

Blackbourne U3A News

A University of the Third Age in Suffolk

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From the Chairman . . .

To all those who have renewed your membership, and to our new members, welcome to the start of another season of Monday lectures. I am sure you will be attracted by several of the topics offered but even if not, do try to come as it is a wonderful opportunity to socialise and meet other members outside your own interest groups. So many times people have said they enjoyed the lecture even though the title did not appeal. Having encouraged you to attend I must remind you that the capacity of the New Green Centre is limited to 250 so it will pay not to arrive late.

With no other venue in the vicinity able to accommodate a greater number (including adequate parking), your committee is considering having two categories of membership. We envisage a full membership, entitling attendance at Monday lectures and interest groups (as at present), and a restricted membership whereby the holder would be able to join interest groups and participate in activities other than the Monday lectures. It is important for the future well being of Blackbourne U3A that there is a steady influx of new, and dare I say, younger, members who will take on the responsibilities of running the group. With two categories we can dispense with the current overall limit of 500.

Over the next few months we shall monitor attendance at the lectures to get an idea of the proportion of the total membership that comes to these. It is also important that we hear your views on such a two tier membership before taking the idea forward.

The Interest Groups Exhibition is on 15 October and I hope to see many of you then.
Bryann Ward

NOTICE BOARD

Dates for your diary

Monday 17 September

Tour of Rougham Tower at Rougham airfield

Monday 1 October

The life and voice of Kathleen Ferrier

Christopher Fifield

Saturday 13 October

Suffolk Network of U3As

Autumn Academy, Stowmarket Middle School
(see Spring newsletter)

Monday 15 October

Interest Groups Exhibition with wine and cheese

Monday 5 November

The history of Royal flying *Graham Laurie*

Monday 3 December

True tales of the removal man and lorry driver

Leonard Priestly

Interest Groups Exhibition

This will take place in New Green Centre on
Monday 15 October at 11.00 am

during which the winners of the photo competition will be announced. Entry is by ticket only and these may be obtained at the lecture meetings in September and October from Audrey Barrett. Advanced reservation is essential. The cost, as last year, is £3 per person.

Rougham Tower Association

Bury St. Edmunds U3A has arranged a tour of the control tower at **Rougham airfield**. This will take place at 2 pm on Monday 17 September. We are invited to join the party and apparently anyone interested should just turn up. There is no charge. Further enquiries may be made to John Dean on 01284 700172.

Online Courses

U3A Online courses are short courses specially designed for older people and available through a partnership between Third Age Trust and U3A Online Resources Ltd (based in Australia). There are both tutored and untutored courses on a wide variety of subjects. For further details visit <http://courses.u3a.org.uk>

Subscriptions

If you have not already renewed your subscription for 2007/8 please see Sally Rands at Monday lectures or contact her on 01449 673621.

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.

LECTURE NOTES

Citizens' Advice Bureau

On 2 July Services Manager Janine Pinel and General Advisor Liz Williams from the Bury St Edmunds branch of the **Citizens' Advice Bureau** gave us an informative insight into the origin and service offered by this valuable organisation. We were surprised to learn that it is a voluntary service and depends on grants, donations, charity and fund raising. It started on 4 September 1939, working from mobile horse boxes, and now has 475 bureaux nationwide. The Bury branch has eight paid staff and 55 volunteers and offers morning appointments and afternoon telephone advice. Case records were originally kept in a hardback notebook but are now computerised and need enquiry forms for each case, and consent forms for records and to deal with outside agencies.

Training takes nine months and the service would not be possible without the volunteers. The free service exists to help people with their problems. Last year 13,000 clients with 16,000 issues were dealt with from the Bury branch, either face to face or by telephone or letter. Currently debt represents one third of problems, together with employment issues and homelessness. Referral to a solicitor for a half an hour consultation is offered free. Advisors always have access to greater advice support from a senior advisor on call, and must always be strictly non-judgemental. Very difficult problems are referred to the Bureau Manager who can refer higher to the main CAB offices.

