

From the Chairman,

AS the winter months bring shorter days and longer nights, rejoice in the fact that the many activities of Blackbourne U3A will help to brighten your days in the colder weather. A big welcome to our new members, and if you've rejoined from last year, very well done – a good decision!

The October Interest Groups Exhibition was another full house and a resounding success due to the commitment and support of many members. A big thank you to those who welcomed you in, to those who prepared the room and the food and wine, and to our Interest Group Convenors, who put on a splendid show of the activities once again. Especial thanks to Shirley Horton who has led the team preparing the food for at least 5 years. Shirley has done a wonderful job with her team and has handed the reins over to Joan Smith for next year.

And speaking of handing over the reins.....four of our Committee members will be leaving their roles in Spring 2012 and we will be looking for more willing helpers to replace them. Will you give a little of your time to help your U3A group continue on its successful way? I do hope so.

Don't forget the mince pies and wine to be enjoyed after the December talk, which will probably be a popular meeting. If you arrive to see the "Full House" sign outside, please respect it. We cannot compromise on the Fire Regulations limit of 250 persons, so apologies now if you are disappointed.

Wrap up warm and stay safe out there.



Peter Heath Shirley is presented with a special bouquet in recognition of her work

MONTHLY LECTURES

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

Monday 5 December

God Rest Ye Merry?

Linda Scholes

Monday 9 January

Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction

Chris Bowden

Monday 6 February

The Island Parrot Sanctuary

Prof. Christine Rivett

Monday 5 March

AGM followed by

Pakenham Water Mill

David Eddershaw

The Beauty of Venice

OUR talk on 4 July was given by Dr David Dougan. With the use of slides he gave us a spectacular tour around the City of Venice, the Lagoon and the Grand Canal, starting with the church of Santa Marie della Salute built in 1682 to commemorate the plague of 1630 and the magnificent works of art. Via St Mark's basin, where 3,000 gondoliers hold a boat race each year, we arrived at St Marks Basilica to be bedazzled by its Byzantine interior of gold mosaics, the Pala d'Oro and the relics of St Mark. Outside are bronze replicas of the four horses taken from Constantinople. The Doges Palace has a Gothic influence with the courtyard embellishments and the giant staircase leading to the council chamber which holds nine hundred people and is highly decorated.

Crossing the Grand Canal is the Rialto bridge, the original of which was made of wood in 1255. A painting of the bridge by Vittore Carpaccio shows shops on it but it collapsed and the present stone bridge dates from 1591. Another amazing sight was the Arsenale with the Lions at the entrance to the shipyard.

Once a powerful trading empire Venice finally fell to Napoleon in 1797 but regained independence as part of Italy in 1866. Over the centuries many artists have painted scenes of Venetian life. In 1835 Ruskin endeavoured to show the decline of the city by a series of sketches. Today Venice has recreated itself through tourism with its population of 60,000 being increased by 20m. tourists each year although there is concern about the damage being caused by the many cruise ships.

David finished by saying if you visit Venice then you must take an evening boat ride with a gondolier and you will truly believe you are in paradise.

Joan Smith

Titanic Exhibition

FOR July's educational visit John Morris arranged an outing to the Titanic Exhibition at the O2 Arena.

April next year will be the centenary of the sinking of RMS Titanic, the wreck of which was not found until 1985 lying in 2.5 miles of icy water. Then began the challenging operation to survey the wreck and 25 years on many artefacts have been recovered, 600 of which are now displayed at this exhibition.



On entering, each visitor was given a boarding pass bearing the name of a passenger and, to add poignancy, at the end of the visit there was a list of passengers showing

whether or not they had survived.

The exhibition was arranged over several galleries depicting the history of the fated liner starting with its construction, launch and the maiden voyage from Southampton on 10 April 1912. Then followed reconstructions of first and third class cabins, the bridge and, complete with sound effects, the boiler room at the heart of the ship. After this the visitor entered the gallery which described the night of 14 April when the hull was ripped open by an iceberg and just over 1500 lives lost.

Each gallery had photographs and descriptions of the people involved and of life on board for the different classes of passenger along with items of equipment and personal belongings that have been recovered. These are in remarkably good condition considering how long they have been in such deep water.

To conclude, the story of the complex recovery operation is told including a model of the remains of the Titanic on the ocean bed.

