

Blackbourne U3A News

A University of the Third Age in Suffolk

ISSUE NUMBER 51

SUMMER 2006

From the Chairman . . .

By the time you read this Summer newsletter the cold and damp weather should be but a distant memory and we should all be enjoying some warm sunshine either in our gardens or away on holiday.

Now that we are able to take full advantage of the Resource Centre at the Third Age Trust I hope we can organise some additional study groups. Brian Milner has full details and will be pleased to help initially. Questionnaires will be available at lecture meetings for you to indicate your interests.

Jean and Derek Oldham are moving across the border to Norfolk. Derek was one of the founding members of our group in 1994 and as such, along with Jean, has always taken an active interest in our affairs. He has held the post of chairman three times, most recently in 2004 when he stepped in to fill the vacancy and ensure our survival. The committee could look to him for advice at any time. Jean also gave full support, acting as secretary and newsletter editor, as well as running the poetry appreciation group. We will certainly miss them and wish them well in their new home. Our loss will be Norwich U3A's gain.

Our programme for 2006/7 is now available, together with the membership application form which should be returned to our membership secretary, Sally Rands, with the increased subscription of £7 per person. The committee has decided to limit numbers to a maximum of 500 for the coming year in an attempt to avoid turning people away from the monthly lecture; the permitted limit is 250.

Thanks to our lecture secretaries we have a very good programme arranged for the coming year and I look forward to welcoming you again on 4 September when the subject will be Civil War.
Bryann Ward

NOTICE BOARD

Dates for your diary

Monday 10 July

Visit to Stoke Bruerne

Monday 4 September

Civil War *David Dougan*

Monday 2 October

Final date for submission of entries to the Wildlife Photography Competition.

Monday 2 October

From Westcliffe to Woolpit...via Broadway and the West End! *Michele Lavender*

Monday 6 November

Frolic, Fervour and Fornication *Pip Wright*

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2006/7 are now due. The annual fee is £7. Membership application forms are available from Sally Rands at Monday lectures or can be sent by e-mail. Please remember to enclose a stamped, self addressed envelope for the return of your receipt/membership card.

Monday Lectures

We are limited to 250 at New Green Centre, so come early to make sure of a seat.

Newsletter

Blackbourne U3A News is distributed at Monday lectures. To save mailing costs, if you are unable to attend please ask a friend or neighbour to pick up a copy for you.

New Dais

We are looking for volunteers to help make a new dais, possibly with wheels. If any member can help please contact either the Chairman, Bryann Ward, or the Secretary, Bob Mountfort.

Study Groups Exhibition

The annual Study Groups event with wine and cheese will take place on 16 October. Tickets will be £3 per person, available from Jean White on or at the September and October lecture meetings.

LECTURE NOTES

Forensic dentistry

On 8 May we were introduced to Graham Ritchie, registered dental surgeon, who gave the lecture on the subject of forensic dentistry. We were told that he had had experience in over 200 cases which had been heard at the Old Bailey, including the Rosemary West trial, and also in the tsunami disaster and the sinking of the Zeebrugge ferry some years ago. He illustrated his talk with slides, some of them quite unexpectedly graphic, but the subject was immensely interesting and we were enthralled to discover just how much information can be learned about a person's age, gender, life style, illnesses, and much more, just by the study of teeth and jaw. We learned that our teeth are unique to ourselves and can be a more reliable form of identification than DNA testing.

It is necessary to have ante-mortem records available and in the tsunami disaster 55 per cent of the victims were identified solely by this means, and in other cases where facial recognition is not possible. Teeth will often survive even fires. Where teeth are used as weapons of assault, the bruises and tooth patterns left behind on the skin have been used with total accuracy to identify the assailant. In March 1851 a pregnant girl was strangled. In her struggles she managed to bite the back of the murderer's hand. The resulting marks led to his identification and subsequent hanging. The lecture was given in a manner which held our interest from start to finish and we left having learned that there is far more to our teeth than just useful eating tools!

The Lost City of Dunwich

On 3 April Mark Mitchels, Head of Cultural Studies at Woodbridge School, presented a fascinating well illustrated talk.

