
Blackbourne U3A News

A University of the Third Age in Suffolk
affiliated to the Third Age Trust



ISSUE NUMBER 59

AUTUMN 2008

From the Chairman . . .

I hope you've all had an enjoyable Summer despite the rather damp weather. Maybe we should count our blessings that we live in East Anglia seeing the awful flooding in other parts of the country.

I trust all who wanted to have renewed their membership as those on the waiting list are now being contacted. There were 70 waiting to join us and it seems highly probable that quite soon we shall have to start to develop a new U3A in the area. Nationally as well as locally the success of the U3A is amazing.

National figures indicate that the U3A loses about 10% of its members a year, but membership actually rises by 10% per year, i.e. statistically the total membership is renewed every five years or so. The U3A is growing rapidly in both new groups and new members. Without new members there is a danger we stagnate, so we should rejoice that we are so popular and dynamic.

I would like to pay tribute to John Freiyer who eight years ago set up our website and has run it ever since; not surprisingly John has decided it is time to 'retire'. Thank you John for all your expertise and efforts on our behalf. Happily Sue Prigg has agreed to take over the role of webmaster and she, John and our General Secretary, Bob Mountfort, are working very hard to develop our website. Thank you to them all.

Brian Milner

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 11 October
Suffolk Network of U3As
Autumn Academy
Combs Middle School,
Stowmarket

Monday 20 October
Interest Groups' Exhibition
With wine and cheese
(see next page)

Monday 3 November
Farming during changing
times
David Barker

Monday 1 December
A Suffolk girl – learning to be
an opera singer
Clare Presland

Monday 5 January
Phenology – is Spring getting
earlier?
Dr Tim Sparks

LECTURE NOTES

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT – 1 September

From the title of this lecture members could be forgiven for thinking it was about ghosts, but Peter Ingram, the speaker, is a Fellow of The Royal Astronomical Society and an Affiliate of the University of Cambridge Institute of Astronomy. He gave a most interesting talk about planets, comets, meteors and asteroids.

There are eight planets around the Sun. Mars has its own moons called Phobos and Deimos but very little water and people will probably be walking on Mars in the next 20–50 years. Venus is covered in craters in one of which is a mountain that would take approximately three days to climb.

Our Moon has craters some of which are named after famous astronomers. The largest planet, Jupiter, is composed almost entirely of gas and its bands are created by extremely high winds.

Comets are on the far edge of the solar system and are freezing cold. As they go round the sun they melt causing a tail which we associate with comets such as Halley's.

Asteroids are lumps of rocky debris floating in the solar system and lie in a belt between Mars and Jupiter. Each day 1000 tonnes of meteorites land on Earth, a lot of it as dust. Some meteorite craters are the size of London and we were shown slides of various craters around the world. The most recent meteorite landed only two months ago in South America. It is thought that a huge one may hit the earth in 55,000 years so beware things that go bump in the night!

At the end of his lecture Peter passed around samples of meteorites which had landed on earth – these were very heavy; and a piece of basalt from the Moon which was extremely light.

Christine Glover and Vera Hurding

FORTHCOMING EVENT

Interest Groups' Exhibition

This will take place in New Green Centre on Monday 20 October from 11.00 am to 12.30 pm during which the winners of the BU3A Photography Competition will be announced.

Entry is by ticket only and these may be obtained at the lecture meeting in October at a cost of £3 per person to include wine, soft drinks and cheese.

SOURCES JOURNAL

Sources is the Educational Journal of the Third Age Trust, brought into being by a grant from the National Lotteries Charities Board. It is distributed free to U3A members upon request.

The publication can be downloaded from the National U3A website www.u3a.org.uk or be sent by mail by completing the 'on-line' application form or by filling in an application form which will be available at our monthly Monday meetings.

Published three times a year, each issue is focused on one particular subject. By drawing on the knowledge and experiences of U3A members it disseminates ideas and practical information which it is hoped will help U3As develop their study groups and activities and encourage them to explore new areas of interest.

Bob Mountfort

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LECTURE NOTES *contd*

THE VICTORIAN VILLAGE – DR DAVID DYMOND

Dr Dymond's talk on 7 July was in two parts; the first focusing on 19th century rural life; the second covering his research into the Suffolk parish of Wortham.

Due to earlier marriages and a decline in death rates, population levels in villages rose steeply after the Napoleonic Wars. Villages were youthful places. In 1851 half the population of Westleton was under 20 years of age. Estate villages such as Culford, had new houses built by the squire for his workers but in other villages houses were sub-divided, overcrowded and unhygienic. Farm workers suffered low wages, long hours and poor diet and many migrated to towns and cities and the Dominions. The need for Poor Relief rose rapidly and unrest led to riots, arson and attacks on Union workhouses.

