



Affiliated to the Third Age Trust
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Newsletter

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BLACKBOURNE U3A URGENTLY NEEDS YOUR HELP

As explained in December's newsletter, if more members do not come forward to help, our U3A will have to close. However, if you do not want this to happen next month and you would like to continue with all the benefits of belonging to our U3A, please give serious consideration as to whether YOU could help prevent closure by volunteering to assist the running of Blackbourne U3A.

Specific committee posts which urgently need filling are Vice-Chairman, General Secretary, and Names Registrar/Newsletter distributor. According to our constitution, our U3A is not permitted to function without a Vice-Chairman and Secretary, so would definitely have to close if no-one can be found for these two vacancies by our AGM on 5 March. Please remember that the minimum commitment is for only one year and a maximum of three years, so you would not be "stuck" with any task for ever!

In addition, general help (mainly at monthly lectures) is needed, and these jobs can be shared, so could YOU help occasionally, perhaps on a rota basis?

PLEASE join us at 11.30am on 5 February at The New Green Centre to find out more details. After all, the more members who come forward to share the necessary tasks, the less there is for each one of us to do, and therefore much fairer for everyone.

Whilst I appreciate that, even in "retirement", we all lead very busy lives these days, with lots of different commitments on our time, I must remind you that the essence and **ethos of any U3A is that all members contribute and participate** as much as they can. Please remember that we are all volunteers as we are not permitted to pay anyone to do any of these tasks. In other words, **without active member participation, there can be no Blackbourne U3A.**

Thank you for your kind consideration

Derrick Haley, Chairman

Notice of Annual General Meeting

To be held in New Green Community Centre, Thurston
at 10am on Monday, 5 March 2018

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 6 March 2017
3. Chairman's Report
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 as previously advised in writing to Gen.Sec. by 21 February.
8. Date of next AGM – 4 March 2019

Only BU3A members may vote at this meeting.

Please note that the Minutes of the 2017 AGM will be available to read on the Blackbourne U3A website before the meeting.

Monthly Lectures

Start promptly at 10.00am
Coffee served until 9.45am

Monday 5 March

Following the AGM.

All aspects of bee keeping

Mike Shave

Monday 9 April

Confessions of a Factory Inspector

Graham Higgins

Monday 14 May

We'll meet again
An evacuee's story

Brian Thurlow

Women Can Fly – the RAF’s fast-jet flying training

Sibling rivalry was a catalyst that led, Sally Dearman, our December speaker, to a career in the RAF. From a relatively early age she and her slightly elder brother competed in climbing trees and she quickly learned that she obtained a personal buzz from being off the ground!

At the age of 16 she enrolled on a flying course and at the age of 17 she joined the Parachute Regiment. Once her brother had obtained a pilot’s licence she quickly followed his example, thereafter losing interest in parachuting in favour of flying, initially Robins and later Cessnas.



The Robin aircraft

Sally later joined the RAF as a member of the Quick Reaction Alert Force (QRA), the role of which was to alert British defences if Russia invaded UK air space. Subsequently she completed officer

training and fighter control training at Cranwell and, following a change in RAF regulations in 1989 which permitted female pilots, she commenced flying jets with the RAF.

An essential lesson she learned was invariably to fly using instruments and never to rely on one’s instinct. Another rule of thumb learned in low level flying (i.e. flying at 7 miles per second 250 feet above the ground) was that if you could not see a cow’s legs you were flying too high and if you could see a sheep’s legs you were flying too low!

In later training she practised air attacks employing cannons in low level bombing runs. However, having flown aircraft at 350 knots per hour she concluded that she did not wish to operate at 420 knots, which would have involved operating jets in combat zones.

Accordingly, Sally left the RAF to retire to civilian life. Initially, and somewhat ironically, she felt ill equipped for her new role and claimed that her children “grew” her. Eventually, she trained as a counsellor for individuals who have experienced trauma, a vocation for which her military service has proved immensely valuable.

Howard Chandler

Detecting and dealing with UXO’s

UXOs, Unexploded Ordnance, was a surprise to some members who were expecting to hear about UFOs. The 174 members present for the first lecture of 2018 were entertained and educated by Lee Gooderham the Managing Director of ORDTEK, a Diss based company. ORDTEK carries out work throughout the world and this results in him visiting some quite hostile areas but not Caribbean.

We are the first U3A to hear Lee’s lecture which is normally given to professional groups as part of their training.

