

# Blackbourne U3A News

A University of the Third Age in Suffolk

ISSUE NUMBER 47

JULY 2005

*From the Chairman . . .*

*It seems such a short while since I wrote my first message for the Newsletter and here I am doing it again. We have had two most interesting lectures and there are more organised for the future.*

*Our Committee has received a request from one of our study groups asking us to consider affiliation to the National and International Third Age Trust. We are duty bound to consider this, which we are currently doing. It is now more than ten years since our U3A was founded. Since then the world, and our lives, have changed in so many ways. We are investigating seriously this request and also the possibility of calling a Special General Meeting some time in October. Our constitution implies this course of action.*

*I hope to give you full details in the next newsletter, but, I do stress, we are still in the investigating mode. I hope that each and every one of you will give this some thought and if you have any comments or questions at this early stage, please get in touch with me or any other Committee member. Talk to us now – that is what we are here for. We have to consider the needs of all our members wishing to widen their horizons and keep active in their retirement.*

*Anne Anstead*

## LECTURE NOTES

### Medical Care in Suffolk in the 1840s

On 4 April Dr Cockayne, a retired GP, gave us an insight into medical care in the 1840s. He told us that poverty and overcrowding caused most of the infections, tuberculosis, typhoid and cholera. The mortality rate for children was approximately 40 per cent and the average life span was 32 years. The only drugs available were digitalis, quinine, iron, morphine and ergot. There was no formal training for doctors at that time and the treatments were invasive: purging, blood letting, cupping and blistering, all very unpleasant for the patient. Thank goodness better training, advances in care and medication have helped to improve all our lives.

### Bressingham Gardens and Steam Experience

On 6 June 170 members enjoyed an interesting and amusing lecture from Peter Freed who has been a volunteer at Bressingham for the last ten years and is now a fully qualified narrow-gauge steam locomotive driver. Peter is a real enthusiast and his great love of steam was conveyed to us with clarity and humour.

Bressingham Steam Experience was started by the late Alan Bloom who died in March aged 98. Alan's first interest was in perennials which he sold initially from a stall in Cambridge market, later by mail order and then from a farm in Burwell. In 1946 he moved to Bressingham and set about cultivating 220 acres of land. He needed to purchase a steam

traction engine to help with the work and this is how Bressingham started. There are now three narrow-gauge railways and locomotives from all over the world.

The Steam Experience is a charitable trust and relies heavily on the 50–60 volunteers who act as drivers, guards and station masters and who use their free time for general maintenance work.

## NOTICE BOARD

### Membership Renewal

May I remind members that subscriptions of £5 per member are now due. If you are renewing by post, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope for the return of your membership and programme card.

*Bryann Ward*

### Monday Lectures

We need help with the audio visual equipment at our monthly meetings. Two or three people to share the responsibility for setting up the microphones, projector etc. If you can help please contact any member of the Committee

### Dates for your Diary

**Thursday 28 July** Visit to Northamptonshire. Coach departs from Thurston at 8.30 am.

**Monday 5 September** Building and restoration of Westminster Abbey *Geoff Roberts*

## **MUSIC FOR ALL TASTES**

### **Music – Listening and Learning**

The aim of this group is to listen to a wide variety of music – some well known and some less familiar. Members research and present the topics of their choice. Sometimes we share a topic among the group, more often one or two people take a subject for the afternoon. Over the past year our subjects have included: Italian music, Czech music, music concerning travel, organ music, early music, operetta, pre-1940 recordings, Spanish music, two Schumann symphonies and Shostakovich.

Our meetings are (usually) held on the third Friday of the month. At present the group is full and there is a waiting list. If there are any more members who are interested and there is someone who would be willing to host a second group I would be willing to help them to get started.

*Joy Bolwell*

### **Big Bands and Jazz**

Now in its eighth year, this group draws in up to 5 per cent of the U3A membership. The simple, but seemingly effective format is that one member introduces a topic for 45–50 minutes. A lively coffee break ensues before the second part of the session allows each member to introduce a track of their choice. This throws up some interesting jazz artists – Herb Alpert, James Last, Edmundo Ros (!!) – to name but three. However, the line is drawn at Daniel O'Donnell!

A very musical and sociable morning, which is held on the last Friday of the month at Great Barton Village Hall. The cost, recently reduced to 50p per session, includes tea and coffee – even Gordon Brown wonders how we do it. In the future we hope to have a few guest speakers: Nick Wells (Bury Festival Manager), Alan Crampton (jazz journalist) and Bob Bromhead (keyboard player).

Come and join us before it's standing room only, and you might miss the Ronnie Scott jokes!

*John Stemp*

### **Opera Appreciation**

The two groups continue to flourish. All 20 members are full of enthusiasm and at every session are learning something about opera and voices. Studies of individual operas have taken us from Barber to Britten, from Massenet to Mozart, from Prokofiev to Puccini. Group 2 has devoted several sessions to the work of Verdi, beginning with 'Oberto' (his first opera) and ending with 'Otello' (his penultimate work). All members have contributed to sessions on French opera, scenes of

operatic anger, loose women in opera, as well as (in the interest of fairness) vile seducers.