Collection plates were placed at the end of the talk, enabling the sum of £96.52 to be donated to this very worthwhile service.

Secrets of the Seats

The lecture on 4 June saw the welcome return of Stuart Bowell, this time speaking to us on the fascination of the **wood carvings** to be found in many of the 10,000 medieval churches in this country. Places to find these works of great skill are on font covers, pulpits, angels on roof beams, screens, pew ends, and of course, misericords which were 'shooting sticks' for the choir or clergy who had to stand throughout services, but could perch themselves on these little shelves to achieve some slight rest while still respecting the requirement to be standing. It can be understood why the translation of this word is 'mercy seat'. The undersides of these often give an insight into the secular everyday life of the period, the carver producing scenes from what he saw going on around him. Some seem to be poking fun at the elders of their community, some even a little rude, and it can only be assumed that their finished efforts were not examined too closely by those in authority, but which give great amusement to those of us now who spend time looking.

Another source of interest is the carving on bench ends and 'poppy heads'. This latter name is thought to have its origin in the French word *poupée*, meaning doll, thus dolls' heads. These carvings are often difficult to understand but would have had clear meanings in their day, representing saints, the seven sins, devils, trades, animals etc. These master carvers would have gone from church to church where their skills were needed and would have had access to books in libraries. Some odd representations of animals from foreign countries would have been taken from pictures drawn by returning explorers and travellers. The fantasy animals were some kind of illustration of symbolism, a lot of which is lost to our modern minds. It was an absorbing talk and will have inspired many of us to go and take a closer look at these treasures.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

On 25 June we visited **Elton Hall**, near Peterborough for a private guided tour of this house which has been the home of the Proby family for over 350 years. Land and property at Elton was granted to Sir Peter Proby, Lord Mayor of London, by Elizabeth I and his descendants built and extended the house over the centuries. It is thus a fascinating mixture of styles reflecting the tastes and interests of the succeeding generations. As well as magnificent furniture there is a fine collection of paintings including some by Gainsborough, Constable and Reynolds. The library has a unique Henry VIII prayer book with the writing of the Tudor king and two of his wives. After lunch in the pleasant restaurant there was time to wander round the colourful gardens or be tempted by the plants on sale in the garden centre.

By the time you read this newsletter a visit will also have been made to **Burghley House**, Stamford.

Forthcoming visits in the pipeline are to Leeds Castle, Kent in mid/late September and to **The British Museum** for the Terracotta Army exhibition. There may still be a few places available for the Christmas Extravaganza at Thursford on 20 December (cost £46). For more details, contact John Morris.

INTEREST GROUP NEWS

Social History – Thurston Group

In June two of our members, Mya Turgoose and Doreen Wooster gave a presentation about **workhouses**, so in July we had an outing to Gressenhall Farm and Museum of Norfolk Life – a most enjoyable and informative day, enhanced by arranging to have a guided tour with an excellent guide. Afterwards we made our own way around more of the facilities and some of us were lucky enough to come across a costumed re-enactment of the Matron's interview of two recalcitrant women inmates of the Workhouse. It gave us insight into life there

and was superbly performed by the three characters involved. Despite inclement weather we had an fascinating time with several of the group saying they would visit Gressenhall again and take friends and family.

Then and Now Group

On 20 July the newly formed Then and Now Group had its first outing – a visit to see the CCTV Centre in Bury St Edmunds. Previously most of us had not known it existed and its situation was a surprise too. There were banks of monitors showing what cameras were surveying, not only in Bury St Edmunds but in Newmarket, Haverhill, Brandon and Mildenhall. Questions were welcomed and answered fully. We returned to the outside world having had a totally new vision of the world in which we live – in more ways than one! Thank you Peter for arranging the visit.

Social History Expedition

Barningham and Thurston groups and the Then and Now Group are looking forward to a joint expedition to see the newly restored Theatre Royal in Bury St Edmunds. Thanks to Deidre Dobson for her arrangements and her kind invitation to the three groups to join together for the visit. It is hoped 30 of us will have a preview of one of the jewels of our county.

