

Blackbourne U3A News

A University of the Third Age in Suffolk

ISSUE NUMBER 53

SPRING 2007

From the Chairman . . .

The past year has been most successful and I hope we can continue the momentum during the coming 12 months. Interest groups are at the heart of the U3A and it is particularly pleasing that the number of these has increased significantly. Some of the groups are full, so if you are on a waiting list why not get together with others in the same position and set up a second group, as has already been done with the Travel and Social History groups. Our Interest Group Coordinator, Brian Milner, will be pleased to help.

At the AGM, three members of last year's committee did not seek re-election: Sheila Linke and Yvonne Yule for personal reasons, and Ann Edmondson who has completed her three-year term. They have all been a pleasure to work with and I thank Ann especially for being a very efficient treasurer. When Ann Sear took on the role as vice-chairman last year she did so on the understanding that she was unwilling to accept automatic nomination to chairman and we acceded to this wish. We are very pleased that Brian Milner has taken on this role. We welcome to the committee Colin Avis as Badge Secretary and Ralph Brighton as Treasurer. We are also hoping to co-opt two more members who have expressed an interest.

*The programme for the Suffolk and District Network of U3As Autumn Academy is enclosed with this newsletter and details are also on the **Blackbourne U3A website**. Those of our members who attended last year came back with positive reports so demand for places is expected to be high.
Bryann Ward*

NOTICE BOARD

Dates for your diary

Monday 14 May

Organic gardening *Karen Kenny*

Monday 4 June

Secrets of the Seats *Stuart Bowell*

Wednesday 6 June

Evening gliding at **Rattlesden Airfield**, Felsham:
group fully booked *Bryann Ward*

Monday 2 July

Citizens Advice Bureau – What do we do? *Bury St Edmunds staff member and volunteer*

Monday 15 October

Interest Groups Exhibition with wine and cheese

Autumn Academy

The Suffolk and District Network of U3As will be holding its Autumn Academy on 13 October 2007 at Combs Middle School, Stowmarket. The Academy offers the opportunity for affiliated Suffolk U3A members to participate in two study

group sessions. There is a **choice of 27 subjects** on diverse topics. Book early to ensure that you are allocated your chosen topics.

The cost will be £7.50 including tea/coffee.

Bookings must be made by 30 June. Leaflets with full details and booking form will be available at Monday lectures in April, May and June, or contact the Secretary who will send you a copy on request.

Bob Mountfort

Monday Lectures

We are limited to 250 at New Green Centre, so come early to make sure of a seat. Volunteers are always needed to set out the chairs and to help with refreshments.

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.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2007/8 will remain at £7. Membership application forms will be available from Sally Rands at Monday lectures from June.

Interest Groups Exhibition

The annual Interest Groups event with wine and cheese will take place on 15 October. Tickets will be £3 per person.

LECTURE NOTES

The Chernobyl Story

On 8 January Len Green told us about the **nuclear accident in 1986 at Chernobyl**, in the Ukraine, and its aftermath. Mr Green, a chartered engineer, was involved in the building of Sizewell A nuclear power station and is a consultant for nuclear projects in Eastern bloc countries. His lecture was graphically illustrated with many interesting facts and figures.

The nuclear reactor at Chernobyl was built by the then Soviet minister and the project director. The construction of unit 4 was rushed and mistakes were made. The light-water reactor combined with graphite moderators proved to be a lethal mixture. Tests were being carried out on the reactor on 26 April 1986, with the safety system disconnected, when there was a violent explosion and the reactor cap blew off. Nuclear fuel travelled through the building like lava, then froze. The fire service was called but they had no protective clothing so they were exposed to high-level radiation. The local residents of Pripyat were given three hours to move out, leaving everything behind, taking only what they could carry.

The reactor was encased in a 'sarcophagus'. This is now deteriorating and a new structure designed to last 100 years will be erected. Nature has now taken over. There is a 30 mile exclusion zone around the site and a new town has been built. The human cost some 20 years on has been less than 50 deaths, many of whom died shortly after the accident. Over 200,000 people were exposed to radiation and long-term health effects may still arise.

Mr Green assured us that nuclear power is safe: the explosion at Chernobyl was due to

a combination of factors that could not happen today.

