

*From your Chairman*

*THE recent tragic events in New Zealand and Japan are a reminder of man's vulnerability in the face of the world's most devastating natural forces, whilst here at home, more benign natural events have marked the progress of the seasons.*

*As I type this in mid March, the daffodils are nodding at the fleeting sun, and we recorded the first brimstone butterfly of the year in our garden, always a sight to lift the spirits. The times have also been changing for Blackbourne U3A. At the recent AGM we said goodbye to several Committee members and welcomed two new ones. Thanks are due to Colin Avis, an excellent Chairman over the last two years, and to Elizabeth Sharpe, Christine Glover, Sheila Linke and John Morris for their services to the cause. Elizabeth especially, has recruited excellent speakers during her term as Lecture Secretary and the programme for the months ahead looks just as interesting. Edna Lockhart takes over Elizabeth's role, and John Christie takes on the Vice Chair position, whilst I step into Colin's shoes, a tough task indeed.*



Colin Avis hands over the Chairmanship to Peter Heath

*Joining Blackbourne U3A has been one of the best things that my wife, Gill, and I have done in recent years. It has opened up a whole new set of experiences and, just as importantly, we have made a whole new circle of friends. I look forward to meeting more of our members as the year progresses and wish you an enjoyable and safe start to British Summer Time. Look out for the brimstone. The orange tip is the next Spring butterfly to make an appearance.*

*Peter Heath*

THIS year's **AGM** on 7 March was attended by 220 members.

Colin Avis, the outgoing Chairman said that his two year stewardship had been at times frustrating, rewarding and enjoyable. Membership is now at the revised maximum of 550 and, following the Interest Groups Exhibition, the number of Interest Groups has increased. He thanked all those members, both on and off the committee, for their hard work and support in maintaining the lively and friendly atmosphere and was himself pleased to have been able to make a contribution.

The treasurer, Laurie Marshall, then presented the accounts which were duly adopted by the meeting. These show a healthy balance of £6160 but nearly £3000 of this will be expended on lectures and affiliation fees before our next subscription year begins in September.

Peter Heath was elected Chairman with John Christie as Vice Chairman. Colin Avis, Christine Glover, Sheila Linke and Elizabeth Sharpe, having completed their allotted term, were ineligible for re-election and John Morris was not seeking re-election. The remaining members were re-elected en bloc and Edna Lockhart was elected onto the committee. An extra three people can be co-opted onto the Committee during the year if necessary.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2011 - 2012

Chairman	<b>Peter Heath</b> 01359 232291
Vice Chairman	<b>John Christie</b> 01359 240358
General Secretary	<b>Roger Eburne</b> 01359 240704
Treasurer	<b>Laurie Marshall</b> 01284 828433
Lecture Secretary	<b>Edna Lockhart</b> 01359 232522
Asst. Lecture Secretary	<b>Sheila Inman</b> 01359 235274
Membership Secretary	<b>Joan Smith</b> 01359 233308
Badge Secretary and Newsletter distribution	<b>Barry Wells</b> 01359259112
Interest Groups	<b>Joan Bailey</b> 01359 232990

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### MONTHLY LECTURES

These start promptly at 10.00 am  
Coffee and biscuits are served  
between 9.30 and 9.45 am

Monday 9 May

**Life of a Travelling Punch & Judy Man**

*Peter Battey*

Monday 6 June

**Suffolk Accident Rescue Service**

*Colin French*

Monday 4 July

**The Beauty of Venice**

*Dr. David Dougan*

### GARDEN VISITS

Contact Barbara Milner for details  
01284 761508

Wednesday 27 April

**Springfields Festival Gardens Spalding.**

Wednesday 25 May

**Stodys Lodge Gardens, Holt.**

Leave Thurston at 10.00 am

Wednesday 22 June

**Byndes Gardes, Pebmarsh, Halstead.**

Leave Thurston 10.00 am

Wednesday 27 July

**Elton Hall, Peterborough**

### SUFFOLK AND DISTRICT NETWORK OF U3A'S AUTUMN ACADEMY

Saturday 8 October 2011 at  
Combs Middle School, Stowmarket  
10.00 am to 3.30 pm. Morning  
and afternoon sessions.

Cost £8 .

Apply by 22 July 2011.

Application forms will be available at  
the monthly meetings..

### EDUCATIONAL VISITS

Monday 27 June

**Burghley House, Stamford**

Cost approx. £22

For details contact John Morris  
01284 723684

### THEATRE VISITS

Sue Russell is considering a visit to  
a performance at the Royal Opera  
House, Covent Garden. The total  
cost will be in the region of £60. If  
you are *seriously* interested please  
contact Sue on 01359 321385  
This will only take place if there is

## LECTURE REPORTS

### BURY ST EDMUNDS and THE WARS of the ROSES – January 10

BRIAN MAY, MA. Oxon. spoke at our first meeting of 2011. Although the subject matter was involved he made it easy to follow and in places made it most amusing without losing its seriousness.

