



Affiliated to the Third Age Trust

Newsletter

Issue 83

November 2014

From your Chairman

AS this is the first newsletter in the 2014/5 term, I would like to give a special welcome to our 43 new members. For those of you not familiar with the workings of the U3A there is a very useful booklet, The U3A Story, which can be purchased for £1.00 at our monthly meetings. In addition, a subscription for the magazine, Third Age Matters, can be organised through the Third Age Trust website.

I hope you enjoyed the Interest Groups Exhibition and found a place in the group of your choice. If there is an activity you would like to pursue, have a word with our Interest Group Co-ordinator, Carol Drury.

At the risk of repeating myself can I please ask all members if any of you feel you can give something back to our wonderful organisation and join our committee? We have several members who have served their three years and we need volunteers to step into their shoes. Ours is a hugely successful group; only because people in the past have given a bit of their time to ensure it flourishes. Have a think please and contact me or one of the present committee to get more insight into what is involved. Joining the committee now will enable you to learn from others before they retire.

Finally, your committee would like to invite everyone at our December lecture to stay behind to enjoy a glass of wine, or a soft drink, and a mince pie. Please help with the removal of the chairs, following which serving will commence.

Karen Murdoch

Monthly Lectures

Start promptly at 10.00am
Coffee and biscuits served until
9.45am

Monday 1 December

***A journey from Mt Athos to
Bhutan – dzongs, mosques
and monasteries***

Doug Patterson

Monday 5 January

***Remembrance and the
Great War – a very British
view***

Taff Gillingham

Monday 2 February

***Two Suffolk teachers' as-
cent of Everest***

Amanda Richmond

Monday 2 March

***AGM
followed by Tales from the
bench***

The Enjoyment of Music

BACH, as one sips a welcoming coffee, is delicious. The strains of JS Bach were a prelude to an absorbing July talk centering on some of the favourite music of our speaker, Christopher Moore, church musician, organist, teacher and conductor.

He demonstrated that music is fundamental to society and has existed all around us as long as humans have had ears to hear. Boundaries between nature and music are blurred, and in ancient Greece Pythagoras (nemesis of school children) first recognised the theory of harmonics, but, of course, rules once established, are doomed to be broken.

In Europe, most music written prior to the 15th century was religious, transcribed by monks for performance in churches and monasteries. Christopher played a piece from the Baroque period, the ethereal Miserere by Allegri, where a plain song base intertwined with a solo boy soprano's voice spiralling to the heavens. The invention of the printing press allowed wider access to secular music, and by the 1700s, notable composers, such as Handel, Mozart and Beethoven, not only composed great symphonies but also introduced intimate music for small groups of string players (chamber music) where instruments chattered among themselves.

During the 19th and 20th century music evolved, often referring externally to places, objects and people. A rousing Sibelius musical extract of horses galloping across a plain, vividly captured Sibelius's affinity with the moods of nature in his home land, Finland. Christopher also played the 'Lark Ascending' by Vaughan Williams, which musically follows the flight of this tiny bird. The joy of music is its diversity and Christopher ended with Mama Cass singing 'Dream a Little Dream of Me'. All gorgeous music, though maybe a few members were hoping for a bit of 'Garage'.

Carole Curtis

The Quiz Group

3.6 million viewers watch the quiz show Pointless on BBC1 and quite a few then switch channels to BBC2 to watch Eggheads... I know I do.

Why are quiz shows so popular? For many reasons. You cannot go through life without picking up a great deal of knowledge, but if you don't use it, you lose it. From crosswords and Sudoku to the monthly lectures, opportunities to use and develop our knowledge can be rewarding (as well as occasionally frustrating). Many U3As now have quiz groups and the Blackbourne U3A Quiz Group got under way in June. Those who come enjoy it – but we need more members in order to become a viable group.

