

Blackbourne U3A News

A University of the Third Age in Suffolk

ISSUE NUMBER 58

SUMMER 2008

From the Chairman . . .

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity of being Chairman of such an active friendly University of the Third Age. Elizabeth Sharpe and Christine Glover have joined the Committee as Lecture Secretary and Assistant Lecture Secretary; Sheila Linke has returned as Joint Educational Visits Organiser (along with Audrey Barrett); and Don Picking is helping Vera Hurding with Newsletter Liaison. Thank you to old and new members of the hard-working committee.

*As your new Chairman one of my first duties is to remind you that it is time to renew your membership of Blackbourne U3A. As you know, we have a waiting list of people wanting to join us so please **remember to rejoin by 1 September** at the latest.*

This, my first message to Blackbourne U3A members sadly coincides with the retirement of the editor of the Blackbourne U3A News. Judith Constantine has produced professional, attractive and informative newsletters for us for many years. Happily she has started to train and will continue to support our potential new editors Bryann Ward and Barbara Milner, whose first publication will appear in the autumn. Thank you Judith for all your hard work and innovative approach. Thank you too to Bryann and Barbara for agreeing to continue the editorship of our magazine.

Brian Milner

NOTICE BOARD

Dates for your diary

Monday 1 September

Things that go bump in the night *Peter Ingram*

Final date for membership renewal (see page 2)

Monday 6 October

Clocks of Windsor Castle
Steven Davidson

Closing date for submission of entries to the Photographic Competition (see page 3)

Saturday 11 October

Suffolk Network of U3As
Autumn Academy, Stowmarket Middle School
(see Spring newsletter)

Monday 20 October

Interest Groups Exhibition with wine and cheese

Monday 3 November

Farming during changing times
David Barker

Monday 1 December

A Suffolk girl – learning to be an opera singer
Clare Presland

Interest Groups Exhibition with Wine and Cheese

This will take place in New Green Centre on Monday 20 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. The cost is £3 per person.

Subscriptions

If you have not already renewed your subscription for 2008/9 please see Sally Rands at Monday lectures or contact her on 01449 673621 before 1 September. Please remember to inform the Membership Secretary if you change your e-mail address.

Audio loop system

The new audio loop system for use by hearing aid wearers at New Green Centre is proving to be of great benefit. Blackbourne U3A donated £1200 to have the system installed and very positive comments have been made about the improved reception for hearing aid users. Just adjust the hearing aid to the 'T' position and clear reception should be available. The loop has been fitted in the Hall and the adjoining Meeting Room.

Newsletter

If you have Internet access the Committee requests that you do not take a printed copy at Monday lectures. To reduce our printing costs please download your copy of *Blackbourne U3A News* from www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk.

LECTURE NOTES

Alfred Lord Tennyson

On 7 April 195 members attended an illuminating lecture presented by Mark Mitchel, MA. The subject was Alfred Lord Tennyson, the celebrated Victorian poet, who was born in Somersby, Lincolnshire on 6 August 1809. Poetry was an early interest in his life and he and his brother Charles liked to walk in the countryside composing alternate lines of poetry. In 1827 he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he met the brilliant Arthur Hallam whom Alfred thought to be as near perfection as a man could be. In 1828 Alfred won the Chancellor's Gold Medal for his poem 'Timbuktoo'. He joined The Apostles, an undergraduates' club whose members remained his lifelong friends. Alfred wrote 'The Lotus Eaters' and read his poems to the group.

In 1831 his father died leaving considerable debts so Alfred left Cambridge without completing his degree and returned to Lincolnshire where he met Emily Sellwood. They fell in love but did not marry until 1849. Hallam died in 1833 and Alfred's grief led to some of his best poetry including 'In Memoriam' and 'Ulysses', the latter being written only three weeks after Hallam's death.

The public and Queen Victoria enjoyed his poems and in 1850 he succeeded William Wordsworth as Poet Laureate.

Emily and Alfred's son was named Hallam after his beloved friend. In 1853 the family moved to Farringford, Isle of Wight, where he wrote 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'.

Alfred died on 6 October 1892. Strangely Emily did not attend his funeral in Westminster Abbey, thinking it too grand. She died four years later and was buried on the Isle of Wight. The distance between their graves is indicative of the emotional and physical space which had come between Alfred and his wife in their final years.

Vera Hurding

Adrian Williams

As a well-known former head-teacher, Mr Williams was a welcome return visitor. At the May meeting, the audience was soon absorbed in his subject 'Life-shaping influences – family, school, friends'.

