculver Towers and Roman Fort** which was under three miles away. Although we all left at the same time, Allan and Gwenda turned up some twenty minutes later, having stopped for fuel, and then being led a merry dance by their Sat-Nav. The Towers were built in the 12th century and although much of the church itself was demolished at the start of the 19th century the Towers were left standing as an aid to navigation.
The church was also built over the site of a Roman fort, as two thousand years ago Reculver stood at the mouth of the River Wantsum, from where the Romans could sail to Richborough. Little of it remains above ground, but there were ample information boards giving us background to both sites.



From here we made our way to Richborough Roman Fort which was about thirty minutes away by car.This time five of us arrived within a few minutes of each other, whilst Belinda was noticeable by her absence as she had unwittingly gone to our third destination of the day first!
Richborough dates back to the first century AD and we started our visit in the small museum before setting off for a look around the site. There was an original gateway here built to protect the Romans during the invasion of Britain in 43 A.D. This was later replaced by a more ornate formal Gateway built to mark the "entrance" to Roman Britain. The walls are also some of the best remaining ruins in Britain. Later it was used as one of the eleven Saxon Shore Forts built to protect Roman Britain against the Saxon invaders, but once the Romans left at the start of the 5th century A.D. the fortifications fell into disuse, although the remains of an early Christian church have been found on the site.

For our third and final stop of the day we turned to an example of Industrial Archaeology and made the short journey to Betteshanger Country Park and the Kent Mining Museum. Here we spent a couple of hours learning all about the area's short history in the industry, as the coal seams under the county were not exploited until the late Victorian period with a boom after the General Strike of 1926. Miners from other parts of the country made their way down to the area to get work which was scarce or non-existent where they lived. These areas included South and North Wales, Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, and even from Scotland. Two former miners were on hand to show us around and answer our (many) questions and with two floors of displays and information boards to take in, this proved another very informative visit.
On Thursday it was time to head back to Essex after a very enjoyable and educational few days, and with plans to return to the area for at least one of our Monthly outings in 2027.

Newsletter Contributions

If you have any items please send them by **12.00 Noon on Wednesday, 18th November 2026**

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.

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(Editor)