

Blackbourne U3A News

A University of the Third Age in Suffolk

ISSUE NUMBER 48

OCTOBER 2005

From the Chairman . . .

Our summer has passed and we are now into autumn – a season of wonderful colours, fruits and seeds from our gardens. I hope you have enjoyed it with your families and friends. We at the Blackbourne U3A now have work to do to determine our way forward and each member and couple should be aware of the Special General Meeting on Monday 17 October at 10 am.

Please come along, take part in the discussions and help to make decisions which will affect us all in the coming years. The Committee looks forward to your participation.

Anne Anstead

LECTURE NOTES

Preservation of Churches

On 4 July we were treated to an entertaining illustrated lecture by Dr Roy Tricker, a church historian. He has contributed to many church guidebooks and is the author of *Suffolk Church Walks*.

We were told that most churches gradually evolve over the centuries and that they contain craftsmanship from many periods. Local benefactors have also had a great influence on what we see today. Windows and doorways can tell us a great deal about the history of a church as can the tower and building materials. Interestingly, many churches can be dated by the costumes carved on the tops of tombstones. The Churches Conservation Trust now cares for redundant churches (see www.visitchurches.org.uk).

Restoration of Westminster Abbey

Our first lecture for 2005/6 was presented on 5 September by Geoff Roberts, surveyor for the restoration of Westminster Abbey. Mr Roberts summarised the history of the Abbey from the first century AD when the Romans first forded the Thames to Thorney Island, where Christians later settled, to today's grand edifice.

Edward the Confessor built the first stone abbey church which was completed in 1065. The gothic nave started by Henry III in 1245 took almost 300 years to construct, then in 1503 Henry VII rebuilt the Lady Chapel. A charter was granted to the school in 1561 by

Elizabeth I, when the Abbey became a 'Royal Peculiar'.

The biggest restoration in the Abbey's history was carried out between 1973 and 1995. After cleaning, all the damaged and eroded stonework was repaired and/or replaced. Some whole structures, such as the cupolas, had to be replaced. Mr Roberts showed us slides of the detailed work done by skilled stonemasons and plumbers, who added their own individual, sometimes humorous, touches. Internal cleaning and refurbishment and the installation of a commemorative window completed the restoration of Henry VII's Chapel. Finally, new statues were created and installed in the niches on the west front and a cross erected on the gable.

NOTICE BOARD

Membership Renewal

If you have not yet renewed your membership please contact the Membership Secretary as soon as possible

Bryann Ward 01284 787508

Dates for your Diary

Monday 3 October

Moments, memory and magic *Vic Botterill*

Thursday 6 October

Visit to Chartwell, Kent

Monday 17 October

Special Meeting to consider affiliation to the Third Age Trust

Monday 7 November

Twenty years in education *Adrian Williams*

Tuesday 29 November

Visit to Thursford for the Christmas Spectacular

Monday 5 December

Two Suffolk lives around Snape Maltings *Bob and Doris Ling followed by wine and mince pies*

Monday 9 January

Pearl of the Orient *Ken Smith*

THE WIDER WORLD

Travel and Tourism

The Travel and Tourism Group meets on the second Monday of each month at Thurston Green Centre. Its purpose is to keep up to date with travel news and to exchange views and travel experiences. Members or invited guest speakers give interesting illustrated talks on places they have visited.

We also organise group travel for our members to areas in which they have expressed a particular interest. The main purpose of such visits is cultural and educational. As we go to press some of our members are in Tallinn, capital of Estonia. Further details of our activities are reported in our quarterly newsletter, *Travellers' Notebook* (visit www.anjucon.free-online.co.uk/travel/index.html).

The group has expanded considerably in the last twelve months and there is now a waiting list. Unfortunately because of the restriction on numbers in our meeting room, we are no longer able to accommodate visitors.

John Dockerty

THE NATURAL WORLD

Birdwatching

The Birdwatching Group started in April. We are very enthusiastic and have had many successful and enjoyable trips, including two full days in July and August to Minsmere and Titchwell. The weather and birds were superb, especially our sighting of a bittern in flight at Minsmere. The tearoom was popular too! Our picnic by the shore at Titchwell – with binoculars at the ready – amidst warm sunny weather and a count of 37 species for the day

made this trip special. Thanks to Barry Milner for the good humoured guidance, patience and supply of jokes.

Rene Brown

Watching Wildlife

Wildlife watchers meet at 10am on the third Thursday of each month, dovetailing with the Walking Group (which meets on the first Thursday) and Birdwatching Group (second Thursday). Each walk is at a site with a particular habitat or special interest, and the outing is aimed at studying the flora, insects, animals and birds that contribute to Suffolk's natural bio-diversity.

Our walks this year have taken us to see ancient oaks and deer at Ickworth and Ixworth Thorpe, to Bull's Wood for oxlips, to West Stow for dragonflies and to Thelnetham Fen. Recently we have done a Lark riverside walk and visited Lynford Arboretum. Icklingham Plains and the waterfowl of the Gipping Valley are yet to come.

Our walks are usually only about two or three miles, and are conducted with frequent stops to look for water voles, photograph fungi, listen for birdsong or identify insects. All this is thirsty work, and we generally finish at a pub at about 12.30.