He started by saying that the family was the most important factor. Unfortunately in modern times marriages fail or do not take place at all. Children do need the stability of two parents. A happy and loving family life produces children who are more likely to do well in their studies and in their social life. If a child has low self-esteem he or she will score badly in every way. Mothers and fathers share their opinions and their skills and, by sitting round a table, talking and eating together, children learn about life without realising it.

Mr Williams then spoke about the types of schools available. An interesting fact is that girls do better in single sex schools, whereas boys do better in dual gender schools! However our speaker favoured the latter and then went on to talk about academic qualifications. It seems that with exams at 7, 11, 14, 16 and 18 we have the most examined children in the world, but statistics show that this is not necessarily ideal. Friends and peers came next under discussion and these can be really influential, especially if the family guidance is ineffectual. Here again the sexes differ, with girls making close friendships whereas boys are more likely to be part of a group.

He finished with some pictures and details of his own family and gave us this quotation:

To put the nation in order first put the family in order – the family is the nucleus of civilisation.

From the many questions that followed, it could be seen how interested everyone had been in his thoughts and opinions.

Elizabeth Sharpe

INTEREST GROUP NEWS

Social History – Barningham Group

Having settled on a subject for study, our members go off and read up on certain aspects of that subject, reporting back at our monthly meeting. Inevitably, this leads to discussion, which we have found to be a major part of our get-togethers. The result is that we find ourselves returning to a subject during the following month.

A good example of this was our looking into the history of cottage industries – a subject which

occupied us for three monthly meetings! As we know, cottage industries are, in effect, small businesses run from home. Working from home has long been a popular way of earning money since it allows workers to choose their hours of work and to take a day off whenever they feel the need (or can afford to). In previous centuries these workers included straw-plaiters, smock-makers, button-makers, glove-makers, stocking-knitters, lace-makers, spinners and weavers, and even chain and nail-makers. Whole families were involved in producing goods to be collected up and sold on by an employer. With the coming of the industrial revolution many workers lost their livelihood and had little option but to work in factories, often in poor conditions and for little reward. The alternative was, all too often, the workhouse.

In days gone by, every village had its own carpenters, woodworkers, blacksmiths, potters, leather-workers and basket-makers, often working in small workshops attached to the house. These home workers supplied the needs of the village and were able to sell direct to the consumer rather than via a third party. Living in Suffolk, we see many of these activities being pursued once again – now in considerably better conditions – and have come to prize the hand-made items which we see at fairs and markets. Book recommendation: *Cottage Industries* by Marjorie Filbee.

Deidre Dobson

Wildlife Watching

Fenland is the theme for the year's wildlife watching, and several recent visits have been to the river fens of Hopton, Market Weston, and in May, to the linked fens of Thelnetham, Hinderclay and Blo Norton. All these lie alongside the River Little Ouse, and exist because the valley was formed at the time of the last ice age, when the melting ice generated a much larger river than exists today. Changes in the course of the river have created a range of differing soil types, with diverse habitats lying side by side. Our guide for the morning was Dr Helen Smith, one of the leading lights of the Little Ouse Headwaters Project – a community venture which has been so effective that they have been able to buy several areas of land which are now being recovered from agriculture in order to re-instate fenland. They now link the whole stretch from Thelnetham windmill to the watershed east of Hinderclay Fen beyond which water drains east into the Waveney.

The extended nature reserve is a delightfully unspoiled and secluded domain, and we explored with the benefit of an extremely knowledgeable guide. A number of new paths have been created through the wet woodland, with views across open water, and great birdwatching opportunities. We saw the Adder's tongue fern, and found a lizard where heath meets fen – but this one was unexpectedly wading through the water amongst the reeds. Many of the group had been unaware of this quiet wonderland at the Suffolk/Norfolk border, and most will want to return to enjoy the sights as spring turns to summer.

Rob Parker

Walking with Interest Group

Ten members of the group were once again fortunate to have perfect weather on the third annual visit to Ventnor on the Isle of Wight, for three days of walks in April.

The first day's walk was just under 5 miles circling Carisbrooke Castle and taking in part of the Tennyson Trail atop Bowcombe Down. Near the end of the walk we sheltered from a rain shower in a conveniently situated pub in Carisbrooke, and after regaining the car park we had a private tour of the nearby priory, currently run by a trust as an inter-denominational day retreat.