Henry VI was only nine months old when he became king in 1422, and until he became of age in 1437 and was able to assume the reins of government, the country was governed by his uncle, the well liked Duke of Gloucester, Gloucester was keen to continue waging war with France although not everyone agreed with this and the Duke of Suffolk went to France to find a French bride for the king in the hope that this would bring peace. The marriage of Henry to Princess Margaret of Anjou was arranged and a truce was agreed. This took place in April 1445 with Margaret being crowned queen in May of that year. So peace with France was secured but this was opposed by Gloucester.

In 1447, Henry, persuaded by his wife, summoned Gloucester to a meeting of Parliament which was held at the invitation of the Duke of Suffolk in Bury St Edmunds. Arriving at his lodgings on the edge of town Gloucester was arrested for treason, took to his bed and died a week later, being laid to rest in St Saviours hospital, Out Northgate Street, the site of which is near the back of the large Tesco's.

In 1450 there were plunderings and attacks on Suffolk's followers and he was exiled to France. However he was executed on a boat at Dover and his body laid in the Collegiate church at Wingfield.

*Joan Smith*

### EJECT! EJECT! MEMOIRS of a TEST PILOT – February 7

STAN HODGKIN was for 10 years test pilot for the [Martin Baker](#) Ejection Seat Company and he told us about this unusual aspect of aviation technology with a liberally illustrated talk.

Having always wanted to be a pilot, Stan began his career in the Fleet Air Arm but he later joined the RAF, flying 29 Squadron's Lightning fighters from Wattisham and 208 Squadron Buccaneers from Honington.

Martin Baker is the world's longest established manufacturer of ejection seats having been founded in 1934 by Sir James Martin and Captain Valentine Baker and we were shown how the development had progressed with an archive film of 1946 to the present day.

In 1944 the Air Ministry asked the Company to develop an ejection seat as, in the new age of jets, baling out of an aircraft had become impossible. In 1946 the first live test was carried out and since then at least 7,400 lives have been saved and the Company is now the largest supplier of ejection seats world-wide.

The Company continues as a successful family run business, headed by the twin sons of the late founder Sir James Martin. They, like their father, are engineers and have great enthusiasm for the product, with the support of a loyal and skilful workforce.

This important equipment is made to save lives and therefore must be of the highest quality – and work the first time! The aircrew member must also reach the ground uninjured to have the best chance of survival. The technical side of this fascinating branch of engineering was illustrated on film.

We realised that Stan Hodgkin had spent an important ten years of his life ensuring that these all important pieces of essential equipment were fully operational and completely safe for the use of others. He was certainly most deserving of our applause.

*Elizabeth Sharpe*

## MY DAY AT THE PALACE – March 7

VISITING us again, Adrian Williams, CBE, was given a warm welcome. He started by recalling the momentous day in 2003 when he opened the formal letter announcing that he would be receiving the CBE for his contribution to education. His family was so excited, especially his youngest daughter, Alice, when told that David Beckham would receive his CBE on the same day!

Only three guests are allowed in the Palace and with one son and two daughters there was a problem. Obviously his wife would attend but graciously his eldest daughter stepped aside, although she was able to celebrate the rest of the day with them. Then came the excitement of buying new outfits and going from the hotel to the ceremony by taxi and the aplomb with which Alice told the driver 'Buckingham Palace' please!

One has to be nominated for the CBE and if the nominator has not heard within 18 months the nomination has not been accepted. Only one in ten nominations are approved. His wife had known early in May 2002 as she had to give all the relevant information but was told to keep it confidential.

Adrian then explained that most countries have an honours system and went on to outline ours. Before 1902 honours were hereditary but since then have become more comprehensive.

Photography is prohibited in the Palace but they purchased a video of the day which we were shown with Adrian saying the ceremony is so well organised that it last exactly one hour and seven minutes. He spoke of the procedure of address to the Queen, the way she signals the end of her conversation with a special handshake, and the splendour and grace of the ceremony in magnificent surroundings.

We were most appreciative that Adrian had shared his momentous occasion with us. He also brought along his medal.

*Joan Smith*

## INTEREST GROUPS' NEWS

### BARNINGHAM SOCIAL HISTORY GROUP

SNUFF and suet – two unusual topics, but both helped to enrich our knowledge of our past.