Frolic, Fervour and Fornication

Two hundred and fifty members attended the absorbing and amusing lecture given by **Pip Wright** on 6 November. Pip has spent many years researching and reading old documents and parish records and gave us an insight into life as it was centuries ago. Before the time of Henry VIII record keeping was a hit and miss affair with notes of parish events kept on scraps of paper which may or may not have been put into the parish chest kept in the local church, dependent entirely on the efficiency, or otherwise, of the vicar. After 1598, however, laws were passed which made it incumbent on the vicar of the parish to keep an accurate record of births, marriages and deaths. We were much amused by some of the extra notes in these registers which reflected the vicar's views on the paternity of some of the new arrivals, and dismayed by entries referring to conjoined twins as 'monsters'.

We were told how the paperwork kept in the parish chest in churches had been like a treasure trove of snippets of local information. The pieces that had survived depended entirely upon the person who had sorted the chest from time to time as to what he considered of interest and importance. For example, there is in existence a letter dated 1626 asking for a man to watch the beacon in Earl Stonham. Why? Because the local people were getting panicky before the start of the Civil War and it was vital that the beacon should not be fired prematurely. For about ten years from 1640 in the Civil War it is hard to find evidence of any records being kept because the registers were hidden during this time to avoid destruction. Some parish registers contained 'secrets', written on separate pieces of paper and stuck on the inside cover, relating to information about a person that could not be officially recorded, but which the vicar thought should be 'on record'. Notes were recorded relating to fornication by certain persons in a village and details of the penance performed. It was

vital that this was observed in order to protect the village from the 'wrath of God'.

Several publications were offered for sale written by Pip Wright offering further information on this fascinating subject.

Christmas 2006

Two hundred and twenty-three people waited patiently for a very special visitor to arrive for the meeting on 4 December. Owing to health and safety regulations he was unable to bring his reindeers, Gloria and Elton, into the hall, so they were left outside. Father Christmas [aka John Stemp] then treated us to a wide range of music with a Christmas theme, from opera to traditional Christmas carols. Many of the members joined in the choruses. After this most enjoyable morning warm sausage rolls and mince pies were offered, together with wine and soft drinks, making a really good start to the Christmas festivities.

February 2007

Owing to illness and the non-arrival of the replacement speaker on 'British tunnelling design', committee members did their best to fill the time on 5 February. Brian Milner gave the answers to the **Christmas quiz** and prizes were presented to the winners.

INTEREST GROUP NEWS

New Groups

Currently we have **29 Interest Groups** of which 14 are full, six almost full and only seven have vacancies. If there is a current group that you would join if there were a vacancy, please ask the convenor to add your name to the waiting list. Once we have five or six names we can then look at starting a second – or third – group.

If your particular interest is not catered for at the moment, please let me know. There could be others who share your interest and who would help form a new group. Being a convenor is not an onerous role, nor does it have to be done alone – it can be shared.

Please let me know of your ideas for new groups and I will see what can be done.

J Brian Milner – Study Groups Co-ordinator

Church Crawling Group

Following the Christmas break, we had a very good turnout for our January visit to St Mary's, Badwell Ash, where two carved stone panels illustrating mason's and blacksmith's tools of the 15th century were a reminder of how our churches are a record, not only of religious practice, but also social customs, over a long period of our history. At nearby Great Ashfield, a delay in locating the church keys led to the setting off of the intruder alarm which screamed for 20 minutes drowning any attempt at communication. However, the modern window in memory of the **US Air Force 385th Bombardment Group** was alone sufficient justification for visiting All Saints', particularly for those who had lived through World War II. Another example of human endeavour and experience solidified in glass, lead and stone for future generations. February took us to Stanningfield where a notable Doom is a pale remnant of a medieval dazzling design of over a hundred figures; then to Cockfield where St Peter's has a magnificent exterior and some interesting monuments inside and a warm welcome from local members.

John Robinson

Parchment Group

Our trial three months has been very successful: members are producing some beautiful cards. They have all agreed to continue so they must enjoy doing it. We are still learners, none of us has had any formal training. We have space for two or three more members. Please contact me if you are interested.

I would like to thank those of you who have supported the sales table of the Card Group; we are not out to make money only to cover our expenses so that we can continue with our hobby! Those of you who have not yet had a look, please do, you may be pleasantly surprised.

