



Newsletter

Affiliated to the Third Age Trust

Issue 62

Summer 2009

From the Chairman

In spite of the doom and gloom of the "credit crunch" I am pleased to be able to report that Blackbourne U3A continues to flourish. Much evidence of this comes with the usual array of Interest Group activities some of which have allowed many of us to experience places we would not normally have visited and my personal thanks go out to those members who arrange such events.

*Selecting venues for these Group visits and holidays is very time consuming and a great deal of work goes into each outing including coach hire, paying for tickets (sometimes in advance) and liaising with you our members etc. May I therefore ask that we all give our various organisers the greatest assistance by ensuring that having made a reservation for a trip we pay our money in good time and we **do** go.*

Just a reminder that we are about to take our Summer break and that of course means Membership Renewals are now due. The programme for 2009/10 and Membership Renewal Forms are available either at the Lecture Meeting on 6 July, or with this Newsletter if it is posted to you. For those who receive the Newsletter via e-mail, renewal forms can be obtained from the Membership Secretary, Joan Smith (01359 233308).

*Our Lecture Secretary, Elizabeth Sharpe, has a fantastic line up of speakers for next year, so **to ensure your continued membership please let Joan have your completed renewal form (with a stamped addressed envelope please) by the next lecture meeting on 7 September. After this date we shall invite those on the waiting list to join and once the 500 limit is reached we will regrettably have to decline further applications whether from new or existing members. So book early to avoid disappointment!***

All that remains is for me to thank you all for your support during the first four months of my Chairmanship and to wish you a happy and relaxing summer break..

Colin Avis

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Monday 7 September
Is Parliament still fit for purpose?

Lord Phillips

Monday 5 October
Thomas Paine: From Corsets to Democracy

Brian Way MA (Oxon)

Monday 19 October
Interest Groups Exhibition

With cheese and wine

Monday 2 November
Two Suffolk Artists - Gainsborough and Constable

Mark Mitchels

Monday 7 December
Christmas Waits
Merry seasonal entertainment

Martyn Harrison

LECTURE NOTES

THE WEATHER BUSINESS - 6 April

A full house of 250 welcomed Jim Bacon, the BBC weatherman, who entertained us with a talk on The Weather Business.

When he first became a meteorologist 41 years ago, forecasting the weather depended very much on humans observing and reporting conditions in their area but during the 70's technology began to take over. Although weather balloons, drifting buoys and land-based monitoring stations are still used it is the satellite that has transformed the art of forecasting, making for more accurate predictions over a longer period.

Pictures were shown and explanations given of the different cloud formations from which we can all predict the coming 24 hours weather. The nature of weather fronts and hailstones were discussed and we also learnt that there are different types of fog. In answer to a question, we now know how the sound of thunder is produced.

Whilst the general public and the farming community rely on an accurate forecast this is even more important for multi million pound projects such as the off shore oil drilling and wind turbine industries. So, despite computer modelling improving all the time, it is still up to the human forecaster to interpret that information accurately and provide a reliable forecast.

Jim received loud applause for a most entertaining and informative talk.

Bryann Ward

COMPUTER GROUP

The Computer Group was founded 12 years ago in 1997 when home computing was in its infancy. Computers are now more user-friendly and much more powerful. Over the years our membership profile has changed and it has become increasingly difficult to satisfy the diverse abilities and interests of our 33 members. In the light of these and other problems, the committee reviewed the current structure of the Group and made a number of proposals which were presented to the members on 28 May. Following discussion all members present voted to wind up the Computer Group in its present form.

From July there will be no monthly meetings at Thurston. We hope to set up several small independent groups to cater for specific interests, such as Everyday Computing, Creative Computing and Digital Photography. Discussion groups will continue as previously.

Members of BU3A who are interested in any of the proposed groups should contact Judith Constantine who will be acting as co-ordinator.

