

Blackbourne U3A News

A University of the Third Age in Suffolk

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SPRING 2008

Valediction

By the time you receive this newsletter I will have stepped down as your chairman and a new committee will have been voted in.

Having served on the committee for four years I leave with mixed feelings. I have met many interesting people, widened my circle of friends and learnt a lot about the workings of the Third Age movement. But I confess to looking forward to merging with the audience once again at the monthly lecture, not having to arrive so early and writing notes to ensure no important announcement is omitted.

Working on the committee has been far from onerous and my two years in the chair has been blessed with a super bunch of colleagues who have all worked hard to ensure the continuing success of Blackbourne U3A. I thank them all for their co-operation.

In particular I thank the three members who are retiring with me. Ann Sear and Jean White jointly stepped in at the last minute over three years ago to organise the speakers for the monthly meetings. I am sure you will all agree that they have done a first class job and made a major contribution to the popularity of our group. Jean has taken notes at the lectures and more recently acted as newsletter and publicity liaison officer. John Morris too has done sterling work for the last three and a half years in researching, organising and conducting an excellent variety of educational visits that are always in great demand.

It has been a privilege to be your chairman and I thank you all for your support. I am confident that Blackbourne U3A will continue to thrive and I wish the new chairman and committee well.

Bryann Ward

NOTICE BOARD

Dates for your diary

Monday 7 April

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Mark Mitchels

Monday 12 May

Life-shaping influences – family school and friends

Adrian Williams

Monday 2 June

The life of a lady cruise director *Judie Abbott*

Monday 7 July

The Victorian village

David Dymond

7-9 September

U3A conference, Swansea University

Saturday 11 October

Autumn Academy 3, Combs Middle School, Stowmarket

Monday 13 October

Interest Groups Exhibition with wine and cheese

Autumn Academy 3

The next **Study Day** for the Suffolk Network of U3As will be held at Combs Middle School, Stowmarket, on Saturday 11 October 2008.

Following on from the success of previous Study Days, it will again take the form of a mini 'Summer School' when members can join in **study group sessions** that will be led by members of our own U3As. **Application forms** are now available. Applications must be submitted by 30 June. The cost is £8 per person.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2008/9 will remain at £7. Membership application forms will be available from Sally Rands at Monday lectures from June.

ANNUAL QUIZ

The first prize of £40 was won by **Ralph Brighton** (our treasurer) who scored 100%. Second prize of £30 for a score of 97% went to **Caroline Baxter** of Great Barton (not a member of the BU3A). Third prize of £20 for a score of 96% went to **David Morris** of Bury St Edmunds (not a member of BU3A). Well done to all of them. There were also a

lot of others in the 90+ range.

The £10 draw was won by **Pamela Cotton** (a member of BU3A).

Thank you to all who bought copies of the quiz. I do hope you enjoyed the questions and trying to find the answers. We made a 'profit' of £188 which we have donated to East Anglia's Children's Hospices – a very worthwhile cause.

You can see the final answers on www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk

J Brian Milner

LECTURE NOTES

True tales of a removal man

The True Tales of the Removal Man and Lorry Driver was the subject of the lecture on 3 December given by Leonard Priestley. It proved to be an absorbing and at times highly amusing account of the life that Len had lived, doing the thing he loved best – driving. His early working life was in his parents' village, and two mobile, grocers shops. He did not like being a shopkeeper however and, much to his father's disappointment, applied for a job at Smedley's, driving a huge delivery truck. He had one hour's tuition on driving such a large vehicle but he managed to convince them that he was the man for the job and remained with the company until he was made redundant in 1971. We were kept amused and amazed by many anecdotes of his years with the company, during which time he won many **awards**, not the least being 'Driver of the Year'. After redundancy he decided to go it alone and bought a van and delivered flowers but this became uneconomic, so he turned his skills to becoming a removal man. The account of this part of his life, with letters and a poem received from happy customers, brought us more hilarious tales of his escapades, and his ingenuity in dealing with seemingly insurmountable problems. He sold his firm when he was 60 but missed the life so much that he now has a 16-seater minibus which he hires out and drives. We were glad to know that his father conceded that he had made a wise choice in becoming a life-long driver rather than remaining a shopkeeper.

Jean White

The real price of fish

The Real Price of Fish was the title of the lecture given by Andy Malcolm to a full house of 250 members on 7 January. Andy came as a representative of the **Fishermen's Mission**, a

126 year old organisation which raises funds and public awareness, and cares for fishermen involved in accidents at sea, and their families. In the early 1900s there was a fleet of mission ships for care at sea and care of bereft families, but now all the caring is done at dockside centres. There are now about 13,000 fishermen left in the UK, mainly deep sea off Aberdeen, and for cuttlefish at Brixham. The cod fish are now to be found in the North, and Mediterranean fish are being caught in Cornwall, thought to be due to possible climate change and warmer seas around our coasts.