Ordnance can vary from a very large bomb to a very small bullet. The requirement for developers to be responsible for Ordnance is covered by a range of legislation which means that ignorance is not an excuse.

A lot of the initial work carried out as part of a project is basic historical research. Detailed maps showing when and where Ordnance may be found are carefully examined. East Anglia has a large

amount of unexploded ordnance from bombs through to objects deposited by the British during the second World War so that roads and bridges could be destroyed to deter the progress of an invading army.

It is not recommended to use these maps as gospel as it is known for a map to show a hundred unexploded land mines when, following site clearance, more than 150 items were found.

We saw a map showing the location of the cable to be laid between Bawdsey and Ipswich to carry power from a wind farm to a sub station; research revealed two bombs along the route of the work which shows the need for careful investigation.

Lee managed to give us all an insight into the technical nature of the work and we were reminded that the knowledge gained DID NOT make us Ordnance experts. Another career opportunity gone.

Laurie Marshall



TRAVELLING by coach in September members of Trav 2 visited Kent. En route we stopped at Ightham Mote, a timber-framed house that has survived for almost 700 years. It is hidden in a secluded Kent valley, is surrounded by a moat and its previous owners included a medieval knight, Tudor courtiers to Henry VIII, high society Victorians and an American businessman.

Next day we visited the Historic Dockyard at Chatham, one of Britain's leading maritime heritage destinations with three historic warships and an historic lifeboat collection. We had an informative tour of the working Victorian Ropery where members of our group volunteered to work the machinery. The Dockyard grew from a Tudor fleet base to a Royal Naval Dockyard. It built and repaired timber-hulled warships from the age of sail, including HMS Victory, steel-hulled steam powered battleships in the 19th century and submarines in the 20th century until its closure in 1984.

The following morning we travelled to Penshurst Place and Gardens. Built in 1341 it has been owned by royalty and nobility including Henry VIII and Edward VI. At the centre is an impressive Baron's Hall with a 60' high chestnut beamed ceiling. This wood was used as it is not attacked by insects. The staterooms contain a collection of tapestries, portraits of little boys dressed as girls until they reached a certain age, armour and antique

Friday Short Walks

Following December's walk around Thurston via the rail crossing footbridge in Heath Road, the group met in the Thurst Coffee Bar where members offered to lead walks of their choice to complete the programme for the coming year.

Taking expected conditions underfoot for January into consideration, our first walk of the year, enjoyed by 22 members, was on firm footpaths around Bury where the route included Shakers Lane and the footpath beside the river Lark back to the Abbey Gardens.

Our walk in February will be around Knettishall Heath when hopefully we shall see signs that spring is on its way.

Sylvie Marshall

furniture. There are 11 acres of formal gardens divided into rooms each with its own season and colour.

After lunch we arrived at Sissinghurst Castle Garden, home in the 1930s to Vita Sackville-West and her husband Harold Nicolson. They transformed the garden to reflect the romance in Vita's poems. Her writing room was in the Tower and we were able to view it whilst climbing the 78 steps to the top for a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside.

On our penultimate day we visited Canterbury and Dover Castle. We had a guided tour of the Cathedral and saw the spot where Archbishop Thomas Becket was murdered in 1170. Afterwards miracles were said to have taken place and the Cathedral became an important centre for pilgrims. We were taken to the Crypt and the impressive Chapter House.

Dover Castle was begun over 2000 years ago. Exploring the Great Tower took us back to the 12th century with rooms recreated as in the reign of Henry II and his court. Fast forward to the Second World War when secret tunnels deep inside the cliffs were being used in one of which naval leaders planned Operation Dynamo to evacuate soldiers trapped in Dunkirk. Another tunnel was an Underground Hospital and we were able to follow the journey of a wounded fighter pilot as a surgeon battled to save his life.

Our final visit was a guided tour of Shepherd Neame Brewery at Faversham. Founded in 1698 it is the oldest brewery in Britain and has a 90' deep artesian well providing water filtered through the North Downs chalk which we were able to taste. We tried some malted barley, smelled the locally grown hops and saw the traditional mash tuns, bygone delivery vehicles and a recreated cooper's workshop. After an ale and lager tasting we had an excellent shepherds pie lunch before journeying home.

Our thanks are due to Rosemary Stratton for organising this great trip.

Yvonne Heftman

Christmas Quiz

At our monthly meeting in February Brian Milner will announce the lucky winners of his 2017 quiz.