We are all keen to continue into another year which means that, once again, the groups are full. Unfortunately, it would not be practical for us to move to a larger venue since we make constant use of the books and recordings to hand.

*Deidre Dobson*

## **HISTORY, HERITAGE AND CRAFTS**

### **Church Crawling**

In the past eight years this group has visited 200 churches, mostly within 20 miles of Thurston. We are now starting on the second round, but as our membership has changed during that period our visits will still be a first to many of us.

Among so many medieval churches it is inevitably the oddities which stick in the memory, like the improbable Saint Eligius, a farrier, who faced with a recalcitrant horse, cut off its legs, shod the hooves and then miraculously stuck the legs back on. He is depicted in a plaque in Freckenham with a somewhat surprised horse. The imagination, skill and irreverent humour of the woodcarvers are a constant delight where old pews survive. In Freckenham we found a devil forcing a priest head down into hell's mouth and a tigress looking in a mirror.

Down the ages the village church has been at the centre of village life, a meeting place for all sorts of social purposes as well as the worship of God. Social, religious, and political change can be seen in what is there and what has been removed. Everywhere we go is evidence of care and devotion to maintaining these wonderful buildings and in several cases adapting them, even in this secular century, to new patterns of worship just as they have been since Saxon times.

And if all that were not enough, we enjoy the ride through the Suffolk landscape and unfamiliar lovely villages. Some members also sample food at our splendid Suffolk pubs. It rarely rains on the fourth Tuesday in the month when we meet at 2 pm. Our next season of visits starts on Tuesday 27 September.

*John Robinson*

### **Local History**

This group meets on the first Thursday of each month except July by kind courtesy of Shirley and Richard Horton at their home in Thurston. We are a small and friendly group, planning our meetings together. Most of the subjects we present are led by members followed by informal discussion over a

welcome cup of tea. In June we had a Bury Blue Guide to explain the history of the Abbey ruins, and in August we shall be exploring the local rivers.  
*Enid Reid 01359 221592*

### **Crafts**

The craft group meets once a month. We cover card making, glass engraving, découpage, painting on glass and ceramics, parchment craft, quilling, machine embroidery, machine knitting, iris folding and tea-bag folding. Each month we choose a topic for the next main group meeting but smaller groups do occasionally meet up to pursue a particular craft or theme.

*Joyce Kirk*

### **POLAND ADVENTURE**

Why adventure? Because to me and many others in the Travel Group, Poland was an unknown country before our visit in May.

From our tour of Krakow, the first capital of this country, we were assailed by the unexpected. The old town boasts beautiful old buildings, including the magnificent Cloth Hall, St Mary's Church, and the cathedral on Wawel Hill. In the Jewish quarter – shabby and battered – we saw the locations for Spielberg's 'Schindler's List' and the extent of the ghetto in WWII.

This theme of persecution continued throughout our visit. Auschwitz is a terrible place, where there's neither smiles, nor laughter, only tears. Appalling statistics abound, leaving you stunned. This was a ghastly testament to the consequences of prejudice and fear and the indifference of onlookers. It was a grim but salutary experience.

Another surprise was the extent and fervour of Roman Catholicism in Poland. Our visit coincided with 'White Week' [Whitsun] as was evident from the number of first communion groups we saw. The churches were thronged with pilgrims.

Wieliczka salt mine is deservedly a World Heritage Site. Down 135 metres and 402 steps this was an awesome experience. Huge hand-carved statues of salt-miners, Copernicus,

Goethe and Pope John Paul II overwhelmed, but the most impressive chamber was the huge cathedral, with chandeliers, altar, and carvings of the Stations of the Cross all in salt.

From here we moved on to Zakopane in the Tatra mountains. The scenery was very lovely with high snow-clad peaks where lurked bears and wolves. Dandelions filled the meadows and Swiss-style chalets dotted the hillsides. Our final full day was the feast of Corpus Christi, and the town was dominated by religious processions. Flags flew and national costumes were worn to provide a very colourful display.

As our adventure concluded with a magical trip on wooden rafts down the fast-flowing River Dunajec, we were left with memories of a beautiful and interesting country full of national and religious fervour; a country that has endured and suffered much and yet proudly survived.

*Jean M Oldham*

### **EDUCATIONAL VISITS**

#### **Imperial War Museum**

On 14 June we had a very good trip to the Imperial War Museum in London. The exhibits were most impressive: they included great escapes, Colditz and the wooden horse, and children at war. There was also a reconstruction of an Anderson shelter. If you were unable to join us and would like to know more visit [www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk)

#### **Northamptonshire**

On 28 July we shall be going to Northamptonshire, starting with Northampton, where we visit the Rennie Mackintosh museum. In the afternoon we move on to Holdenbury House, where tea is included. A few places, cost £23, are still available.

#### **Thursford Spectacular**

Another visit to Thursford is planned for 29 November. There will be a morning stop in Norwich for shopping, then on to Thursford for the afternoon performance. To find out about the Thursford Collection visit [www.a2znorfolk.com/thursford](http://www.a2znorfolk.com/thursford)