There are a great variety of Interest Groups in the Blackbourne, but there is only one where you will find questions to jog your memory on News and Current Affairs, History, Geography, Food and Drink, Sport and Popular Music. You may find there is a little bit of humour and nostalgia somewhere in the mix. We have more to offer you than the pub quiz down the road: the question setter (that's me) compiles questions to suit the interests of U3A members. For example, not too many of us listen to Radio 1 nowadays.

We meet in the New Green Centre on the first Wednesday of the month at 2pm. If you have any questions before then, please get in touch.

The Quiz Group: it's not Pointless but it's not pointless either!

Jim McMillan

Theatre Visits group

THEATRE and cinema buffs will be pleased to learn that Philip Webber has volunteered to co ordinate this popular group.

His first outing will be to the Theatre Royal, Norwich on Wednesday 8 April to see **Top Hat**.

The coach will leave New Green at 10.00am for the matinee performance at 2.30pm

Philip can be contacted on 01359 270499 or in the bar area at the monthly meetings

Late Stuart and Georgian Bury St Edmunds

THE new academic year started with a very knowledgeable talk by Dr Pat Murrell and 218 members were given a detailed insight into the buildings and people of Bury St Edmunds during this period.

In 1673 Bury St Edmunds was described as a large town with two parishes (St Johns and St Marys) with uneven rough paved streets and a Wednesday corn market. The town was well served with fish and meat suppliers and an active retail trade and was favoured by tourists but there was a suggestion that it became expensive as the traders fleeced the visitors. In 1720 Daniel Defoe remarked that people liked Bury St Edmunds "for the sake of it".

Large rural estates such as Rushbrooke Hall, Hawstead Place, Hardwick House and even Ickworth House also held properties in the town where they entertained for a few days. The Bristols of Ickworth had a substantial house in Honey Hill and the Oakes from Hardwick House owned property in Guildhall Street.

The population in the late 18th Century was 5500 and by the early 19th century this had risen to 7765. These figures compare with 160,000 and 217,000 for the whole county. Although Bury St Edmunds was always smaller than Ipswich in size it was considered to be higher in social standing. In 1790 there were 56 Inn Keepers in the town with a population of about 7500 people.

In 1644 Bury St Edmunds became a government constituency with two Members of Parliament. The only people allowed to vote were the members of the Corporation and so they had considerable power and control of affairs. In 1792 the street previously known as Cook Row became Abbeygate Street and in 1819 a new theatre, the present Theatre Royal, was opened but this was considered by some to be too far from the town centre.

As the talk came to an end I couldn't help but think that Dr Murrell had treated us all to a small part of her wide local knowledge.

Laurie Marshall

The Bayeux Tapestry



THE ever-popular Mark Mitchels was our October speaker, suggesting an alternative view of events recorded in the Bayeux Tapestry. Mark showed us that even in the 11th century spin doctors plied their trade with gusto. Was Harold shot through the eye? Did the Anglo Saxons flee the battlefield? Or was it Norman spin?

Housed in the Musée de la Tapisserie de Bayeux, the tapestry is a skilful piece of embroidery on linen stretching 230 feet by 18 inches wide; most likely sewn by small teams of embroiderers from Canterbury rather than French seamstresses. It records events between 1064 and 1066, centering on the Battle of Hastings, the defining battle of English/French history. The tapestry shows William, Duke of Normandy's visit to Edward the Confessor, where Edward promised the English throne to William. Edward later changed his mind and named Harold his heir. The last panel depicts William the Conqueror's coronation in Westminster Abbey – so blame 1066 on Edward the Confessor!

No one knows who commissioned the tapestry, but various clues indicate William's half-brother, Bishop Odo, Earl of Kent, as the most likely candidate. Tell-tale signs show Odo always slightly taller than William and the 'victory feast' panel after the battle has overtones of the Last Supper depicting Odo in the 'Jesus' position. The tapestry colours are as vibrant today as when first sewn. Battle scenes are animated with Anglo Saxon axes felling Norman horses and soldiers falling down into the tapestry margins. Risqué images litter some margins, their significance unfortunately lost to us. Luckily the Victorians spared our blushes by adding underclothes to their copy of the tapestry housed in Reading Museum. Originally hung in Bayeux Cathedral, the Bayeux tapestry was later stored in a chest and lost for 400 years thereby preserving its vibrant beauty for us to enjoy.

