



Affiliated to the Third Age Trust

Newsletter

Issue 88

February 2016

From our Chairman

WELCOME to the February newsletter. This is the last one before the AGM and the end of my first year as chairman. It has been an interesting year, and I have learnt a lot about the running of a U3A, especially with our attempt to gain charity status and the changes to the constitution – that was a steep learning curve!

I would never have thought of myself as committee material let alone chairman but I have gained a great deal from the last year and will put myself forward to serve another year as chairman. I have always preferred to work in the background and I'm sure this applies to many of you too, BUT sometimes we have to stand up and be counted! The U3A cannot continue without committee members and officers, and at the AGM we are looking for a new treasurer – we definitely cannot function without a treasurer! It is a post which could be shared; we are all busy people so if we can share the load that should make it easier. Could this be you? If this makes the position more appealing, please come and talk to us to find out what is involved. We have space for more committee members too, so again come and talk to us – we are having a gathering after the February lecture where you can meet the current committee.

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM when I hope we will have the full complement of officers and committee!

With best wishes to you all,

Anne Ling

The Road to Mandalay

BY THE old Moulmein Pagoda,
lookin' lazy at the sea,
There's a Burma girl a-
settin', and I know she
thinks o' me;

For the wind is in the palm-
trees, and the temple-bells
they say:

"Come you back, you British
soldier; come you back to
Mandalay!"

Come you back to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay:
Can't you 'ear their paddles
chunkin' from Rangoon to
Mandalay ?

On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flyin'-fishes play,
An' the dawn comes up like
thunder outer China 'crosst
the Bay!

THE road to Mandalay is fraught with difficulties especially if starting from New Green. Unfortunately, John Wilkin, our December speaker, had technical problems with the slideshow which should have accompanied his talk. Nevertheless, John's educational holiday with [ACE Cultural Tours](#) gave a fascinating insight into the culture and history of Myanmar (formerly Burma). Myanmar is a country rich in oil, gas and jade, with a population of around 50 million, two-thirds of whom are Buddhists but until recently its military junta made tourism difficult.

Now pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been elected to parliament and sanctions partly lifted, Myanmar may become both richer and more accessible. John toured the country visiting over 59 temples in some of Myanmar's former capital cities such as Mandalay, Rangoon or Moulmein and even viewed the largest reclining Buddha in the world. John visited the medieval temple city of Bagan where, out of respect, shoes were left on the coach, and he tripped his way around 20 golden stepped pagodas with bare feet – a memorable experience.

John was struck by the way religion governed everyone's life. Apparently in Buddhism one gains merit by acts of kindness and giving. Monks, in ruby-coloured robes, venture forth with bowls which are generously filled. This is not begging as the donor receives merit for every kind deed and the ultimate step in Buddhism is to reach nirvana. In conjunction with Buddhism, is a spirit world (Nats) which may bring bad luck if not appeased by offerings and shrines - rather like our superstitions regarding leprechauns or greeting magpies. There was mention of the Chindits and the infamous Burma railway but always one is reminded of Kipling's poem even though there was not a flying fish in sight!

Carole Curtis

The Stone Age Brought to Life

It has been a long journey over the last 4,000 years to reach the age of the smart phone. Well, we have made it, but what have we forgotten along the way?

Will Lord – Stone Age man – but minus bearskins, gave us a fascinating view into our ancestral past. He had a table groaning with skins, vicious axes, flint spears and other implements that Stone Age man needed to survive.

Will's childhood was spent near Grimes Graves in Norfolk where his parents were the site custodians. He, therefore, roamed among Neolithic flint mine diggings finding nodules of flint in the chalk. These he shaped into arrowheads.

He carried his love of the Neolithic into adulthood and now tours schools to demonstrate building shelters, carving flint implements and making buckskin clothes. This must be inspiring for children whose only foraging might be the frozen food section of a supermarket.

Who would not thrill at treading in the first fossilised footsteps outside Africa in the clays at Happisburgh? Will skins and tans deerhide in the traditional way using vats filled with water over oak chippings which, as his neighbours noticed, is not a



sweet-smelling liquid. He softens the skins by rubbing them with brains. Strong cordage is made from nettles and Will is an expert at knapping flints for building and weapons, even teaching this skill to Michael Portillo. A slide of a deer's skull demonstrated that Stone Age man used it as headgear – not for pagan rituals – but as camouflage when stalking deer. In this modern technological age, there is a place for learning some of these skills – you never know when you may need them!

Carole Curtis

Garden Visits Group



SORRY the title is a misnomer – we are not a closed “group” – all the events and visits are open to all members of Blackbourne U3A.

These are always on the fourth Wednesday of the month, and all you need to do is sign up as you wish. The programme for 2016 is on the Blackbourne U3A website and we always “man a stall” in the Bar Area at the monthly Monday meetings where you will find application sheets for meetings up to two months ahead

On 24th February we have Hilary Thomas booked to give us an illustrated talk on “Bulbs for all Seasons” in the Main Hall here at 2.00.p.m. The cost is £5 per person and includes a cup of tea and a piece of cake!

On 23 March we are setting off from New Green at 10.30.a.m. to visit Fairhaven Woodland and Water Gardens in South Walsham. We went there in March 2010 and were very impressed with their candelabra primulas.

On 25 May we will be visiting Bradenham Hall Gardens near Swaffham, stopping off first at Thetford Garden Centre for a browse and lunch.

Barbara Milner

Quiz Group

OUR friendly Quiz Group has been running very successfully since its inception about 18 months ago, with many thanks to Jim McMillan for being our monthly Quizmaster over that time. Although he has now stood down as our regular quizmaster, Jim plans to remain with us as an active contestant, so he'd be the one to have on your team (although it may cost you)!