Of local interest, Cavendish Hall is a memorial to Tyrell William Cavendish who perished and we were surprised to learn that a surviving stewardess, Violet Jessop, lived locally and is buried in Hartest.

Bryann Ward

Life in Antarctica

OUR speaker for October was Dr Peter Clarkson MBE. In 1967 he graduated with Honours in Geology from Durham University and joined the British Antarctic Survey where he spent the next 22 years. During this time, stationed at Halley Bay, his work covered the Shackleton Range, South Shetland Islands and the Antarctic peninsula.

He gave us a brief history of the exploration of the area which began with Shackleton in 1901. The first person to reach the pole was Roald Amundsen on 14 December 1911 followed 35 days later by Robert Scott's ill-fated party.

Whilst the north polar region is frozen sea, 99.6% of the south pole is land, covered in ice to a depth of over two miles. He explained how an ice shelf is formed when a glacier or ice sheet flows down to a coastline and onto the ocean surface.

He then described how the scientists lived and worked in sub zero temperatures. Only during the summer could they carry out research. A trip to survey the Shackleton range might take up to three weeks to cover 150 miles. We were shown slides of the sledges used to carry the equipment and the dog team that hauled them. The leading dog was always a bitch thus encouraging the males to follow! The party had to watch for cracks and crevasses in the ice which could appear anywhere and at any time and it was often the dogs who first sensed the danger. Nowadays the dogs have been replaced by motorised ski-dogs.

During Dr Clarkson's time most of the base camp buildings at Halley Bay were below the snow and their rations were of dried food. Mid-winter was a time for jovial festivities and a most important piece of equipment was the tin opener.

He described what a real 'white out' is like and the consequent hazards. Using his experience and knowledge mixed with a sense of humour we all had a wonderful insight into life in Antarctica during his 20 years there.

Guide Dogs

IN September Peter Heath introduced Sandra and Graham Waspe and their two guide dogs Opal and retired Edward, himself now blind.

They began by telling us that in Germany during World War I first aiders would go onto the battlefield with their German Shepherd dogs and bring back the wounded. Those soldiers able to walk, some of whom had been blinded, would be given the lead of the dog and the dog told to return to the first aid post. This procedure had been noticed and in 1916 the first dog training centre was set up and by 1925 5,000 dogs had been trained. In the USA in 1928 the charity "Seeing Eyes" was launched and three years later in England, with four trained German Shepherds, the charity [Guide Dogs for the Blind](#) was founded. In the 1950's they successfully trained golden retrievers and labradors and now other breeds including labradoodles are trained.

Graham explained that 1,200 dogs are bred each year and from six months to one year they live with volunteers known as puppy walkers. Not all make the grade as a guide dog for the blind, but go on to help the disabled, hearing dogs for the deaf, police etc, Those who make the grade go on for a further five months training. When you see a dog with the harness on it is working and so it is most important that you do not touch or feed it without asking. Each dog costs £50,000 and all costs are met by the RNIB. The dogs retire at about ten years old.

Graham told us how his sight had been damaged, first at the age of ten, playing bows and arrows with his brothers and secondly in a car accident in his youth. However his motto is "be positive and get on with life". He then told us a couple of stories, concluding with the fact that today there are only 4,500 working dogs but 180,000 visually impaired.

A collection after the talk raised £278.

Joan Smith

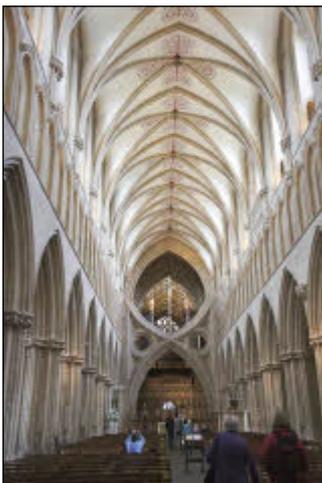
Dorset Diary



IN June Trav 2 went to Dorset and stayed in the Sherborne Hotel, stopping on the way to visit Osterley Park in Isleworth, a spectacular National Trust property. After arriving at our destination, settling in and having dinner, many of us wandered in the hotel grounds, enjoying the fun of outdoor draughts, crazy golf and a friendly challenge match of boules with members of another coach party newly arrived from Kent.