Carole Curtis

Rhine & Moselle Cruise 18 – 25 September 2014

MEMBERS of the Travel and Tourism group enjoyed a week's cruise on the Rhine and Moselle rivers with Saga Holidays. After a very early start we were able to relax on Eurostar and enjoy the short trip to Brussels. There our luggage was transported to the waiting coach for the journey to Cologne. Here we boarded our cruise ship and were shown to our cabins with time to unpack before our first meal on board. A four course dinner awaited us with free wine, beer or soft drinks.

The next day we sailed before breakfast and made our way upstream on the Rhine via Königswinter, a small town with narrow, interesting streets overlooked by a 19th century gothic looking castle and an even higher ruined tower. Some people enjoyed a brief visit to Bonn and were most impressed with the sights and the guide. During lunch we sailed on to Remagen where those taking the scenic coach tour through the Ahr valley disembarked whilst the boat carried on to Koblenz. The tour passed steep vineyards bearing a heavy harvest of red grapes and many ruined castles on rocky crags. Before rejoining the boat at Koblenz a short stop was made in the small town of Ahrweiler, still with its walls and four gates,

The following day we had time in Koblenz to marvel at the rebuilding of much of the old town to its pre-war state and at the cable car over the river to the fortress on the opposite headland which gave brilliant views over the town, the Rhine and the Moselle. After lunch we sailed upstream along the Moselle with the sun making brief forays between the rain.

On Sunday morning we stopped in Zell, a pretty town sitting on the river bank with the vineyards rising up immediately behind it, and then travelled on to Bernkastel. Despite the showers everyone enjoyed free time in the town admiring the lovely wooden decorated



buildings and fountains as well as a castle on the hilltop above. In the evening local musicians came on board to entertain the passengers making an interesting end to the day.

Monday saw us leave Bernkastel and head back downstream to Cochem. Here we had a free afternoon to explore, or take an excursion to the castle and then on to a local winery for a wine tasting. Back on board we cast off, heading back for Koblenz and early next morning sailed back down the Rhine, through the Rhine Gorge and past the Lorelei rock to Rudesheim where another free afternoon was enjoyed. Many took advantage of the cable car up the hillside to the massive Germania monument, with great views over the river. In the town were plenty of places to wander and explore including the famous Drosselgasse filled with old narrow, decorated buildings, now tourist shops or restaurants. For our penultimate day we travelled downstream to Cologne and had time to explore the city and its imposing cathedral after lunch.

On the last day we were up at 5.30am for breakfast before the return journey home after a very enjoyable relaxing break.

Brenda Last

Interest Group's Exhibition

Well done and many thanks to all who made this excellent morning possible. There were many marvellous displays on show and we hope that members (especially new ones) were able to speak to convenors of those Interest Groups in which they were particularly interested with a view to joining.

Photographs were taken throughout the morning and will be on the website soon, to give just a *souçon* of all that was going on.

Shown here is David Wilding's winning entry for the Photo Group members' competition.

Here's to the next time – date alert for your 2015 diary, 19 October.

Carol Drury
Interest Groups Co-ordinator



Interest Group Snippets

French

Three members expressed interest in the French Appreciation group which is currently full. If there are other members wishing to improve their language skills or knowledge of France it may be possible to set up a new group.

If you are interested please contact Ann Sear on 01359 230423.

Learn how to use the Ipad

From taking photos, movies, emailing, using apps, watching catch up TV, painting, drawing and printing to Skyping your family and friends

If you are interested in joining us and want to learn the Ipad, would you please email me, Chris Brooks
chris@todd.co.uk

The Royal Opera House Production Workshop

THIS was my first attendance at a U3A nationally organised event – a fascinating day out, very informative and well organised, which will live long in the memory. Very knowledgeable tour guides led three U3A groups to explore these huge, impressive, and state-of-the-art production workshops.