Members of the Computer Group, past and present, are indebted to Convenors John Freiyer (1997-2006), Alan Simpson (2006-2009), Bill Packham, and founding members John Turner and Peter Pinel for their invaluable help and advice over the years. Their generosity with time and expertise has been unstinting and we thank them all. We would also like to acknowledge contributions in earlier years by Colin Harbury, John Smith and the late John Ryder. Last, but not least, our grateful thanks to Sylvia Packham and Ruth Simpson for providing refreshments at our monthly meetings.

Judith Constantine
01359 241079

LECTURE NOTES (continued)

THE WORK OF ST NICHOLAS' HOSPICE - 11 May

Ian Norris and Sue Long are Community Fundraisers for the Hospice which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

Ian, who has held the position for four years, spoke first, saying that the hospice was about life, enabling people to enjoy whatever life they have. The hospice is for anyone who has a life limiting illness and most patients are referred by their doctor. Patients are treated as individuals and helped to be comfortable with themselves. Care for the family is also given and as the Duchess of Kent said 'laughter and tears walk side by side.'

He explained the lay-out of the hospice and some of the treatments offered, including complementary medicine. Trained care nurses are available for people wishing to stay at home.

Sue, who has held her position for just a year, spoke of her friend whom she had taken for treatment and when asked if she had enjoyed her day, her friend's face was radiant and she said the day was second to none and she had 'been treated like a Queen.' Having given a talk to a class of school children, Sue was confronted by a young girl who had been troublesome at school since her grandmother had died. Impressed by Sue's talk, and with help from the whole school, the girl put on a charity event and when told they had raised £400 the girl burst into tears - her life had changed.

For families there is *Nicky's Way*, a bereavement course for children who have lost loved ones, which is so important as a child's future is so precious.

With a ratio of one staff to two patients it costs £4m. a year to run the Hospice. Just 20% comes from Government grants with the rest being provided by the private sector and fund raising. The latter is already 25% to 30% down due to the economic situation.

A collection after the talk raised £385.

Joan Smith

LE CHEMIN DE LA LIBERTÉ - Bernie Millard - 1 June

A very knowledgeable Bernie Millard had joined a group to retrace the route known as the Freedom Trail taken by escapees during the World War II from the south of France across the Pyrenees into Spain. The group attempting this venture was well supplied with the right equipment and travelled during the day. With the help of his grandson Simon, who showed slides of maps and the terrain, Bernie explained the background.

In the second World War when the Germans captured France many prisoners, French nationals and servicemen, were put to hard labour in appalling conditions with little medical care. There are various trails across the Pyrenees and in all 33,000 prisoners attempted to escape. They were not well equipped and had to escape during the night so the death rate was extremely high. Once in neutral Spain anyone from any country other than France was treated well and sent to their prospective consulate for arrangements to get them home. However the French had a difficult time because of Franco's relationship with the Germans, many being shot even though in a neutral country.

Bernie's group began their walk from Saint Girons covering 44.64 miles in 34 hours over several days with the climb and descent totalling 16,550 feet. En route they met with friends from the resistance and passed several plaques commemorating those who lost their lives. It had been an arduous journey; imagine just how much worse it had been for the escapees.

Joan Smith

PEAK DISTRICT

On Thursday 7th. May 37 of the **Trav2 Group** set off for a 4-day visit to the Peak District. En route we stopped at the National Trust property Belton House, near Grantham, which we all agreed was the most beautiful stately home the group had visited. Friday was a day of sightseeing initially around Ashbourne, Buxton and Glossop and then on to Bury for a trip on a steam train to Rawtenstall – the railway being one of those saved from Dr Beeching's axe.

On leaving the train we went on to Holmfirth, home of '*Last of the Summer Wine*'; stopping at Compo's café for an amazing fish and chip lunch, followed by a choice of desserts and tea/coffee, all for the ridiculously reasonable price of £4.50. After wandering around the village we were taken on a beautiful trip around the Dales through Glossop, over Snake Pass to Hope Valley, Bakewell and Matlock. Saturday we visited Crich, a lovingly created period village with its interesting Tramway Museum where we saw restored trams from all over the country – some of us admitted remembering them whilst others pretended they didn't!