The next morning we visited the most appealing town of Weymouth, which is hosting the sailing Olympics next year. It achieved its popularity in the late 1700s and early 1800s apparently due to the fourteen family holidays spent there by King George III who went to bathe in the sea as a cure for his nervous disorders. Then we set off for Portland Bill, looking over Chesil Beach on the way, and from there to Abbotsbury to see the subtropical gardens which were not at their best, although good to have seen. We also went to the famous Swannery, established by the Benedictine Monks who built a monastery at Abbotsbury during the 1040s and who farmed the swans to produce food for their lavish banquets. After dinner that evening we were entertained by a performer with a very pleasant voice and an amusing line in chat.

On Sunday we had a little tour of the surrounding area to see Glastonbury Tor, and the site of the famous Glastonbury Festival, thinking how daunting – and deafening – it must be in the area at the time of the festival. We ended our tour at Clarks Village Outlet for our retail therapy, teashops or, for some, a local hostelry and a pint of beer! Afterwards we were off to Wells and its Cathedral. This is a most beautiful building with a wonderful display of medieval statues on the West Front, graceful interior scissor arches and humorous carvings on the pillars.



Wells Cathedral

After dinner that evening we were entertained by a pair of saxophonists who set up such a toe-tapping beat that some of our party could not resist the temptation to throw themselves onto the dance floor with frenetic enthusiasm!

Day four – homeward bound, stopping at Ham House, Richmond, another National Trust property. The Ham House connection with Suffolk was established in 1648 when Elizabeth married Sir Lionel Tollemache, 3rd Baronet, of Helmingham Hall in Suffolk. They had eleven children, of whom five survived to adulthood. The property was passed down the line of inheritance through the family until it was handed into the care of the National Trust in 1948.



Arriving home early evening, it was declared to be another successful Trav2 trip

Jean White

Interest Group News

Deidre Dobson's Social History Group has taken a different emphasis and is now a Discussion Group, where members discuss issues raised by the group.

Christina Ruddock has handed over the reins of the Social History-Thurston Group to John Hines, ably assisted by Laurie Marshall. Thank you to Christina for all the work she has done for that group in the past and to John and Laurie for taking the group forward.

Thanks to Joan Bailey and Gillian Bush for running the Computer group which has now closed. Gillian had covered basics and as interest was waning Joan decided to close after about a 6 months run.

Jim Cotton's Canals and Inland Waterways Group has not met recently and Jim is waiting to see if any new members show an interest before final decisions are made about that Group.

Four other new Groups set up last year – Dining Out, Folk Dancing, Philosophy, and Witchneedlecraft are all doing well.

We are still looking for someone to take over the lead role for the Theatre Group. Sue Russell has done a splendid job for so many of us over the years, so a big thank you to Sue from us all.

If you have an interest which is not being catered for please contact Joan Bailey.

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 Webmaster,

Sue Prigg, at

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

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Book Review

"The Shift – The Future of Work is Already Here" by Lynda Gratton, published this year by FSC + Harper Collins, ISBN No. 978-0-00-742793-2. List price £18.99 – Amazon £10 – or from the Library for free!

I THOUGHT you would like to know about a truly amazing book which I have just read and which was recently recommended on the radio. I am not on commission (honestly!), but genuinely feel that this book contains some really important and useful information for us all.

Lynda Gratton, the author, is Professor of Management Practice at the London Business School. She is English and has been hailed by *The Times* as 'one of the top 20 business thinkers in the world today', and by the *Financial Times* as 'the business thinker most likely to make a real difference over the next decade'. This is her seventh book, and she still looks barely 45.

Basically, from having studied the global world of work with members of her team who are based in every continent, the author explains how, without taking the easy option of resorting to science fiction, she realistically

believes 'the world of work' will be in the year 2025 (only 14 years from now). Giving several examples, she outlines both the 'worse-case' and 'much-better case' scenario, and then goes on to give really practical advice on how to move oneself towards the 'better' case scenario. She concludes with three sets of advice to (a) children, (b) chief executive officers of companies, and (c) governments, which make a huge amount of sense to me.