The venue, High House, can be found on the Essex side of the QE2 bridge. The original buildings of the former farm complex were built about 500 years ago and are miraculous survivors in this now very modern industrial landscape. Once owned by the wealthy Whitbread brewing family the site leads down to the Thames, but the farm met its decline when it was cut in two by the Purfleet by-pass and Eurostar rail line.

What has all this Essex history to do with the Royal Opera House? Well, its scenery making workshops were an unsuspecting casualty of Stratford's 2012 Olympic Village, which left them searching for a new home. The 4,000 square metre site in Thurrock was acquired, and the £6 million production park was opened by Prince Charles in 2011, with the site now housing the UK's first ever National Skills Academy for technical and stage crafts for the performing arts and live music industries. Still under construction are the costume store, workshop and student block. It is expected that the project will create around 250 jobs and teach over 6,000 apprentices each year, as projections suggest that the live music and events industry will need around 30,000 people over the coming decade alone.

I soon realised that anything to do with the ROH has quite mind-boggling statistics, i.e. the best costumes and scenery (as these things are made to last for 40+ years),



the largest and most innovative workshops, the heaviest lorries to transport everything, and most sophisticated scenery management logistics (powered at Covent Garden by Rolls Royce hydraulics, enabling 30 tons of scenery to be moved in 40 seconds!).

One of the workshops has a grass covered, energy efficient roof and computer controlled internal lights to

boost the natural light to an even consistency. We visited the scenery paint shop, carpentry, metalwork and fibreglass areas, observed from the high-level viewing galleries which the craftspeople themselves use to view their creations from above, and we learnt about each area to get a fascinating insight into the making of world-class sets and scenery. We were told that the recording studio was built with a floating floor, to make it sound-proof and to minimise vibrations and noise from the nearby rail line and industrial areas. We also viewed videos of how hair and special effects make-up were constructed (we even handled John the Baptist's severed head in all its gruesome latex splendour, though minus the dripping "blood"!), and concluded the day with a hands-on workshop of dressing a small wooden model into a "super hero" from plans and designs created by the two other U3A groups.

It was so refreshing and up-lifting to see these young and very talented craftspeople at their work, and to know that here was a facility for many more generations to come. Also to learn that the locals are actively encouraged to use these facilities.

I am beginning to appreciate why London theatre tickets are so expensive!

Stella Chamberlin

RAF Mildenhall



THEN and Now group members enjoyed a most informative visit to the USAF 100th Air Refuelling Wing based at Mildenhall. Our very courteous hosts were the 351st Air Refuelling Squadron which provides aircrews and 15 Boeing KC-135 aircraft for training, operational air refuelling, aeromedical evacuation, and airlift missions for US and NATO fighter, bomber, support, and reconnaissance aircraft in the airspace over the Atlantic Ocean, Europe, Africa, and South West Asia.

After passing security we visited the fire station and were given a demonstration of the water jets used by the crash tenders in the event of an emergency and passed through the well equipped quarters used by the duty crews.

Following lunch we attended a presentation of the work of the wing. We were surprised to hear that there are just three crew members in such a large aircraft full of aviation fuel. It clearly needs great skill to operate the boom to refuel other aircraft with the operator in a prone position in the tail of the KC-135 for up to three hours.

The visit ended with a tour of a KC-135 where we were able to experience the close quarters in which the boom operator works and gaze in bewilderment at the instruments in the cockpit.

Bryann Ward

Educational Visit 28 July 2014

THE day started with a visit to the [Secret Nuclear Bunker](#) at **Kelvedon Hatch** which was built during 1952-53 as a potential regional government H.Q. for use during the cold war. It was sold back to the original owners of the land in the 1950's and is now a privately run tourist attraction.



The entrance was through what looked like an ordinary bungalow, with a 100 yard tunnel entering the bunker at its lowest level 125 feet underground and three floors in total. The earth excavated was piled on top to form a hill and the communications mast was built on top of that.