Over several years these have proved popular with our members notwithstanding the difficulty many of us have in completing them. The winners certainly deserve their prize. After deducting the cost of printing and prize money the surplus is donated to local charities.

Brian has stated that this will be his last quiz so this is an opportune time to thank him, not only for setting the questions but also for his quietly efficient service to Blackbourne U3A including as chairman and instigator/convenor of the Then and Now group.

Brian has been ably supported by his wife, Barbara, who, until the end of 2017 was convenor of the flourishing Garden Visits group.

Blackbourne U3A thank you both for your contributions enjoyed by many over the years.

Educational Visit. 27 November 2017 Ely Cathedral and Stained Glass Museum



Our tour guides highlighted the development of the cathedral over thirteen centuries from the founding of a monastery in 673 by St Etheldreda to the major redevelopment of the cathedral during the Victorian era and 20th century. In 1986 a “Great Restoration” began, costing over £12 million, not completed until 2000 – and judging by the scaffolding still inside and outside the cathedral, the work is ever continuing.

The guides could only show us highlights but these included the wonderful survival which is the 12th century Priests’ door. This has an exquisitely carved stone tympanum depicting Christ in Majesty.

We viewed the beautiful nave ceiling, the idea of Cathedral Dean Peacock. In 1856 he commissioned Henry Le Strange to paint the entire ceiling having already painted the ceiling of the west tower. Following Le Strange’s death in 1862, this monumental work was completed in 1865 by his artist friend Thomas Parry. There are 12 panels ranging from ‘The Creation of Man’ to ‘Christ in Majesty’.

The famous octagon tower, soaring over the crossing between the central transepts, is ‘a wonder of the medieval world and perhaps the most beautiful and original design to be found in Gothic architecture’. This ingenious replacement of the square Norman tower, which collapsed in February 1322, was devised by Sacrist Alan de Walsingham. The first phase of the work, completed in 1328, included the eight massive stone columns that support tall arches that span the nave and transept, and support the octagonal base for the lantern, utilising eight massive oak beams .

A further stop was in the Lady Chapel – by far the largest in England. The foundations were commenced just six months before the collapse of the old Norman tower – there’s speculation this could have caused the fall! The chapel build was thus delayed but was completed in 1349. Prior to the Reformation of the 16th century this contained 147 life size statues – now all gone or defaced during reign of Edward VI.

We then progressed to the St Etheldreda’s Chapel, the central space at the east end of the Cathedral and the site of her shrine. The huge reredos behind the altar was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, the prolific English Gothic revival architect, who oversaw the major Victorian restorations.

After our tour we were free to explore this building in more detail and to visit the Stained Glass Museum in the south triforium of the Cathedral. This houses examples of stained glass from the 13th century to the 21st century, primarily from the UK, but also from Europe and the USA. It gives a unique opportunity to study this amazing art and craft up close, with the aid of a video of stained glass manufacture and free audio guide.

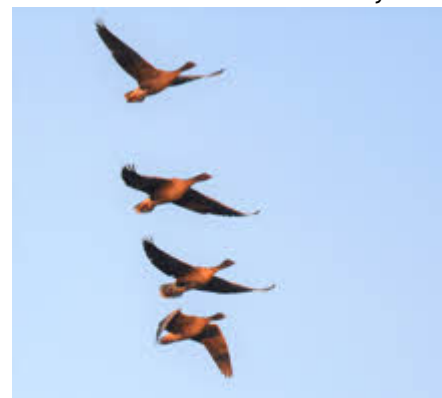
Ralph Brighton

Pink Foot Spectacular

After spending a night in a nearby hotel, members of the Bird Watching group arose early, arriving by 7 am at the RSPB hide on Snettisham beach where they were able to watch thousands of pink footed geese leaving the safety of the Wash mudflats and fly inland to feed on the sugar beet tops in the fields.

These geese leave Iceland in the autumn to migrate to East Anglia for milder conditions and plentiful food. In the late afternoon they fly back to the mud flats to be safe from predators. Estimates vary but some 50,000 to 100,000 birds come to our coast to over winter. In late winter they migrate back to Iceland to breed. This is well over half the world population of this small goose.

Tony Sear



Parking for those with limited mobility

Following the recent trial period and members’ positive feedback on allocating the whole front car park for this purpose at our monthly lecture meetings, the committee has decided to continue doing so indefinitely. However, please remember that this scheme will not be “policed” by anyone, but left to all members’ common sense and kind consideration for those not as mobile as themselves.

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