Fishing is said to be the most dangerous of peacetime jobs with a man being 50 times more likely to lose his life than in any other occupation. We were shown slides taken during some of the storms at sea which filled us with horror at the thought of surviving against such very violent forces, all to provide us with a meal in warmth and comfort. Every 13 days a boat is sunk, and every month a man is lost. A lot of the Mission's work is pastoral, caring for the retired, disabled, widows, and children of fishermen, and we heard many anecdotes of good works done to help the needy. We were also entertained most enjoyably to sea shanties sung unaccompanied by Andy. The Fishermen's Mission receives no government support and an envelope collection from members raised the sum of £471.83 for this very worthwhile cause.

St Edmundsbury Cathedral

The subject of the 4 February lecture was the Development of **St Edmundsbury Cathedral** given by Sarah Friswell, a Bury St Edmunds Blue Badge guide. We were given a very comprehensive history of the building, and many of its adornments, together with very interesting pictures, and learned that it has been an on-going process of building from at least 1214, with the work on the Lady Chapel and Edmund Chapel only being completed in 1970. In 1995 Mr Dykes Bower died and left £2 million to complete the building. With the help of another £5.5 million from the Millennium Commission and the rest from local people, work on the tower and transept was able to commence. We were astonished to learn that it was carried out by just two men with a very small team, using the same traditional building methods as medieval craftsmen.

The original building material of Lincolnshire stone was thought to be unobtainable but by great good fortune a rare seam of Barnack limestone, the best stone available, had just

been quarried and was able to be used, together with flints, bricks and lime mortar, as in the original building. 98 miles of scaffolding poles were used. It is designed as a lantern tower, is hollow and is not meant to be climbed. It is built to last at least 1000 years and is 150 feet from the ground to the top of the pinnacles. Guided tours take place at 11.30 am every day from Easter to September.

Jean White

INTEREST GROUP NEWS

Then and Now Group

We now have over 50 members and very soon will need to consider splitting into two groups.

The visit to the Fire Station covered not only fire risk awareness but also a video about car accidents and rescues. We came away having had an enlightening and thought provoking afternoon.

In December Jeff Paine gave us a fascinating talk about the Bury Cross. Made of walrus ivory at Bury St Edmunds Abbey, the 12th century beautifully carved cross now resides in New York. Sadly in its home town we have only a copy. Jeff brought the story of the Cross to life for us and his excellent illustrations showed the skill of the craftsmen of medieval times.

In January Horry Parsons told us about 'Building the Tower' of St James' Cathedral. His wonderfully humorous and lively presentation included details of the initial tendering for the work, the 98 miles of scaffolding along with its 128,000 fasteners, the visits of Prince Charles and his bricklaying which still lies within the heart of the construction – much to the Prince's concern.

We have a varied and interesting programme for the year.

Brian Milner

Social History – Thurston Group

In November John Hines presented a lively talk about popular music in the 19th and 20th centuries. From tavern songs, to music hall, wartime songs, 'tin pan alley', big bands, skiffle and many more areas of our musical history, John had his audience engrossed. Who would have believed what the words of 'What shall we do with a drunken sailor' really referred to and who initiated the song!

In January Roger Oddy talked about 'token coinage' and brought along his collection of tokens made and used in Bury St Edmunds as

well as nationwide. The fine quality of some of the local tokens was amazing. Roger's interesting talk was all the more rewarding to the group because he had started researching token coinage only after a talk about early coinage by another member of the group.

The group is enthusiastic and willing to research topics as was shown when this year's programme was drawn up with virtually no arm-twisting!

Brian Milner

Garden Visits Group

This group has now changed its format – instead of charging a membership fee of £5 we have decided to operate as an 'open' group with no membership fee. I have a list of interested people and I endeavour to e-mail them with prior notice of our programme. Anyone interested in joining our visits is welcome, providing there is space on the coach. I am always at the back of the hall at the monthly Monday meetings with details of what is happening.

In November last year we had a superb talk by Sue Wooster who owns the national collection of campanulas. Most of us were astounded by the number of varieties there are and the vast differences in the individual flowers. It was even more enjoyable as Sue is the daughter-in-law of one of our members.

In January we had our 'party' in the meeting room at New Green Centre and it was a great opportunity for us all to get to know each other better and enjoy the general fun and food on offer.