We are now running the Quiz Group to a slightly different format, i.e. with a different quizmaster each month (see website for details), each of whom will run the month's quiz in their own way but, typically, there will be nine rounds of ten questions, with the chance to double your points by playing your Joker on a pre-chosen round, thus making a total of 100 points available.

We remain a relaxed, informal and sociable group of quizzers, so do join us for a fun afternoon's entertainment.

Stella Chamberlin - 01359 242601



Educational Visit – 23 November 2015



WE started our day at the BBC studios and headquarters in Portland Place. The grade II listed building was opened in 1932 and much of the original art deco design has been retained.

After passing through the security checks, our guides escorted us to a gallery overlooking the area where they broadcast the main news and weather programmes. Here we saw the journalists preparing and collating information for the news broadcasts – a hive of activity involving what looked like at least a hundred people.

During our tour we were shown around a studio where some of us volunteered to be newsreaders, weather presenters or act out a short radio drama complete with sound effects.

A tour around the One Show studio was the highlight for many as we all got a chance to sit on the famous green sofa. The size of the studio was surprisingly small, but clever use of mirrors and moveable wall panels make it appear much larger on our TV screens.



The afternoon was spent at the [BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir](#), locally known as the Neasden Temple. A mandir is a Hindu place of worship where people can unite to serve God and society. 5,000 tonnes of Italian and Indian marble and Bulgarian limestone were intricately hand carved in India before being transported to London for assembly which took two and a half years. The temple opened in 1995 and attracts half a million visitors each year.

Entering through the portico and grand foyer of richly carved teak columns and oak panels we removed our shoes and were ushered into the Haveli Prayer Hall, a pillar-less hall of some 2750 square metres which seats over 2,500 worshippers. Here we were given an insight to the Hindu faith and the sights we were going to see in the temple. Festivals and wedding parties are celebrated here and according to our guide they can be quite lively and go on for some time.

The Inner Sanctum is the heart of the Mandir and is located on the upper floor where seven ornate shrines house murtis which are sacred images of the deities to which Hindus worship and express their loving relationship with the Divine. A most peaceful area containing beautiful carved pillars, ceilings and the central dome.

There is also a permanent exhibition which traces and explains the history of the Hinduism, the world's oldest living religion.

Linda Wells



Interest Group News

Then and Now

The 2016 programme of meetings for the group has now been finalised, brief details of which are below.

The meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of the month at 2.00pm currently in Great Barton Village Hall.

Annual membership costs £5 plus £3 for each meeting attended. Visitors are welcome at a charge of £5 per meeting.

Thursday 25 February
History of Town Crying

Thursday 24 March
Building of the Cathedral Tower

Thursday 28 April
Wm Pretty & Son - a Suffolk Family

Thursday 26 May
Suffolk Watermills and Windmills

Thursday 23 June
The Great Fen

Thursday 28 July
History of Surnames

Thursday 22 September
A Romp through Henry VIII's life

Thursday 27 October
Dissolution of the Monasteries

Thursday 24 November
The Rivers Lark and Linnet

Full details will be found on our [website](#)

Educational Visits

Maureen Morris's phone number is 01284 767240 and not as shown in our programme

The date of the November visit to Brooklands is now Monday 28 November

K9 Walkers

The convenor is now Karen Murdoch. 02359 270313

The Friday Longer Walks and Local History groups are now full

Notice of Annual General Meeting

To be held in New Green Community Centre, Thurston
at 10am on Monday, 7 March 2016

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM of 2 March, 2015
3. Minutes of SGM of 5 October, 2015
4. Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Accounts
5. Appointment of Accounts Examiner
6. Election of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and other Committee members
7. Any other Business
8. Date of next AGM – 6 March 2017

Science Study Day

Saturday 16 April 2016 at 9.30am
The Apex, Bury St Edmunds

Bury U3A is organising this open meeting which will consist of two lectures in the morning and two in the afternoon with an hour's break for lunch.

The subjects covered are:

The geological history of Britain
by Dr Peter Sheldon

What are blackholes for? By Dr Judith Croston

Insect conservation by Dr Ed Turner

The wild world of corvids by Dr Gabrielle Davidson

Tickets cost £15 and are available from the Apex
For full details see the link on our [website](#).

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Contributions, including photos, are always welcome and should be sent to publisher@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk
DEADLINE FOR MAY ISSUE IS 27 APRIL

ELECTION OF TREASURER AT AGM 2016

At the forthcoming AGM in March we have to elect a new treasurer. John Marshall has to resign after completing three years of excellent service to our U3A.

At present, despite several appeals, we do not have a volunteer to replace him. Our U3A cannot continue if we do not elect a treasurer at the AGM on 7 March.

National U3A have told us that we will have to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting to close Blackbourne U3A. This will mean no more monthly meetings and no more Interest Groups organising events, clubs and holidays.

We have over 600 members and it does seem incredible that we cannot find one person to fill this position. The applicant should be able to organise Internet Banking and be fully computer conversant.

After the monthly meeting on February 1 the Chairman and the Committee will be holding a meeting in the conservatory at New Green to discuss our new Committee.

**If you can help please come and talk to us.
or email or telephone**

**Anne Ling – Chairman, 01359 231881
chair@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk**

**Maxine Wilde – Secretary, 01359 230842
secretary@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk
or talk to any committee member**

Please do not assume that 'someone else will do the job'

Monthly Meetings

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

Monday 7 March

AGM followed by

The Sutton Hoo Stone

Brian Ansell

Monday 4 April

The Duke of Wellington

Mark Mitchells

Monday 9 May

A Solo Walk across Africa

Fran Sandham