On our way home we visited Canons Abbey, another NT property and were given a potted history of the families that had lived there since around 1710 to the present day. We were also told about the techniques used to preserve the house and its contents. All in all a great visit.

(For full a pictorial report please visit www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk.)

Bob Mountfort

ISLE of WIGHT – April 2009

Seventeen members of the **Walking Group** found themselves back on the Isle of Wight for a 4th successive year. Once again our base was the Eversley Hotel, Ventnor and the weather couldn't have been better.

We walked together on each of the three mornings with the afternoons free for people to do whatever they wished, meeting up for a delicious evening meal.

With numerous well signed paths criss-crossing the island we opted for a fairly easy route on day one from Newchurch (the oldest parish of the island) to Alverstone taking in the Yar river trail.

The second day's walk from Godshill was a little longer with steady climbs onto Appuldurcombe Down and past the now ruined mansion of the same name. The third walk took the group up onto Mottistone Down, past the Longstone (an ancient burial site) and down to the pretty village of Brighstone. Here we took sustenance before the final steep return ascent.

On the final morning we arranged a private visit to [Haddon Lake House Gardens](#) where the owners told us of the history and restoration of the site. Originally the garden of a large Victorian house, it had become neglected following family arguments over a will. It was then used as an aviary but again fell into disuse until the present owners purchased the land in 2002. With the aid of grants from Natural England they set about restoring the gardens to their Victorian style, discovering the original paths and water system that fed the lake. Flowers, fruit and vegetables are grown organically in the walled garden and do particularly well, for the microclimate resembles that of the Isles of Scilly.

Bryann Ward

CHESTER – 18 to 22 May 2009

Thirty members of the **Travel & Tourism Group** set off for Chester via Trentham Estate which had beautiful gardens and a very good shopping outlet where we had lunch before arriving at our hotel about 4-30pm.

Tuesday we spent in Liverpool where a local guide took us on an interesting and informative coach tour. Most of us visited the Beatles museum at the Albert Dock where we learned the Beatles' history from their births until the break-up of the group. We also had a visit to the Anglican Cathedral, an amazing building and the largest cathedral in Europe, and afterwards on a trip on the Mersey ferry complete with the song 'Ferry across the Mersey'.

Next day we had another excellent guided coach tour; this time of Chester. The race course in Chester used to be the local port, but the river changed course allowing the land to dry and it was made into the Race Course. During excavation for a new road, the largest amphitheatre in the country was discovered. Chester is the only city with a complete city wall, approximately 2 miles long.

We had a very full last day leaving the hotel for our first stop at Llandudno, a pleasant little town with some very nice Victorian hotels. The next stop was at Betwsy-Coed in Snowdonia National Park; then on to Lake Bala, for a train ride along one side of the lake on a narrow gauge train and homeward bound for another scenic journey back to the hotel.

On Friday we set off home, stopping at the National Memorial Arboretum which commemorates all service personnel who have died since the Second World War. After lunch we made our way back to Thurston.

Yvonne Yule

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

On 27 April after a coffee stop in Cromer we visited Felbrigg Hall, Norfolk., a beautifully presented National Trust property which is home to one of the largest collections of the 18th century Grand Tour paintings by William Windham. As well as enjoying the extremely interesting and well-preserved Hall some of us walked around the extensive gardens, albeit a little cold!

Sheila Linke

PLEASE REMEMBER

The BU3A Annual Photography Competition

This year's entries must be submitted at the latest by the 5 October either at our monthly meeting or to Ken Weston, 5 Lower Broom Road, Woolpit, IP30 9UU to ensure judging can be made and the winning photographs displayed at our Interest Groups' Exhibition on 19 October

Categories: 1. Water; 2. Mood;
3. Open (any subject).

