BASILDON AND BILLERICAY u3a

NEWSLETTER No 396

NOVEMBER 2026



Fireworks over Tower Bridge

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

As we come towards the end of another year, we are now counting the days for the numerous group end of year lunches and planning meetings in readiness for 2027.

I trust you are all getting your thinking caps on for new ideas for your groups.

We are fortunate in the number and variety of our groups so I look forward to seeing what else you come up with.

EDITOR'S NOTE

As Christmas is rapidly approaching, the December Newsletter will be issued a week earlier than usual. The deadline for receiving items will be Wednesday, 9th December.

MONTHLY MEETING

Friday 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.

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL AFTERNOON

Friday December 12th

Starting at 1 pm – with Festive Refreshments



We will be holding our popular Christmas Social event again this year in the Emmanuel Hall, Billericay.

THIS EVENT IS NOW FULL

If you have booked a place and find you will be unable to attend, please let the membership secretary know as soon as possible,so the place can be offered to a member on the waiting list

ARCHAEOLOGY 2

VISIT TO THE CHELMSFORD MUSEUM

Seven of us made this visit, firstly meeting in the Hive café at the Museum. Here we enjoyed a delicious lunch, although ordering had been a little disorganised, but it was half term and they were busy!

We then walked around to the Museum and went straight to the gallery housing "Timeless Treasures" including the Great Baddow Hoard exhibition which was the main reason for our trip. This had been found by a metal detectorist in 2020 and it turned out to be the largest recorded hoard of gold Iron Age coins that had been found in Britain – 933 coins in all. They were discovered with copper alloy fragments which, it is assumed, were part of the vessel holding them. It is not known why they were buried but they would have been valuable at that time 2000 years ago.





The gallery has other "treasures" on display encouraging us to think about what it means to be valued by people. These included children's toys, love tokens, pictures of landscapes etc. There was also a display of other metal detectorist finds.



Here is John using the gadget to demonstrate how heavy the hoard was. Each coin weighs twice as much as a modern 5p coin. Altogether 5.8kg. We all tried and decided we would not have liked to carry it any distance.

After we had finished here, some of us left the group and the rest carried on viewing all the other many and various exhibits at this delightful Museum.

GOLF GROUP

NOVEMBER 2026 REPORT

Since the last monthly report, the Golf group has played at Top Meadow, Maylands, Stapleford Abbots and Risebridge.
The weather has been reasonably settled, if understandably a little more chilly as autumn sets in. At this time of the year, leaves on the course are a real problem as the ball tends to nestle underneath them or hide amongst them, often making it really difficult to find.



In the rutting season there were plenty of deer on the course at Maylands in Romford and they seem unbothered by golf balls flying past them, even running across the fairway.



Terry putting on the 18th green at Risebridge with Colin looking on.

Another problem at this time of the year is the heavy dew. If the sun is shining, the ball can be hard to spot, even if it's on the fairway, so occasionally some players break with tradition and use a yellow or an orange ball.

Most of the group enjoyed their annual curry at the Gandhi Indian restaurant in Billericay. They very thoughtfully sent this photograph of them enjoying themselves in the warm to Richard who was freezing in Stockport watching his grandchildren at football training!!





Colin, Mick and Terry on the 18th at Risebridge just before Remembrance Sunday

Report by R.B.

ESSEX DISCOVERY

VISIT TO THE ESSEX RECORD OFFICE AT CHELMSFORD



On Friday 16th October, 12 of us went on a "Behind the Scenes Tour" of the Essex Record Office (ERO) at Chelmsford. Ed Harris, archivist, gave us a thorough and entertaining explanation of what happens at the ERO, and how the archives are looked after and accessed by the public.

Firstly, he gave us a guided tour of the public search rooms explaining how the resources are accessed and viewed. He had out a selection of local maps from many years ago, which we found fascinating allowing us to identify how things have changed where we live. He also had a couple of plans from renowned architect, Frederick Chancellor, a project that I have volunteered with for nearly ten years. These plans from the 1850's are hand drawn and painted, works of art in themselves, and would look good framed and hung in a gallery

He next took us into the archive store and told us how items are stored showing us some of the special items kept there; for example, an elaborately decorated Bible belonging to Charles I as seen in the photo. He explained the many systems that are used to protect the valuable and unique historic documents kept there.

We were also taken to the document conservation workshop where Diane Taylor described some of the actions she takes to ensure that items that have not been digitised are still available for the public to see. She showed a bundle of building plans waiting to be treated. These are rolled and dirty being covered in dirt and dust from the Victorian age, with damaged and broken edges. A good example of what her department can achieve knowing these will look as good as the Chancellor plans seen earlier.

Apologies to Andy Fletcher who seems to have dropped off the edge of the photo.

RAMBLING GROUP



For October's ramble we met at the Langdon Nature Reserve Visitor Centre on the Lower Dunton Road. The visitor centre belongs to the Essex Wildlife Trust, and has excellent facilities including a café, toilets and plenty of parking. We had time for a quick coffee and chat before we left at 10.30 for our walk through the Plotlands and local woodlands. Ten of us set off up the steep incline through the Plotlands, where in the 1930s, Londoners could set up their own rustic idyll.





Having made it to the top, and out onto the High Road, we headed down Lee Chapel Lane, past some quite fancy residences, and on to Willow Park. Once we were about as far from our start point as we could be, the heavens opened and we all got suitably drenched!
The Marks Hill nature reserve with its dense tree cover provided a little relief, and by the time we'd emerged onto Lincewood, the rain had eased off and it was a gentler walk back, mainly downhill, with a drying breeze behind us. A hot drink and a slice of cake was a welcome comforter back at the café.

Please see the next page for details of our December City walk

Farringdon to Whitechapel walk 16/12/26

We will meet in the Farringdon station Elizabeth Line lobby on Cowcross Street for a planned departure at 10.45. Timing suits off peak train tickets from the Billericay and Basildon train lines.

The walk is five miles long and takes in a wide variety of city, river and residential environments. From Farringdon we will head south past St Paul's and over the Millennium Bridge. We will take the Thames south bank path, return across the river over Tower Bridge, then thread our way through converted docklands to Whitechapel. Several interesting features will be passed on the route. The walk will end at Whitechapel station where London Underground, Overground and the Elizabeth Line can be accessed.

We will make a refreshment stop near the walk's commencement where good toilet facilities are available. There are several other toilet opportunities on the first half of the walk but none in the second half which is more residential.

At Whitechapel there are opportunities for a coffee or pub lunch including a u3a favourite.

Please bring your u3a membership card with you and as usual appropriate clothing and footwear.

Please use WhatsApp if there are any delays or other difficulties.

Newsletter Contributions

If you have any items, please send them by **12.00 Noon on Wednesday 9th December 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)