Snuff was first recorded in 1497 and introduced into the French Court by Catherine de Medici in 1561, having found it a great help soothing her son's terrible migraines. Very soon this medicinal remedy became a pleasurable habit and fashionable amongst royalty and the aristocracy, and by the 18th century snuff taking was popular throughout all social classes

The rise in fame of the common cigarette is largely responsible for the decline of snuff taking. With smoking now outlawed from public places around the world the 21st century could see the return of snuff taking with people turning to it to get the effects of nicotine – its health risks are seen to be significantly less than smoking cigarettes,

So to suet – first mentioned in a recipe in 1617. The Atoxa factory (from *toro* the Spanish word for bull) was opened in Lancashire in 1893. Before this, all suet, the hard fat around the kidneys of beef cattle, had to be cut and chopped by hand. Atoxa now sells enough suet in Britain each year to make one million dumplings a day. A tin of Atoxa survived Captain Scott's trek to the Antarctic and was returned to the company decades later with the contents still pure!

And there is also a vegetable fat suet. Mincemeat, mince pies, steak and kidney pudding, spotted dick, Christmas puddings et al all use suet. What an ingredient to have at our fingertips.

*Gwen and Eddie Blows*

## OPERA APPRECIATION

The January edition of 'U3A Sources' contains, as in all issues, a note of the Third Age Trust Resource Centre's latest acquisitions

They report that they have a growing collection of opera on DVD and that, for the first time in the U3A, there is an Opera National Subject Coordinator. It may be that some of our members might consider starting an Opera Group, in which case Arthur Tart (01604 721463) might be helpful.

Deidre and John Dobson, who convened Opera Groups for a number of years, are also willing to offer help and advice, and lend recordings.

## NEW FOLK DANCING GROUP

This group meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at Wetherden Village Hall 2.00pm – 4.00pm

There is still room for more members.

Further details available from Joan Stebbens 01284 769867

## SOCIAL HISTORY (Thurston Group)

The group meets on the third Friday of the month at 10.00.a.m. in the Conservatory of New Green, Thurston.

This year we have had talks by members on 'World War II Christmases at Home and Abroad', 'The History of Underwear in the 20th century', 'Sir Walter's Curse – The History of Tobacco' and 'The Woollen Industry'. We have room for more members so why not come along and enjoy our lively meetings.

For further details please contact Christina Ruddock on 07766332273

## FRENCH APPRECIATION

ON the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2011, the French Appreciation Group held their first meeting of the New Year at the home of Judith and Andrew Constantine where we shared a very enjoyable French style lunch, the highlight of which was the Galette des Rois. This delightful cake was kindly brought to us directly from France by Mary Shepherd's daughter.

Ann Sear explained that the tradition of the Galette was that it was a reminder and a re-presentation of The Epiphany, or Visit of The Three Kings, to see the Baby Jesus in the stable at Bethlehem.

Each person receives a slice of the cake in which is hidden a small porcelain figure (a fève or favour) and whoever finds the figure wears a gold crown which also comes with the cake.

This person is then king or queen for the day and is treated with great honour and may choose another person to join him or her to lead a dance.

After lunch we enjoyed a game of Scrabble, played in French of course, which helped to polish up our language skills.

Our thanks to Anne-Marie for delivering the cake from Bordeaux, and especially to Judith and Andrew for their hospitality.

*Mary Shepherd*



Galette des Rois



Queen of the day

## WILDLIFE WATCHING

THIS year the Wildlife Watching group is following the course upstream of the river Black Bourn and on a grey overcast morning in January, 20 of us made our way to County Hole near Barnham on the Euston estate. This is where the Black Bourn and Little Ouse rivers converge.

Despite the damp conditions and the rivers in flood there was much to see including stoats and hares. The real reward, however, was the sight of two red deer stags that had been disturbed by a nearby shoot.



They came quite close, crashing across the water-logged ground, and the photographers among us were able to take some excellent shots, one of which, by Chris Brooks, is reproduced here.

*Alex Parker*

## GARDEN GROUP VISIT TO WALSINGHAM

ON an extremely wet 23 February, 51 of us braved the elements to visit Walsingham Abbey to see their glorious snowdrops. We were lucky as by the time we arrived the rain had ceased and, although it was a bit muddy underfoot, we were able to wander through the woodland and see them in their thousands in their natural habitat. Our expert photographer Jo Sweetman took this wonderful picture of the barn owl – and bemoaned the fact that she had not got a better lens with her! Everyone else thought the photograph was brilliant.

This group has become so popular that our booking sheets get full as soon as they are put out at the monthly meetings. As places are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, to avoid disappointment it is necessary to make sure you book straight away.

*Barbara Milner*



## 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](http://www.u3a.org.uk)

Our own website is

[www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk](http://www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk)

Please send your contributions, with relevant photos about your current activities to our Webmaster, Sue Prigg, at

[webmaster@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:publisher@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk)

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Your input is always welcome – it need not necessarily be groups' information