Photos must be prints, min. 7" x 5", max. A4. For full details and rules see the Blackbourne U3A website or the monthly meeting noticeboard

AMBER NECTAR

BARNINGHAM SOCIAL HISTORY GROUP felt it to be its duty to check out England's only whisky distillery – St George's Distillery in Roudham, Norfolk. With its collective mind firmly concentrated on the educational aspects of the visit, the group made its way across the border via the B1111. The visit began with a cup of coffee and a video giving a brief insight into the making of whisky, after which the distillery manager quizzed us about our drinking habits. Surprisingly, few of our number turned out to be regular drinkers of the amber nectar. Perhaps hoping that we would see the light, our guide enthusiastically led us on a tour of the distillery to see the way their whisky is produced in the beautiful copper stills. Water is obtained from the distillery's own aquifer and ingredients are sourced in East Anglia. Nothing is thrown away, all waste products being put to use locally as animal feed or fertiliser.

Great emphasis was laid on the fact that Scotland is not, as the Scots would have us believe, the only country manufacturing whisky. The distillation process was introduced into America by early European settlers, but it was not until the 17th century that true whisky production started. By the end of the 18th century America began to call its product Bourbon and by the 19th century distilleries were being built in Wales, England, India and Australia. The end of the 19th century saw the end of whisky production in England but The English Whisky Co. has put this country back on the map with the building of St George's Distillery. The first barrel was filled with St George's whisky in December 2006. The law dictates that the product cannot be labelled 'whisky' until it is three years old but after a bit of tasting we didn't much care what it was called!

The purpose built distillery sits on the banks of the River Thet with beautiful meadows around. The building itself can house conferences and social events; tours and educational tastings may be booked.

The shop stocks over 200 different whiskies from all over the world, as well as a range of gift ideas. More information on their website: englishwhisky.co.uk or 01953 717939

Deidre Dobson

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

k

Our own website is

www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk

Where you can view fuller pictorial reports of some of the items in this Newsletter.

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

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

Items for the Newsletter can be sent to publisher@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk

OPERA APPRECIATION

Blackbourne U3A's Opera Appreciation Group met for the first time in October 1996, convened by Deidre Dobson, who had that year arrived in Suffolk. Members of the study group have, of course, changed over the years and some dozens of people have shared and widened their knowledge of opera. Other U3A members now have a newly discovered enthusiasm for a subject they originally approached somewhat tentatively. Deidre and John are winding up the current study group this summer. If any U3A member would like to start a new group, John and Deidre would be happy to give advice, and lend recordings and books whenever possible. Contact them on 01359 221643

GARDEN VISITS

Since the last BU3A Newsletter this group has had really successful and delightful visits to the gardens of:

- Buckingham Palace
- Capel Manor - attached to the College in Enfield.
- National Trust Peckover House in Wisbech.

The group's visits take place on the fourth Wednesday of each month and we travel by comfortable Galloway European coaches.

Barbara Milner

SHORT WALKS

The Short Walks Group is still going strong despite the sad loss of its popular convenor Richard Horton.

We walk at 10.30am every first Friday in the month and most recently have included Diss (town and country), Walsham le Willows (country) and a private farm trail at Ixworth Thorpe. Strangely on every occasion we have had seventeen walkers.

There are forty seven members of the group although I suspect that some members for various reasons are no longer able to take part and I would appreciate a phone call if this is the case, in order to allow others to join.

Finally as we did not hold a planning meeting this year I welcome any ideas for future walks to add to this years programme.

Barry Wells

Tel: 01359 259112

THEATRE VISITS

Sign of the Times

On Wednesday 20 May the **Theatre Visits Group** had the opportunity to see Stephen Tompkinson and his 'work experience' colleague bring Tim Firth's new play to life. They made us sad, contemplate what life brings to us and give us laughter.

Just the two actors were able to hold us spellbound.

Sue Russell

Produced by Barbara Milner and
Bryann Ward
Printed by Profile Business
Supplies, Bury St Edmunds
© Blackbourne U3A 2009

COPY DEADLINE FOR OCTOBER EDITION IS SEPTEMBER 20

To save mailing and printing costs please download this Newsletter from our website