Not all was doom and gloom. In 1800 only 5% of children had any education but by 1850 50% received some schooling due to voluntary efforts, especially by Anglican clergy. Non-Conformism spread rapidly often due to dissatisfaction with absentee clergy. Eventually the Church of England reformed itself and restored many of its churches.

The Wortham study* was based on the extraordinary records made by Richard Cobbold, rector of Wortham from 1824 to 1877. It contains potted biographies of many of the parishioners with paintings of them and their houses.

Dr Dymond showed slides of these characters and their homes, many of which can still be identified today, and gave interesting insights into their characters. Dr Dymond's fascinating account of a most interesting period was followed by many wide-ranging questions showing how much the presentation had been enjoyed.

* *'Parson and People in a Suffolk Village: Richard Cobbold's Wortham 1824-77'* Editor David Dymond.

Sue Prigg and Don Picking

INTEREST GROUP NEWS

TRAVEL TO GROUP

On Friday 13 June 45 of us left Thurston by coach; for our ten-day holiday in Switzerland. After an overnight stay at Reims we set off again for the Hotel Krone in Giswil. As well as being an ideal base for our daily proposed excursions, Giswil also gave us immediate access to well-maintained walking trails, and the opportunity to amble through meadows and woods enjoying unspoilt natural beauty, and gazing at snow-capped mountains around us, an unfamiliar sight to our Suffolk eyes.

Our first day was spent in Lucerne, a short distance away, where we enjoyed a morning's guided walking tour of the medieval town, taking in picturesque old squares and towers; the Kapell Bridge; the Lion Monument; and much more. In the afternoon a boat trip on the lake offered a different opportunity to enjoy the awe-inspiring views of the surrounding mountains.

It is not possible in so brief a narrative to describe the many experiences of this trip – visiting snowy Kleine Scheidegg Mountain on the Jungfrau Railway; Grindelwald; Bern, a UNESCO world heritage site; the journey on the Golden Pass Panoramic Train through mountain passes and traditional Swiss villages to Montreux, Jazz capital of the world, and where Freddie Mercury is much revered; a return journey on the steam-hauled Brienzer Rothorn Cog Railway, with a lunch stop high up at Planalp; and so very much more. Suffice to say that the quality and experiences of this trip were voted an unqualified success, and a photographer's delight, and we were much touched to see the owners and staff smiling, waving, and bidding us 'return soon' as we left..

Jean White

INTEREST GROUP NEWS

SOCIAL HISTORY GROUP

In May, Joan Stebbens gave an interesting talk on *The History of Canals* which resulted in a lively discussion about members' own experiences on canals.

In June, Mya Turgoose and Doreen Wooster introduced *The History of Toys* and again members took a full part describing their own memories of favourite playthings.

In July, Christina Ruddock gave a well researched and scholarly talk on *Slavery and the Slave Trade*. This terrible trade which linked Europe, Africa and the Americas was made possible by conveniently prevailing winds and currents. It coincided with the opening up of the Americas and the Caribbean and the establishment of sugar, tobacco and rice plantations. The slaves were treated abominably by otherwise civilised human beings – all in the name of economics and profit. In the late 18th century Quakers on each side of the Atlantic began to denounce slavery. English abolitionists such as Thomas Clarkson attacked the slavery trade itself as they felt this tactic gave them the best chance of political success and of winning over Parliament, something they achieved in 1807. Sadly forms of slavery still exist in many parts of the world, including our own country.

Brian Milner

THEN AND NOW GROUP

In June, Jo Pinner arranged a visit to Mildenhall Museum. This small but fascinating and informative museum contains a lot of local artefacts including fenland farm equipment and tools. However the *pièce de resistance* is the wonderfully displayed Mildenhall Treasure – the originals of which are in the British Museum. We also enjoyed a guided tour of St Mary's Church which has a long and interesting history. The afternoon ended with a very welcome cup of tea and biscuits in the Museum.

In July and August we split into two groups to have a tour of *Historic Places of Entertainment* in Bury St Edmunds led by Bury Heritage Guide David Rees. This interesting and entertaining tour covered sites of the Bury Fair, theatres, the Botanical Gardens and even the first swimming pool in the town. David Rees described the sites and the people connected with them and answered all our questions without once consulting any notes. Very impressive.

Brian Milner

THEATRE VISITS GROUP

COPPELIA

Twenty-two of us visited the Theatre Royal Norwich for the English Youth Ballet production of *Coppélia*. The world acclaimed principal dancers were excellent in the roles of Swanilde and Franz. However the youth ballet stole the show helping or thwarting Dr Coppélius in his desire to bring his beloved doll Coppélia to life.

WITCHES OF EASTWICK

In September we again visited the Theatre Royal in Norwich to see the production of *Witches of Eastwick* prior to its West End opening. Marti Pellow (from Wet Wet Wet) brought a particularly raunchy perspective to the character of Daryl Van Horn. The rest of the cast were excellent and the music and dancing added an extra dimension to the famous story.