At present we are seriously over-subscribed, but there is always space for an extra keen naturalist, particularly anyone with knowledge they are ready to share by leading occasionally. Please make contact with me before joining the group.

Rob Parker

PLEASURABLE PURSUITS

Book Group

We are a small group of people who enjoy reading books, novels, biographies, classics, by writers of all centuries and countries, as well as poetry. Sometimes we read a play or a book together. At the moment we are reading *Enduring Love* by Ian McEwan. One of our members has obtained for us, from the Internet, copies of the reading guide to this book. From time to time we read our favourite poems or prose to each other, or recommend books that we have enjoyed reading.

We meet once a fortnight in members' homes, usually on a Thursday morning. New

members are always welcome.

Steph Miller

Discussion Group

The principal object of the Eastern Discussion Group (EDG) of the Blackbourne U3A is that all members find it a pleasant experience. This is best judged at the time of departure, frequently nearer to 5pm than 4pm, and with everyone looking forward to the next meeting. (The tea isn't spiked either!) The published subject for discussion usually lasts about ten minutes, by which time the conversation has strayed onto something of current interest. And on we go from there: no subject is barred. I can confidently say that everyone has an intelligent attitude in putting forward, or listening to, a particular point of view.

Our meetings normally comprise six or eight regular members from a roll of about 12 who all live to the east of Thurston and we look forward to welcoming some new members. I have found the EDG to be such a pleasant activity over the years that it seems incredible to me that with some 400 or so members, our U3A has yet to establish a second, say a Western, Discussion Group.

Michael Gurr

Watercolour Painting

I believe the Watercolour Painting Group started in 1994 and it has continued to thrive. The numbers now stand at 23 and there is a waiting list.

We meet on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 2pm from October to May at Thurston Green Centre. Each member elects to draw or paint a subject of their own choice and I attempt to advise them about materials, paints, brushes and technique. I demonstrate technique from time to time and I think the members find this useful.

Each year we display our work at our annual cheese and wine event in April. We have received many complimentary remarks about the work, and a few have been sold.

I have booked the venue for 2005/6 and am looking forward to another successful year.

Henry Gow

Scrabble

The Scrabble Group meets on the third

Thursday of each month at 2pm at the WI Hall in Woolpit. We are a friendly group who not only enjoy the skill of playing but hope in so doing we are keeping our 'little grey cells' ticking over. New members are most welcome.

Lillian Gow

WALKING FOR SOFTIES

Ten members of the Walks with an Interest Group joined a coach party of 39 others at the end of June for a weekend trip to the Yorkshire Dales. After a rather long and hot journey on the Friday, which included a stop at Holmfirth to view Sid's cafe and Nora Batty's cottage, we arrived at our hotel on the edge of Burnley.

The next day, Saturday, we motored across the Pennines into the Dales where we met our guide Jeremy, his wife Mary and their dog Fox in Hawes. The morning's walk took us up a gentle incline to the former quarrying village of Apperset where we learnt about the quarrying and mining of the gritstone rock. Then on along an old track, passing several of the stone barns which are a feature of the Dales. One barn was built for every three fields and was used to store hay on the upper floor for winter use and to shelter cattle below. We were told about the construction of the barn, but unlike barns in East Anglia they are not suitable for conversion to dwellings as most are difficult to access by vehicle. Maybe this is a good thing although it limits the scope for restoring and/or saving them.

Then back to Hawes, the home of Wensleydale cheese, for lunch, where we found the villagers celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of VE Day with a street parade accompanied by pipers. After lunch we took another walk to the west of Hawes, visiting the village of Hardraw with its force (waterfall). En route our attention was distracted by a fine aerial display by a Spitfire in VE markings.

An early start on Sunday enabled us to undertake another walk before heading home. This was from Malham where we met up again with our guide who led us beside a babbling brook through meadows and woods to Janet's Fosse, the home of the tooth fairy. A climb across open fields took us to the top of Malham Cove with its limestone pavements for a lesson on the geology of the area. It is difficult to imagine that once water flowed over

the face of the cove to create a fall of greater height than Niagara. After a descent of over 400 steps it was back to Malham village for refreshments before the long haul back to the flatlands of East Anglia.

At present the group is full and there is a waiting list of about ten. If anyone is willing to run a second group I shall be more than willing to help get it started as clearly there is real potential for two groups, each perhaps offering walks of different distances.

Bryann Ward

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

Northamptonshire

Our trip to Northamptonshire in July was enjoyed by all. We visited the house in Derngate, Northampton, restored in 1917 by Charles Rennie Mackintosh. In the afternoon

we moved on to Holdenbury House, where Charles I was kept by the Parliamentarians in 1647. More information can be found on www.78derngate.org.uk

Chartwell

Our next visit will be to Chartwell, the home of Winston Churchill, on 6 October. Entrance is free to National Trust members. Visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/Chartwell for more details

Thursford Spectacular

Another visit to Thursford is planned for 29 November. The coach will be going direct to Thursford for the afternoon performance. There are still some seats available.

John Morris