Dunwich developed from a safe anchorage utilised by the Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings. In the 11th century it extended its boundaries compelling neighbours, Blythburgh, Walberswick and Southwold, to pay duties to use their own

harbours because Dunwich controlled the entrance to the bay. Ill-feeling and violence resulted.

King John gave Dunwich two Charters, the second with the prestigious position of Mayor. In 1231 Margery de Cressy of Walberswick sued Dunwich over harbour fees. She lost, but the Judge ruled that should ever the harbour entrance move to the north of the growing shingle spit, she would not have to pay! In disgust she threw the legal document into a chest where it lay forgotten for nearly 200 years.

Dunwich prospered through shipbuilding, fishing and trading. The population grew to 7000. The Corporation was arrogant, telling the King that they couldn't supply him with ships because they were at war – with Yarmouth! The sea continued to batter the coast and eventually the harbour access was blocked. Worse still, the spit was breached to the north and Walberswick gained the longed for harbour entrance. The legal document was found and Dunwich had to pay fees to Walberswick.

Desperate days for Dunwich led to piracy involving even the Mayor. Merchants and mariners left and more land and buildings were washed away. By the mid 14th century three-quarters of the city lay under the sea and Dunwich's days of glory were over. In 1700 it was a 'rotten borough' with only 11 electors and a population of 100.

Daniel Defoe visited and commented about 'pride coming before a fall'. J M W Turner painted a fantasy picture of the town and visitors were attracted. Now all that remains of the mediaeval city is the Leper Chapel. There is a Victorian Church, a pub, and a museum housing a model of the old city.

Spontaneous applause marked the end of Mark Mitchels' rivetting talk about what had been one of England's ten largest cities, now beneath the North Sea leaving little trace that it had ever existed.

Suffolk Curiosities

Peter Driver commenced his talk on 5 June with several amusing anecdotes, delivered in the soft Suffolk vernacular, which

immediately caught the audience's interest and led into a most fascinating slide show illustrating features on buildings and elsewhere around us which so often go unnoticed in our daily lives because we seldom think to look upwards. We saw plaques detailing the residence of notable personalities; a phoenix over a doorway to indicate that the building had burned down and had been rebuilt; markers of various individual fire services on buildings so that the firemen knew which fires to put out and which to leave burning. How unlucky if you paid your dues to the wrong group and your house caught fire! We heard why suicides were buried at crossroads and not in churchyards, and saw the height of the flood waters marked on the wall of the Harbour Inn at Southwold. Also in Southwold we saw several figureheads which had been washed ashore and are now on buildings, and on a row of terraced houses in Southwold little faces carved at the tops of brick pillars just under the roof. How many of us would ever see those unprompted? We saw pictures of the amazing achievement of the wife of the vicar of Huntingfield who painted the entire ceiling of the church, and cheeky carvings under the misericords at Yaxley church. It was a very interesting talk and left us realising that the everyday world around us has so much more to tell us if we have the wit to look.

WALKING IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT

At the end of April nine members of the Walking Group took the ferry down Southampton Water and crossed the Solent for a three night stay in a comfortable hotel at Ventnor on the south coast of the Isle of Wight.

The island became a fashionable holiday location after Queen Victoria purchased Osborne House in 1845 as a country residence where she, her husband Albert, and their children were able to enjoy a private family life away from the affairs of state. Many traces of the Victorian influence are still to be found as you travel around the island.

The first day's walk involved a steep climb from Godshill onto Appuldurcombe Down and back via the ruins of Appuldurcombe House. The views would have been great had it not been for the mist and low cloud that surrounded us! But we did have some super views on the next day when Brading Down and the remains of a Roman villa were the objective.

For the third day we took a more level route to explore the estuary and seashore around the Newtown river that empties into the Solent – quite a contrast to the downs and cliffs of the south coast. On the morning of departure half of the group spent the time at leisure while the rest decided on a final short walk, eventually finding their way to the picturesque Winkle Street with its thatched cottages and clear stream to say nothing of being enticed into Bill Brett's Aladdin's cave.

After each morning's walk, everyone went their own way, visiting such places as Osborne House, Carisbrooke Castle, the Needles Old Battery and the Botanic Gardens, with the evenings spent together recalling these visits over a five-course dinner.