Sue Russell

From the new editors of Blackbourne U3A News

We are indebted to Judith for her patience in teaching us the basics of Desk Top Publishing and we will attempt to maintain the high standards she has achieved.

For the present we intend keeping the same format but we shall be pleased to consider any suggestions for changes, subject to budget restrictions.

What really matters is content and for this we rely on you for contributions either individually or from Interest Groups. Ideally these should be sent to us by e-mail in the form of attachments but if you do not have a computer, typed or hand written notes will be just as acceptable.

Barbara Milner and Bryann
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blackbourne-u3a.org.uk**

U3A WEBSITES

Visit the U3A website to find out more about the Third Age Trust, and resources offered for your particular interests:
www.u3a.org.uk

Our own website is
www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk

Please send your contributions, with relevant photos, about your current activities to our new Webmaster, Sue Prigg, at
webmaster@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk

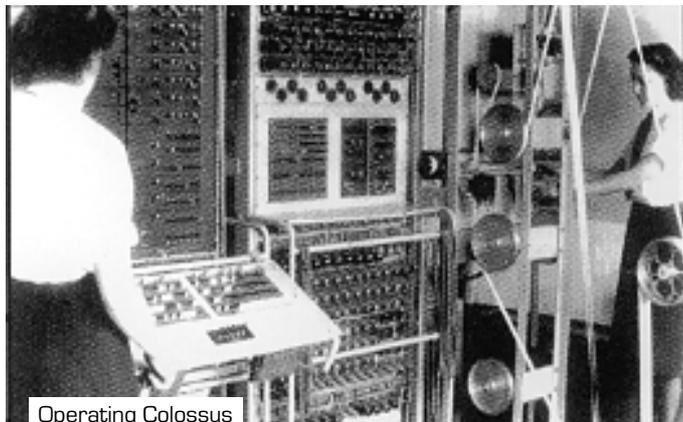
If you do not have Internet access you can contact Sue
01638 751289

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www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

VISIT TO BLETCHLEY PARK ON 30 JUNE 2008

On arrival, our group of 49 listened to a short introductory talk and then were free to enjoy the once 'best kept secret' Park at leisure, with the help of individual audio guides.



Bletchley Park was a passion of Winston Churchill. He called its codebreakers his 'geese that laid the golden eggs that never cackled' because his 8,500 people worked in total secrecy.

Work at Bletchley Park was a race against time. Codebreakers like Alan Turing desperately tried to crack Germany's coded communications. Hitler believed that the Enigma Machine was unbreakable but, although the odds were colossal, he was wrong. The codebreakers' successes helped to save countless lives by shortening World War II by about two years. The Park also houses Colossus, the World's first electronic computer.

There was a wide range of exhibitions to enjoy, including a vast Churchill collection, classic vintage vehicles, maritime and 1940s displays, as well as a Victorian mansion and stable yard. An American garden trail around the lake was also enjoyed together with an adequate restaurant and comprehensive gift shop.

Audrey Barrett

GARDEN VISITS GROUP

This year we have had very interesting and varied visits.

- February **Harveys Nursery** at Thurston, Gold Medal winners at this year's Hampton Court Flower Show.
- March **Clermont House**, Little Cressingham, with its fabulous arboretum.
- April **Saville Gardens and Valley Gardens**
Two very different gardens designs, but both well worth the long journey down to Windsor.
- May **Hoveton Hall**, near Wroxham, where we saw an amazing display of rhododendrons and a fantastic walled garden with some most humorously labelled herbs.
- June **Madingley Hall**, Cambridge. Capability Brown designed these beautiful College grounds.
- July **Hampton Court Flower Show** It was a pity that due to the incessant rain we were not able to spend as much time as we would have liked gleaning ideas from the outside show gardens but the marquees held more than enough beautiful displays and ideas to inspire us.
- August **Helmingham Hall** near Stowmarket.
We had a very relaxing afternoon wandering around the beautiful herbaceous borders and working kitchen garden. I think we were all impressed by their vegetables - most of us never having seen such large beetroot and radishes! As usual we ended up in the tearooms enjoying delicious cakes.

Barbara Milner

FORTHCOMING OUTINGS

GARDEN VISITS

Wisley RHS Gardens
Wednesday 22 October
2008
Full details from Barbara Milner on 01284 761508

THEATRE VISITS

Christmas Spectacular with the Co-op Youngsters
Snape Maltings
Saturday 12 December
2008
The Co-op Youngsters are well-known locally and have recently finished a sell-out session of *High School Musical*. Their last year's *Christmas Spectacular* had rave reviews.
Full details from Sue Russell on 01359 231285

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

Gressenhall Workhouse and Museum of Norfolk Life
Monday 13 October 2008.
Full details from either Audrey Barrett on 01284 723345 or Sheila Linke on 01284 766474