We are all looking forward to our programme of visits for 2008.

Barbara Milner

Barningham Social History Group

We are a small group, numbering just 12, but we have huge enthusiasm, and enjoy the conversation when we are together as much as the study undertaken individually. During the past year we have followed up interests in a wide range of subjects.

Our findings on the silk weaving industry were illustrated by an excellent television programme presented by Dan Cruickshank. Isambard Kingdom Brunel's achievements were looked at in detail. Our December meeting was devoted to the history of pantomime, followed in the New Year by an enthusiastic foray into shops and shopping. One thing tends to lead to another and we proceeded to find out what we could about

the history of tea, coffee and chocolate drinking; then on to the confectionery industry.

In rather more sombre mood we spent a couple of months boning up (sorry!) on aspects of death and burial. Did you know that in the 1850s a special railway line was created to carry the dead out of London to a suburban necropolis? The rise and fall of the English seaside holiday received our attention last summer and we have gone on to consider various aspects of childhood over the centuries.

At the end of January, the Group visited **Viridor's Waste Management** site at Mason's, Great Blakenham – not, at first sight, a subject for social historians but certainly something which may well have a bearing on what social historians of the future will think of us. We came away from the visit very aware of the profligacy of our society.

Deidre Dobson

Music Group

The 'Listening and Learning' Music Group which meets (usually) on the third Friday of the month at 2.30 pm now has one vacancy. If you are interested in joining or in finding out more about us, please contact Joy Bolwell.

Craft Group

The Craft Group is flourishing and now has a new offshoot, namely Parchment Crafting which has introduced yet another enjoyable hobby to our members. The quality of work now bears no resemblance to that produced when we first started! A very enjoyable time is spent at our monthly meetings and continues individually at home. *Joyce Kirk*

Tutankhamun

January's educational visit was to the **Tutankhamun exhibition** in the O2 (Millennium Dome).

After a short video presentation we entered the galleries. We were then taken through the history of the pharaohs pre-Tutankhamun with displays of artefacts discovered in their tombs. These are well displayed with detailed descriptions. The last few galleries are devoted to Tutankhamun with the account of his discovery by Howard Carter in 1922, and a selection of items found in his tomb. Using the latest technology experts have created an image of what the king might have looked like but the cause of his death, aged 18, remains a mystery.

The exhibition is open until 30 August 2008 and the tour, which can take a good two hours, is to be

recommended.

Bryann Ward

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held at New Green Centre, Thurston, on 3 March; 237 members were present. The minutes of the AGM held on 5 March 2007 were read by the general secretary, Bob Mountfort, and adopted by the meeting as a true record.

The chairman, Bryann Ward, reported that the past year has been another successful one. The quality of the monthly lectures is now attracting the maximum number of members that can be accommodated in New Green and there is no difficulty in filling a 50 seater coach for the popular educational visits. Ann Sear, Jean White and John Morris, who are standing down, were thanked for all the effort they have put into these activities and were applauded by the members.

The number of interest groups has increased to 35. The convenors were thanked for their time and effort and for agreeing a format for reporting their finances to the treasurer.

Honorary membership was awarded to Henry Gow and Ivan Abbott for services rendered over many years. Other members who assist behind the scenes were thanked for their contributions in helping to make Blackbourne U3A a well run organisation.

The treasurer, Ralph Brighton, presented the financial report. Total funds were £8515 at 31 December 2007 but since then payments totalling £3250 have been made for a hearing loop system at New Green and new projection equipment. Having been duly proposed and seconded the accounts were adopted by the meeting. Roger Beaurain was thanked for his role as examiner over the past four years and Laurie Marshall was appointed as examiner for the coming year.

Brian Milner was elected as chairman and Charles Crane as vice chairman*. All eligible existing committee members were re-elected together with five new members (see below).

The chairman summarised options to try and solve the over capacity problem at New Green and sought opinions from the floor.

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

*Due to prior commitments Charles Crane relinquished his position on the committee; subsequently the role of vice chairman was allocated to Colin Avis.

COMMITTEE 2008/9

Brian Milner *Chairman and Interest Groups Co-ordinator*

Colin Avis *Vice Chairman and Badge Secretary*

Ralph Brighton *Treasurer*

Bob Mountfort *General Secretary*

Sally Rands *Membership Secretary*

Elizabeth Sharpe *Lecture Secretary*

Christine Glover *Assistant Lecture Secretary*

Sheila Linke *Educational Visits Organiser*

Audrey Barrett *Educational Visits Assistant*

Vera Hurding *Newsletter Liaison*

Don Picking *Newsletter Liaison Assistant*