



## BASILDON AND BILLERICAY U3A

### NEWSLETTER No 316

MARCH 2020

#### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**



Hello Everybody,

These are surreal times, aren't they? Reality seems to have been suspended along with just about everything else. I will not mention the big CV but would point you in the direction of the

Trust website ([www.u3a.org/home](http://www.u3a.org/home)) where you can find the latest guidance and advice.

The Trust has recommended that the various U3A's continue to publish their newsletters to keep their members in the loop. Obviously with all activities suspended there will be a scarcity of current articles, so we are requesting that members contribute items of interest. These could be: the history of their group or our U3A; puzzles, quizzes or humorous anecdotes; groups who do not normally send in articles could submit reports about their group. I'm sure you can come up with other ideas.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to express our wishes that all our members come through this crisis unharmed, and hope that things will return to normality in the not too distant future.

Please read the following announcement from the **Third Age Trust**:

U3A members are being asked to help craft a shared learning project where they create living history of this extraordinary time.

The project will look for personal thoughts, ideas and reflections on how this feels to you and what you are doing to deal with it. Members may want to keep an electronic diary or to find a little note-book which you can have close at hand to scribble down thoughts as they come.

We are asking people to write up anything they think relevant to having to be at home and your thoughts and reactions. You may wish to write something each day for example, or once a week or simply when something of note happens. You may read an article, book or see a programme which triggers some ideas or thoughts.

We are also looking for ideas and reflections on how you are keeping your interests going if you are online and if you have access on your television, radio or via the internet.

It's also pretty important to think of good things that happen so in the journal make an effort every day to list five things that gave you pleasure however small.

We will be expanding our support of this project in the coming days including suggested questions that you could ask yourself to help structure your thoughts.

We are currently recruiting volunteers to be contact points to offer support and advice. If you want take part - please keep in touch with us. **At the moment share your ideas at [communications@u3a.org.uk](mailto:communications@u3a.org.uk) but in the next few days we will have a dedicated email address for this living history project.** So keep checking the website and national newsletter.

We look forward to hearing from you.

### **MONTHLY MEETINGS**

This coming monthly meeting will be cancelled and the AGM postponed until a later date. Future monthly meetings will also be cancelled until further notice. This will mean that the existing Committee members continue in their posts for the time being.

### **GROUP'S FACILITATOR**

### **NEW GROUPS' MEETING**

Due to the current situation with Coronavirus, I have decided to postpone the New Groups' meeting that I had planned to hold on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March.

I am still keen to get new groups set up, so will reschedule the meeting when the situation improves and people feel that it is safer to venture out. If you are interested in joining a particular group, please email me with your details and which group you would like to join and I will keep a list.

I hope that it will only be a month or two until I can reschedule the meeting and will let everyone know as soon as I have a new date.

## **U3A JAZZ CONCERT**

**4<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

The jazz concert proved to be a great success as a packed, enthusiastic audience enjoyed listening to the 5 brilliant musicians, 2 of whom are current winners, on trumpet and clarinet, in the British Jazz Awards. What a wonderful way to spend a Friday afternoon



## **NOTICES FROM THE GROUPS**



### **RAMBLING GROUP.**

Although a walk programme had been prepared for April and May, in view of the U3A directive to suspend all activities, even those taking place outdoors, it is regretted that all U3A Rambling Group walks are suspended until further notice. Walks submitted for April and May will be held over until we are able to resume activities

### **PETANQUE GROUP**

In view of the Coronavirus situation and the measures being taken UK wide, normal weekly meetings on Mondays and Thursdays are suspended until further notice. However, the Petanque Terrain in Lake Meadows is a public area and is open at all times for individuals, families or small groups to use should they wish to do so.

Weekly meetings will be resumed as soon as the COVID-19 outbreak is controlled or minimised and it is considered safe to meet as a group.

We shall miss our weekly opportunities to play Petanque and enjoy the social interaction and hope it will not be too long before we can meet again and welcome any new members.

### **TABLE TENNIS GROUP**

Please note that the table tennis group has been suspended until further notice. Hopefully it will resume before too long

## **HALF RAMBLE**

We meet on the first Monday of every month at 10.30am. The following walks are scheduled, but in view of the current Covid-19 precautions please contact the co-ordinator to confirm, as instructions are varying daily.

**6th April** Warley Place Nature Reserve and gardens, Brentwood. On the Warley Road (B180). Turn right next to Thatchers Arms Pub CM13 3HU. Park in grounds or in the Pub.