Elizabeth Clarke

Social History – Thurston Group

We have had interesting talks and discussions by members of the group ranging from coinage, rise of political parties, castles, cottage industries, Christmas, and history of advertising. Our members have organised a full programme for the rest of the year.

J Brian Milner

Poetry Group

Some sad news! The Poetry Group has decided that the time has come to close itself. We have been going for over ten years and members have enjoyed many very interesting and informative meetings, covering a large selection of poetry and poets.

Unfortunately our numbers in the last 18 months have gone down to four members and the group is no longer viable. We have tried in the newsletter, at meetings, and at the Study Groups Exhibition to advertise but to no avail. Maybe someone will join the U3A, be surprised that there is no poetry group and offer to start one, and maybe there will be members interested in joining!

Joy Bolwell

Garden Visits Group

This group started in October 2006 with a visit to the **Old Vicarage Garden at East Ruston**, which we felt would be a hard act to follow. In November we had a lively talk by Karen Kenny on 'The Magical Mystery of Herbs' and in January an interesting and enlightening talk by RHS Gold Medalist Ben Potterton. Our Christmas meeting was marked with a demonstration by Mary Yuill, a member of our group, who gave us delightful ideas for Christmas arrangements with live, dried and silk materials.

We started our 2007 visits with a trip to **Anglesey Abbey** gardens, which was very enjoyable despite many of the snowdrops being past their best. The Winter and Woodland Walks gave us plenty of inspiration. A full programme of visits has been arranged for the rest of the year.

Barbara Milner

blackbourne-u3a.org.uk

We now have our own domain name:

blackbourne-u3a.org.uk has arrived!

Many, many thanks to John Freiyer who has previously hosted the website on his own domain. We have signed up with an Internet company called Namesco who have provided us with our own domain name and a hosting service. John has done the great thing and transferred all the information from his site to our own. John is continuing as webmaster.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

The following visits are being planned for 2007; further details will be available at Monday lectures through the year:

The Red House, and **Dansen House**, Bexley, Kent

Hampton Court Palace

Buckingham Palace to see the Queen's wedding dress and jewellery, then to the Queen's Gallery to see the exhibition of Italian renaissance paintings

Elton Hall, Peterborough

Althorp House, Northants

Leeds Castle, Kent

The **nuclear bunker** in Essex, and **Audley End House**

Thursford Christmas concert: could those members who would like to go to the concert this year please tell me as soon as possible as I need to book in April if there is sufficient interest.
John Morris

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held at New Green Centre, Thurston, on Monday 5 March 2007; 219 members were present.

The minutes of AGM held on 6 March 2006 were read by the secretary, Bob Mountfort, proposed and seconded by Adam Edmondson and Henry Gow respectively as an accurate record, and duly adopted by the meeting.

The chairman, Bryann Ward, then reported on the past year in which real progress had been made. Membership reached 500, interest groups increased to 29; we ran our first photographic competition, organised a Christmas quiz and set up a dedicated website. Monthly lectures and educational visits continued to be popular. He thanked all those who had contributed both on and off the committee.

Ann Edmondson then presented her last financial report, commenting on items in the accounts, copies of which had been circulated. Total funds were £6806 on 31 December 2006; there will be no increase in subscription for the coming year. The accounts were proposed and seconded by John Stemp and Roy Beard respectively and duly adopted. Roger Beaurain was thanked for his work as external examiner and was reappointed for 2007/8.

Bryann Ward was re-elected as chairman and Brian Milner as vice chairman. Three members, Sheila Linke, Yvonne Yule and Ann Edmondson were not seeking re-election to the committee and the remaining

members were re-elected en bloc. Colin Avis and Ralph Brighton were elected onto the committee.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 10.35am.

COMMITTEE 2007/8

Bryann Ward *Chairman*

Brian Milner *Vice Chairman and Interest Group Co-ordinator*

Ralph Brighton *Treasurer*

Bob Mountfort *Secretary*

Sally Rands *Membership Secretary*

Ann Sear *Lecture Secretary*

John Morris *Educational Visits Organiser*

Colin Avis *Badge Secretary*

Jean White *Publicity and Newsletter Co-ordinator*