Hundreds of staff could be accommodated in fairly basic conditions for three months at a time. It was self sufficient, having its own air conditioning and heating plant, as well as mains water from a deep bore hole. A large operational centre, which included representatives of all the government and military departments, was at the hub of everything. Radio, telecommunications and teleprinter network systems were in their own rooms as well as a BBC studio.

A medical bay with an operating theatre was needed, as during the time staff were working, there were bound to be health problems, and should you be unfortunate enough to pass away, you would have been placed in a body bag and then into a cardboard coffin before being removed from the site.

As well as being open for tourists the bunker is used for filming and they had been doing so the previous day. Sometimes Scout groups stay overnight, but not "hot bedding" which staff were forced to do as there were over 600 staff using the bunker.

An audio guide was provided giving a huge amount of information, including what your fate would have been if you were unfortunate enough to have been caught in a nuclear explosion.

After lunch we went on to the [Tiptree Jam Museum](#) to see where the manufacturing of jams and marmalade have been taking place since 1885. The Wilkin family came to Tiptree in the early 1700's and started farming at Tewlands Farm but by 1865 had moved away from arable crops to fruit.

Arthur Charles Wilkin founded the Britannia Fruit Preserving Company in 1885 producing the first Tiptree branded preserves, and that first year's production was shipped to Australia. Reformed as Wilkin & Sons, the company leased farms as far away as Dagenham in Essex, and Suffolk.

The present chairman of the business is Peter Wilkin, great grandson of the founder, and after his appointment in 1971 an extensive modernisation program followed. Through a trust employees own a significant portion of the company, not unlike the John Lewis of today. The company has continuously held a Royal Warrant for preserves since 1911 – quite an achievement.



Wilkin and Sons also operate five tearooms in Essex, a specialist bakery and patisserie producer (Tiptree Patisserie) and sell fresh fruit grown on the Tiptree estates. The visitor centre also features a tea room, where most people indulged, and also a well stocked gift shop. There were lots of Wilkin red bags to be seen when we got back on our coach!

Linda Wells

The Magna Carta Project

Organised by Bury U3A but open to everyone, a lecture day on the above was held on 20 September in the Apex, Bury St Edmunds.

This project takes the original charters of King John (1199-1216), and undertakes a landmark investigation into the events of 1214/15 in light of new unfolding evidence and revised thinking by the academic world. This will provide commentary for researchers, schools and the general public. Talks were given by five eminent professors from universities in Cambridge, Oxford, London, and Norwich, with the final talk given by the former Director General of the National Trust on a contemporary "Charter of the Forest" relating to people's rights on commonly owned land.

The speakers gave excellent presentations, and knew their subjects in great depth. We learnt that the concepts in Magna Carta were not necessarily new, but could be traced as far back as Roman times to the "Justinian Codex" and various "Papal Decretals" before, and particularly after, Thomas a Becket's death in 1170.

The subject was summed up by Professor Saul from Royal Holloway University who quoted the T.V. historian, Dr David Starkey, that Magna Carta was "of its time", i.e. relevant mainly to the early Middle Ages. Nevertheless, the myth of Magna Carta has inspired people all over the world to the present day, although only three of the original 63 clauses are still enshrined in UK law today. Clause 12 relates to the Church, clause 3 to the City of London, and clauses 39 & 40 (later combined) relate to the right of trial by jury of peers or to the law of the land, and the right to justice without payment or delay.

For much more information on this amazing project, visit the website

www.magnacartaresearch.org and look out for a new book in January 2015 entitled "Magna Carta" (Penguin Classics, 9780241953372) translated with a new commentary by Professor David Carpenter, who was one of the speakers.

David Ellis

Watching Birds - July 2014



MEMBERS of the Watching Birds Group visited the British Trust for Ornithology at Thetford for a very interesting talk by Paul Stancliffe, their media manager, on cuckoo migration.