Bryann Ward

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

On 11 May 45 members enjoyed a visit to Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire. It was built between 1874 and 1889 in the style of a French chateau for Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild.. It contains an impressive collection of 18th century decorative arts including Sèvres porcelain, Georgian silver, furniture, and portraits by Gainsborough and Reynolds. We had an introductory talk and an audio guide as we went round the house.. The fine Victorian garden also caught our attention.

Our next outing will be to Stoke Bruerne on the Grand Union Canal on 10 July. Future plans include visits to Chatham dockyard, Windsor Castle and Althorpe House. By popular demand we hope to return to Thursford for the Christmas Spectacular on 28 November.

John Morris

CHANGES TO OUR CONSTITUTION

The duly convened Special General Meeting to approve changes to our constitution took place immediately before the lecture on Monday 8 May.

With the aid of the overhead projector the chairman explained the revised wordings, the main effect being to increase the maximum number of committee members from 10 to 12 and to permit the incumbent chairman to stand for re-election to that office for the following year, but only for that year. (i.e. s/he must stand down after serving two consecutive years).

There were no questions from the floor, and the amendments, duly proposed and seconded, were approved unanimously.

A copy of the revised constitution is on the chairman's notice board

STUDY GROUP NEWS

Social History

Deidre Dobson would like to hear from any members who might be interested in forming a group to study English social history – the history of people and their activities, rather than a chronological study of monarchs, wars, etc. We would, of course, not touch on local history which Blackbourne U3A already covers. The resource centre of the Third Age Trust has material which might help us on our way. An initial planning session in September is proposed, with suggested meetings monthly on Tuesdays.

Deidre Dobson

Poetry Appreciation

Come and join us! There are now two vacancies in this very successful group as Jean and Derek Oldham are leaving this area. For the time being enquiries should be made to

Joy Bolwell

Travel and Tourism

The Travel and Tourism Group continues to flourish. In April 16 members spent a week in Marrakech, Morocco. This trip is reported in detail in our newsletter *Travellers' Notebook*, which may be viewed online at www.anjucon.co.uk/travel. In October we are going to Barcelona for three nights and next May, for our tenth trip, we shall be travelling north to Northumbria by coach. This trip is exclusively for members and partners to celebrate our tenth journey and to cement the friendships that we have enjoyed since the inception of the group.

In recent months we have enjoyed talks from members on such diverse destinations as Florida, Bangladesh, South Africa, New Zealand and Greenland. Future meetings looking at Sri Lanka, and the Orient Express from Singapore to Thailand are planned. Meetings are very well attended. The group is now full and there is quite a long waiting list.

John Dockerty

Computer Group

We have had some interesting talks and demonstrations over the past year: Central Suffolk Broadband; creating slide shows with music; IT in the church; animations; using Family Tree Maker. We have introduced workshops on such topics as Internet Explorer and Outlook Express. There is also a small hands-on group for solving individual problems and another studying digital photography. Advances in technology continue apace and prices continue to fall. One of the best buys now is a digital camera, so if you do not already have one I recommend that you get one, learn how to use it and how to manipulate your photos

Recently members have been introduced to Serif PagePlus and Serif WebPlus, which incidentally is the software used to prepare the print and web versions of *Blackbourne U3A News*. At future meetings we shall be looking at Works Suite, and the impact of computers on TV and entertainment. New members and visitors are always welcome at our meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month at New Green Centre.

Alan Simpson

COMMITTEE 2006/7

Bryann Ward *Chairman*

Ann Sear *Vice Chairman and Joint Lecture Secretary*

Bob Mountfort *Secretary*

Ann Edmondson *Treasurer*

Sheila Linke *Badge Secretary and Newsletter Distributor*

Brian Milner *Third Age Trust Resources*

John Morris *Educational Visits Organiser*

Sally Rands *Membership Secretary*

Jean White *Joint Lecture Secretary*

Yvonne Ryder *Newsletter and Study Groups Co-ordinator*

FAREWELL

It is with very mixed feelings that Derek and I say goodbye to Blackbourne USA. As Founder Members, we have enjoyed watching it grow and we are delighted to see it now a Member of the Third Age Trust.

During our time here we have enjoyed many interesting lectures and made good friends through various study groups.

We hope to join Norwich USA and do the same. Meanwhile thank you for your friendships and may Blackbourne USA continue to flourish without us.

Jean and Derek Oldham