Although she is at the London Business School, her advice to achieve a real work-life balance is for anyone in any sphere of work anywhere in the world, not just office and/or computer based. Therefore, I feel it should be compulsory reading for all parents (to help their children, of whatever age!), because it also explained to me and, hence, opened my eyes to quite a few aspects of the modern working environment. Our offspring are going to have to work until they are approximately 70, so to be able to achieve a sensible work-life balance over all those years has got to be pretty important for everyone's sanity.

I do hope you will find time to read this impressive revelatory book, and that your family can benefit from its excellent advice.

Stella Chamberlin

Garden Visits

IN September the Group spent a great day in glorious weather by the seaside. We had a break at Clacton with fish and chips on the promenade, on our way to Brightlingsea to Moverons Gardens. These gardens are open as part of the National Gardens Scheme and are really well worth a visit. We found it amazing how beautifully the owner had developed the site in a very short time – investing a vast amount of time, skill, and I would expect, cash!

In October the visit was to [Marks Hall Gardens](#) and Arboretum, Coggeshall.

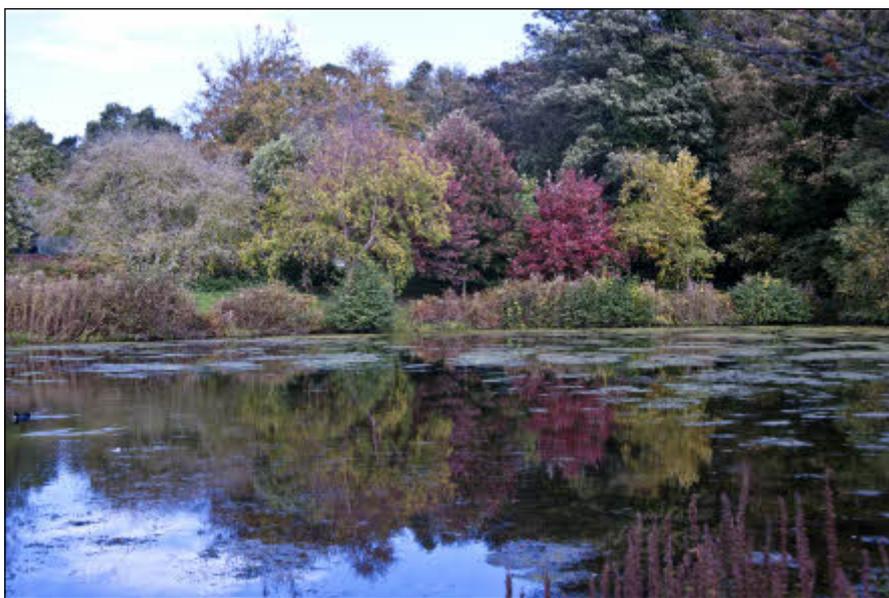
On the death of Mrs Price in 1966, there was concern over her husband Thomas Phillips Price's bequest of the Marks Hall Estate to the nation. The house had gone and the grounds had become an overgrown jungle of weeds, self-sown trees and bushes and the lakes' cascades damaged and clogged. In 1972 a charitable trust was set up to administer and restore the estate. With support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Essex Environment Trust and The Rufford Foundation, 1400 metres of hard paths and a stunning new bridge have been installed within the 200 acre Arboretum. This allows access for people of all abilities all the year round

The Group had a wonderful day there on 27 October, ending our year's programme of visits in delightful weather. Brita von Schoenaich designed the overall contour and shape of each of the five gardens (now maintained by only five gardeners) and on 1st July 2003 the Duchess of

Devonshire officially opened the Walled Garden. Today Marks Hall Estate is truly beautiful and the miles of woodland walks were a pleasure, everywhere seemed so tranquil and the autumnal colours, particularly the reds of the acers and dogwoods against the white trunked birch trees, were vibrant.

On Wednesday 26 November [at 2.45pm](#) Jo Sweetman and Chris Brookes are presenting a slide show set to music of gardens we have visited in 2011 and on **Thursday 15 December** Susan Cochram will be creating beautiful arrangements on the theme of "The Holly and the Ivy", whilst her husband will be doing Christmas readings.

Barbara Milner



Autumn colour at Marks Hall – Jo Sweetman

Produced by Barbara Milner and Bryann Ward
Printed by Profile Business Supplies, Bury St Edmunds
Deadline for January edition is 30 December 2011