BTO's cuckoo tracking project began in 2011 after monitoring of UK cuckoos suggested a huge decline from the 1990s to the present day. Results showed that the Scottish population had actually increased over this period, whilst in England there were significant losses. Initial research found that UK cuckoo losses were not associated with their relatively short stay in the UK, nor in the lack of breeding success, suggesting that problems during migration may be a major factor.

Limited tracking of tagged male cuckoos by satellite started in 2011, using tags weighing just 5 grams and costing £2500 each. Thanks to the generous support of sponsors the future of the project seems secure, and currently 22 birds are being tracked. Anyone can follow their progress by logging into the BTO website www.bto.org/cuckoos - the website is very user-friendly so do take a look.

Early results from tracking studies would appear to show that birds which take a westerly route through Spain, which has suffered drought conditions in recent years, have lower survival rates than birds which take a more easterly route through Italy. Interestingly all the cuckoos tagged in Scotland have taken the apparently more successful eastern migration route.

All birds have to refuel and build fat reserves during migration before moving on. The major obstacle to them is crossing the vast Sahara desert, where some tagged birds have died en route. Does the easterly route through Italy provide better food supplies than Spain? Notably many of the Italy routed birds have managed to cross the Mediterranean Sea and the desert in minimal hops, lending support to theories of better food supplies on that route.

Tracking has established the main cuckoo migration routes, and also that most birds overwinter in Congo or Gabon, or occasionally even further south in Angola. This fascinating project may yet reveal why our cuckoo population is in serious decline.

Following the talk, Paul led members around the BTO Reserve where all those present had excellent views of kingfishers, a real bonus and a fitting end to our visit.

Peter Heath

Walking groups

The Thursday Group had a very interesting circular walk from Woolpit to Drinkstone in September. We passed the remains of the two old windmills at Woolpit. Calling at the very modern Drinkstone Village Hall we were welcomed with tea or coffee and home made biscuits. One of the features in the village hall is a display of needle work pictures of houses of the village. Before returning to Woolpit we visited Drinkstone's historic 14th century church that has a 15th century Oak Screen and its font is believed to be the oldest man made structure in the village.

John Light

The Friday longer walks group has enjoyed another successful year to date, only having had to cancel one walk due to very wet weather. Thanks go to our regular walkers and especially to those who have lead the walks from various local villages including Walsham le Willows, Bradfield St. George, Kersey, Knettishall, Combs, Needham Market and Hartest. All walks have been followed by a well deserved drink and a very sociable pub lunch. We are now looking forward to our Christmas lunch when we will plan our programme for 2015.

Sylvie Marshall

Singing for pleasure

THIS group now meets on the second Monday afternoon each month - next session to be on 10 November. We're still at Woolpit Institute (in the centre of the village), where all voices (male & female) are welcome to join us for a light-hearted session of singing just for fun, old songs and new, in a friendly relaxed atmosphere. No auditions and no need to read music.

Contact: Anne Hayward, 01359 242342, or see our website for full details

Keeping in Touch

After a recent request from one of our members and thanks to the expertise of our Webmistress, Sue Prigg, we have arranged a facility so that most of our committee members can now be contacted by e-mail via the links on our website.

Visit www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk and click on Committee then the underlined details of the committee member to whom you wish to send an e-mail and type and send the message as usual. All committee members can still be reached by telephone, but we trust that this added facility will be of benefit to everyone.

Stella Chamberlin

Fire Safety in your Home

We have been advised that the SCC Fire Service's Electric Blanket Testing at local centres is no longer be available but will now be included in a "Safer Home Visit". So, if you have not had a Home Visit from the Fire Service within the past three years, you may telephone them on 01473 260588 to book a visit, at which time your electric blanket can also be tested. Needless to say, as in all things these days, terms and conditions apply, although we are assured that this is still a free service.

Stella Chamberlin

Produced by Bryann Ward
Printed by Profile Business
Supplies, Bury St Edmunds

Contributions to : publisher
@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk

**Copy deadline for February
edition is 17 January 2015**