**4th May** Paper Mill Lock, Little Baddow. From the A414 at Danbury turn left into Little Baddow Road. (2.5 miles). The car park is on left just before river (CM3 4BS)

## **REPORTS OF GROUP ACTIVITIES**



## **GREEN FINGERS GARDENING GROUP**



This year marks the fourth anniversary of the Greenfingers Group and during the winter months we have been growing our own garden flowering pots and baskets as shown in the accompanying photo. Each one was beautifully presented at our February meeting and contained a lovely display of a variety of plants, foliage and bulbs. After much deliberation it was decided that they were all excellent exhibits and everyone came equal first. We hope to have similar competitions throughout the year to maintain our members' interest and competitive spirit.

## **THEATRE STUDIES GROUP**

### **Theatre Studies Group visit to the Royal Albert Hall**

On a bright sunny February morning 19 of our group had a back stage tour of the Royal Albert Hall. On the northern edge of South Kensington this magnificent building was opened in 1871 by Queen Victoria. It was the dream of her husband Prince Albert to have a building to house the Arts and Sciences. He had acquired the land which now houses all the museums in one area of London. The planning had started in 1851 but in 1861 Prince Albert died. In 1867 the Queen laid the first stone for the Hall of Arts and Sciences. However when she officially opened it she said it was called the Royal Albert Hall. Being Queen nobody challenged her on its title.

Prince Albert had insisted this impressive building would be accessible for everyone and its uses varied. The structure is sound and the iron roof weighs 338 tonnes together with 279 tonnes of glazing. The acoustics are among the best in the world and this is achieved by the echo fibre glass diffusers (known as the mushrooms) which hang from the ceiling at different levels. The hall's organ was built by Henry Willis in 1871 and has 9999 pipes. The building has over 5200 seats all with an excellent view of the round arena. The boxes are housed on the first level with the royal box identified by a crown on the outside. If the Royal Family are not using the box the seats are given to one of the royal household for a nominal amount donated to charity.

The foundation stone was made out of Red Aberdeen Granite and beneath it lies a glass time capsule with coins, artefacts and papers from the Victorian era enclosed. This is still partially visible in the auditorium if you know where to look. The building is self-funding; it is held in trust and is managed by a registered charity. Many of the original boxes are still held by the same families. The trust hires the venue out and it is used almost daily, which helps with the running costs.

Over the years the hall has been host to many annual events such as 'The Proms', Ballets, Operas, National TV awards and Classical Spectaculars. The Beatles, Kaiser Chiefs and Jimi Hendrix have all performed there, as well as Eric Clapton who holds the current record for the most performances. As well as the arts, many sports tournaments have been held in the centre with the dome overhead. An enjoyable and informative day out. Well worth a visit.

### **Pretty Woman – the Musical**

Early March saw our group travelling to London to see the new musical 'Pretty Woman' which is based on the iconic film starring Julia Roberts and Richard Gere.

This musical tells the story of a young girl, Vivian (on the streets) trying to make a living. One day she comes across a man, Edward, lost in the red light district who needs directions. She charges him for them and as he wants her company he takes her to his swanky hotel and agrees to pay her. Next morning he asks Vivian to stay for a week and gives her his credit card to spend on clothes and accessories. All this with 'no strings attached'.

The hotel manager takes her under his wing, teaches her the correct etiquette, shows her where to shop and how to dance. Together with the 'Bell Boy' they transform her into a 'lady.' Edward is impressed and whisks her off to the opera. Vivian, overcome with emotion, falls helplessly in love. Edward realises there is more to life than work and they become partners.

The choreography was by Jerry Mitchell and an original score by Bryan Adams and Jim Valance. The costumes and scenery were spectacular and the whole cast worked extremely hard. Actors Danny Mac and Aimee Aitkinson portrayed the characters well. Especially good were their singing voices. An enjoyable afternoon at the theatre made even better by having our seats upgraded at no extra cost.

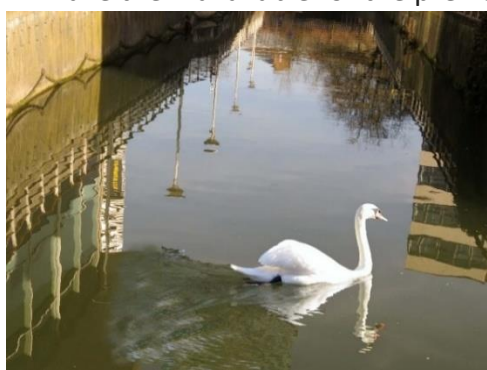


## PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

On 5<sup>th</sup> February, the photography group enjoyed a great morning out in Chelmsford and our themes for this month were "Reflections" and "Looking up". We started off at Meadow Walk and got some great reflections in the River Can, then went to Chelmsford Cathedral for our "Looking Up" pictures. Our morning out ended very sociably with lunch in King's Coffee House.