The second walk of 6.5 miles was the most strenuous but provided panoramic views to both north and south coasts of the island. Starting from another part of the Tennyson Trail on Mottistone Down we dropped down through woodland and over ten stiles to reach the village of Calbourne with its pretty Winkle Street. Here we were able to refresh ourselves at The Sun prior to the return leg which involved a steady 500 ft climb onto Brighstone Down before the final descent to the starting point.

For the last walk we deserted the downs and travelled to the east of the island for a much more gentle ramble of 4.5 miles around the coast from Bembridge and up a mere 150 ft to visit the windmill. Now owned by the National Trust this dates from the early 16th century and is the only surviving mill on the island.

On the morning of departure we were eagerly looking forward to a putting competition on the immaculate green near the hotel but our plan was thwarted when the green attendant failed to appear. Does this mean we will have to return another year to fulfill this ambition?

Bryann Ward

Our Trip to Mold

Organised by Success Tours 45 of us travelled on Monday 31 March by Simonds coach to Ironbridge in Shropshire where Telford's famous bridge spans the River Severn. From there we continued to Beaufort Park Hotel, Mold, Flintshire. Next day we visited North Snowdonia National Park, taking the mountain railway up Mount Snowdon. Because of high winds and the construction of a new centre at the summit, our train stopped at Clogwyn. Passing several slate mines en route to Betws-y-Coed for lunch, we saw the huge slate reserves and the thin soil which is unsuitable for agriculture. On Wednesday, after shopping in Mold and Alfonwen, we visited Bodnant Gardens, owned by the National Trust since 1949. Camellias, rhododendrons and azaleas were in flower and we all enjoyed the amazing spectacle.

A scenic ride took us to Portmeirion on Thursday, the village built by Clough Williams-Ellis between 1926 and 1976 when he was over 90! The whole wooded site on a peninsula overlooking the sea is a conservation area. All the buildings are listed and are used as shops, cafés, holiday accommodation and a hotel. Williams-Ellis' aim was to show how a series of buildings, many with brightly coloured walls and intricate shapes, could be set together to create a beautiful environment. The Portmeirion range of pottery, made in Staffordshire, had its earliest patterns designed by Mrs Williams-Ellis; the well-known original pattern 'Botanic Garden' is still very popular. In the evening, following a harp accompaniment during dinner, a male choir sang to us to remind us that we were in Wales.

On Friday we left behind the rolling hills of North Wales, with their small fields and thousands of sheep and lambs, and, after an interesting guided tour of the village of Ecclestone, part of the Duke of Westminster's estate, we had time to explore Chester before returning home. Overall the weather had been kind to us, our hotel reasonable, our party on good form, our coach driver very reliable and assuring – the trip had been a success.

Eddie Blows

The Purrr-fect Day

The Theatre Visits Group made its first outing to see the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical 'Cats' at the Theatre Royal Norwich on 9 April. Many of us had seen a production of Cats in London and

the cast certainly lived up to their predecessors – Elaine Page would have been proud of her successor. The dancers moved with all the grace and flexibility that their feline counterparts manage.

We are looking forward to our next visits – to the ballet Coppélia in July and The Witches of Eastwick in September.

Sue Russell

Then and Now Group

On Thursday 22 May members of the Then and Now Group met at the Cock Inn, Polstead where an alfresco lunch was enjoyed. Afterwards Loretta Cullen and her friend Helen, both members of Bury U3A led us on a very enjoyable walk around the area. We heard of the misadventures of the ill-fated Maria Marten and her lover – and murderer – William Corder whose life was ended on the gallows in Bury St Edmunds in 1827. Loretta told us the story of the ill-starred couple, pointed out places of interest including Corder's House and the lovely old church of St Mary, and led us through the beautiful gently undulating countryside. Arriving back at the village green two local ladies kindly opened the community shop especially for us – there was a good trade in ice creams which were consumed by grateful members sitting on a bench circling one of the village trees.

Brian Milner

DISCUSSION GROUP

This group needs a new convenor – can you help? If so please contact Brian Milner 01284 761508

SINGING FOR PLEASURE

This group is having a great time. There are still a few places open for more members to join them. You *do not* need to be able to read music just enjoy singing.

They meet on the third Tuesday of the month 2.15–4.00 p.m. in Woolpit Church

TRAVEL

The Travel and Tourism Group visited the Netherlands in April for a cruise on the Dutch canals. You can read a report of their trip and members' own travels in *Travellers Notebook*, www.anjucon.co.uk/travel