Brian Milner

Garden Visits Group

Members of this group have continued to enjoy their monthly outings. This year we have visited Anglesey Abbey at Quy near Cambridge (to see the snowdrops); Fairhaven Woodland and Water Gardens at South Walsham (to see their candelabra primulas and skunk cabbages! – which are similar to an arum lily) where we also had a boat trip on their private broad; Sheringham Park (beautiful display of rhododendrons); Beth Chatto's Garden near Colchester (celebrated for its unusual plants); Green Island Gardens at Ardleigh (a first for most of us and really enjoyed); and one of the

four Royal Horticultural Society Gardens at Hyde Hall, near Chelmsford. The entrance to Hyde Hall was free as we have joined the RHS as an affiliated group. On 22 August we held our annual 'show' to conform to the RHS requirements of membership – group members each submitted a *very* small flower arrangement and we discussed our programme for next year.

Barbara Milner

Computer Group

The Computer Group has had a varied programme over the past year. We have had presentations on topics such as computers in further education, new technology in television, MP3 music, setting up a low budget computer, organising our daily lives with MS Works and planning a journey with MS Auto Route.

We also hold regular hands-on workshops when we look in depth at a particular aspect of practical computing. Recently we have been learning how to create attractive posters using MS Word: there is a competition for the best poster with a prize to be presented at the Interest Groups Exhibition.

Broadband will shortly be installed at New Green Centre which will enable us to access the Internet at our meetings. This facility will offer us a whole new range of topics for study. We welcome new members at any level from beginners to the more advanced. We all need to be computer literate these days, so why not come along at 2 pm on the fourth Thursday of the month to see what we do.

Alan Simpson

Patchwork and Quilting Group

This group has run its course. Yvonne Jones tells me the members have developed their expertise so they are now very capable of carrying on their craft by themselves. Thanks go to Yvonne, and earlier to Doreen Calvert, who have convened the group over the seven or eight years it has run and congratulations on the quality of the work produced by its members.

New Groups

We are always looking to start new Interest Groups. Please let Brian Milner know of your interest and if possible, the names of people who are prepared to be convenors.

Convenors do not need to be on their own; two or three people can join together to organise a group. To those of you who already convene Interest Groups – your efforts are really appreciated by our members. Thank you.

Brian Milner

FLYING HIGH

. . . well, up to about 1200 ft. Over two evenings in June 14 members enjoyed the thrill of powerless flight courtesy of **Rattlesden Gliding Club**.

After briefings on safety, instrumentation and controls everyone had two launches by winch and a few circuits of the airfield before coming gently back to earth. Within a couple of seconds the glider was airborne and travelling at about 60 mph in a steep climb to 1000 ft when the winch rope was released enabling us to level out and soar like a bird. Visibility was good, and you could see as far as Sizewell and the Orwell bridge.

Most of us took the opportunity to control the glider and found that only a slight movement on the joystick resulted in a noticeable change in direction. Luckily the instructor behind could take over should we be too heavy handed!

With the light failing fast it was time to help take the gliders back to the hangar and adjourn to the clubroom for a chat and drink to round off a very different evening.

The cost of this taster session included two months' membership of the club and one or two of our members have returned for further flights and tuition. You're never too old to learn!

Bryann Ward

FIRST AID COURSE

On 16 July 17 members attended a four-hour first aid course run by Mrs Edith Gathercole, Divisional Superintendent of St John Ambulance. The training was practical and covered primary survey (the first examination of an unconscious casualty), recovery position, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation including breathing and chest compression, strokes, heart attacks, falls and fractures and choking. All members took part

enthusiastically under Mrs Gathercole's competent and expert leadership. Members were awarded a certificate of attendance and received back-up notes. They will now be in a

much better position should a first aid emergency arise. If other members are interested a future course can be arranged.