At our recent house meeting, we reviewed the images from Chelmsford, along with some taken by Peter Cubley in the Caribbean. You will see below some of our images, including Peter's image of a Bananaquit bird.

I've also included a couple of photos taken by Jetta Rushbrook, on our previous theme of Winter during her Christmas trip to Lapland. Unfortunately I didn't have them available for the previous newsletter but I've included



Swan Reflection Doreen Pamplin

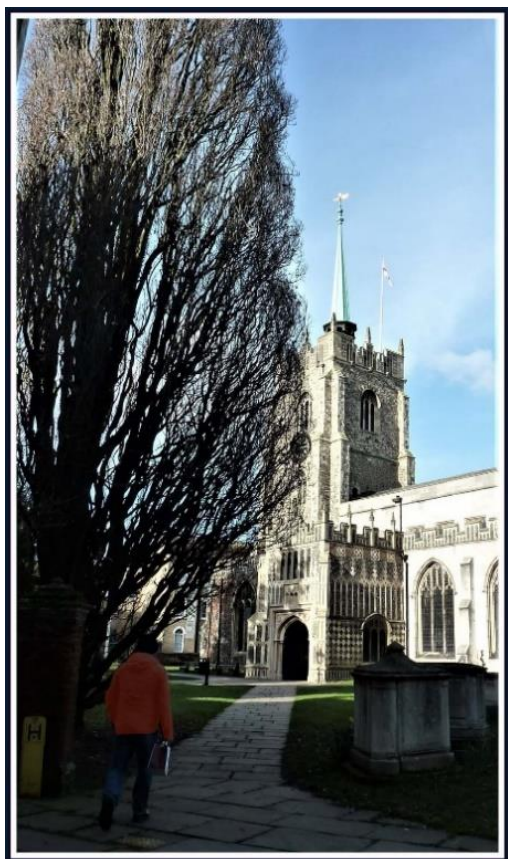
them now because they are so good. All the better because they were taken on a mobile phone after the extreme cold weather drained the batteries in Jetta's big camera!



Bananaquit Bird Peter Cubley



River Can Dave Stephen



Chelmsford Cathedral Val Hole

Lapland and Sleigh Ride Jetta Rushbrook



## **RAILWAY JOURNEYS GROUP**



### **March 2020 Visit**

Our first visit this year was to Neasden Temple in North West London. The mandir (Hindu place of worship) was completed in just two and a half years using limestone and marble individually carved in India. Over 23,000 stone pieces were numbered, packed and transported to Neasden and then assembled like a giant 3D jigsaw by specialist stonemasons and volunteers. No iron or steel was used in the construction.

Our guide greeted us in the adjoining haveli and this is where the reception, assembly hall, a permanent exhibition entitled “Understanding Hinduism”, a souvenir shop and offices are located. This is constructed of wood carved from English oak and Burmese teak with an intricately carved wooden façade and interior.

After removing our shoes, we went into the mandir and on the lower floor we saw a glimpse of the ancient Hindu practice of pouring water over the sacred image of God which was being performed in a beautiful marble room decorated in white and gold. It was nice and warm throughout thanks to the underfloor heating. Upstairs we saw one of the five “arti” ceremonies which take place every day. This involves the waving of lighted wicks before the sacred images accompanied by singing, prayers and music.

In the huge assembly room of the haveli, we watched a video of the construction of the temple including the enormous pouring of concrete for the foundations, one of the biggest ever made in the U.K in one day. We were given an insight into the Hindu faith and the opportunity to ask questions.

The final part of our visit was to the Shayona restaurant, across the road from the temple, which offers a variety of delicious vegetarian Indian food.

The very warm welcome we received from the staff and the stunning craftsmanship of the carvings made it an experience we will remember.

### **EDITOR'S NOTE**

We hope there will be a Newsletter in April, although there may be very little content, as Groups are not meeting.

If, as an individual, you are following the suggestions made on Page 1 by the Chairman, or on Page 2 by the Third Age Trust and wish to share any experiences via the Newsletter please do so. Whilst we are "socially isolating", maybe you have taken up a new activity, or re-visited an old hobby, started to learn a new language or discovered a new talent. This is an unusual experience for us all and we want to hear from you!

### **Newsletter Contributions**

If you do have any items for the April Newsletter please send them by **12.00 Noon on Wednesday, April 15th**

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.

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 details of individuals (name, address, phone number) have been redacted from the on-line versions.

Editor