

# Blackbourne U3A News

A University of the Third Age in Suffolk  
affiliated to the Third Age Trust 



ISSUE NUMBER 61

SPRING 2009

*From the Chairman,*

*Firstly my thanks to you all for endorsing my nomination to act as your Chairman for the coming year. To bring you up to date with the changes within the Blackbourne U3A I would remind you that Brian Milner, Bob Mountfort and Sally Rands stood down following their three years in office and that Don Picking also stood down for personal reasons. In their places I am pleased to welcome Roger Eburne as our new Secretary; Joan Smith as Membership Secretary; Joan Bailey as Interest Groups Co-ordinator; and Sheila Inman. The continuing members of the committee are Sheila Linke as Vice Chairman, and Joint Educational Visits Organiser along with Audrey Barrett, Ralph Brighton as Treasurer; Vera Hurding as Badge Secretary/Newsletter Distribution; and Elizabeth Sharpe and Christine Glover as Joint Lecture Secretaries.*

*I would like to thank the retiring committee members for their support and hard work during their terms of office and extend my best wishes to both new and existing members, and I feel sure that they will all continue to build on the success of Blackbourne U3A as established by our predecessors.*

*Looking at the forthcoming programme of lectures, I feel privileged to be allowed to introduce such a wide and interesting array of speakers over the next year and hope that you will all find something to interest you.*

*Added to our normal Lecture Meetings of course will be the Interest Groups Exhibition, affectionately known as the "Cheese and Wine" meeting, scheduled for 19 October; our Christmas celebration in December, and of course the ongoing success of our Interest Groups including the Theatre, Educational, and Garden Visits.*

*Finally my sincere thanks to all members who have helped make Blackbourne U3A what it is today - I look forward to working with you all in the future.*

*Colin Avis.*

## THE NEW COMMITTEE

<b>Chairman</b>	Colin Avis 01359 240431
<b>Vice Chairman</b>	Sheila Linke 01284 766474
<b>General Secretary</b>	Roger Eburne 01359 240704
<b>Treasurer</b>	Ralph Brighton 01284 703969
<b>Joint Lecture Secretaries</b>	Elizabeth Sharpe 01359 230045 Christine Glover 01284 788075
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Joan Smith 01359 233308
<b>Badge Secretary and Newsletter Distribution</b>	Vera Hurding 01284 728658
<b>Joint Educational Visits</b>	Audrey Barrett 01284 723345 Sheila Linke 01284 766474
<b>Interest Groups Co-ordinator</b>	Joan Bailey 01359 232990 Sheila Inman 01359 235274

## AGM REPORT

230 members were present at our Annual General Meeting held on 2 March at the New Green Centre.

The minutes of the AGM held on 3 March 2008 were read and adopted. The outgoing Chairman, Brian Milner, reported that the past year had again been very successful with full membership at 500 and an ongoing waiting list. He was sure the new Committee would continue to seek a solution to the waiting list problem but at present the number on the list was not felt sufficient to warrant the forming of a new U3A.

At the heart of the U3A are the interest groups and whilst we have a thriving number, ideas for new groups were always welcome. He thanked all the Convenors for the time they put into make the groups and the annual exhibition a success. He also thanked Committee members and other helpers for their support throughout his year as Chairman.

The Treasurer, Ralph Brighton, went through the accounts, copies of which had already been distributed, showing the credit balance at 31 December 2008 as £5908. There were no questions and the accounts were duly adopted. Laurie Marshall was willing to continue as Examiner.

As well as the Chairman, the General Secretary, Bob Mountfort and Membership Secretary, Sally Rands, were standing down having completed their three year terms of office and also Don Picking for personal reasons.

Colin Avis was elected Chairman and Sheila Linke Vice Chairman. The remaining committee members were re-elected plus new members Joan Bailey, Roger Eburne, Sheila Inman and Joan Smith.

## LECTURE NOTES

### PHENOLOGY – IS SPRING GETTING EARLIER? – Tim Sparks

Phenology is the study of annual events, monitoring seasons and climate change.

There has been a gradual rise in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and climate change throughout the world, partly because of human activity. Over the last 150 years 2008 was the 10th warmest year on record. We know this from a variety



of valuable resources such as card indices, diaries and even recordings on garden sheds! For over 50 years ordinary people have logged bird sightings, numbers of bees and butterflies in their gardens, varieties and dates of flowers blooming etc. Photographs are a valuable source of evidence, but memory is certainly not! The writer Dylan Thomas wrote that he could “*never remember whether it snowed for 6 days and nights when he was 12 or 12 days and nights when he was 6*”.

Dramatic evidence of climate change is that in 1942 a glacier in Alaska had become a fiord by 2005. Some species

of plants and animals can benefit from climate change, but others need to adapt. Weeds and pests are highly adaptable! Unseasonal oddities have included frogs spawning in November and daffodils blooming on Christmas Day.

Tim Sparks’ humour introduced a touch of light heartedness to an otherwise serious, but most interesting January talk.

Audrey Barrett

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### ARRIVE ALIVE – Michelle White from The Driving Agency

Michelle White told us that the aim of the *Arrive Alive* programme is to keep older drivers safely on the road for as long as possible. The Agency is committed to reducing fatalities and crashes on Britain’s roads, and many of the points she brought to our attention could apply to any age group. However, she pointed out that as we get older, various conditions can affect our driving – our ability to react quickly to situations; stiffening joints; hearing difficulties; failing eyesight etc. She did admit that, as older people, we do bring a wealth of knowledge, confidence and experience to our driving. Nevertheless, driving is more complex and demanding than it used to be and this was illustrated by a series of slides. She also suggested that we might like to refresh our knowledge, by reading the Highway Code, which is far more informative nowadays. This can be obtained from bookshops and at [www.highwaycode.gov.org](http://www.highwaycode.gov.org)

Other points mentioned were road signs (are there too many?), the effect of speed on braking distances, and the influence of drink – just one unit of alcohol takes one hour to pass through our systems.

The leaflet “*Drive on! Advice for Older Drivers*” is well worth reading and copies can be obtained by calling 08701 226236. Another source of information is [www.passplus.org.uk](http://www.passplus.org.uk) which provides advice about motorway and night driving.

Michelle emphasised that by taking even greater care and adjusting our driving habits, growing older is no reason to give up driving.

Elizabeth Sharpe

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### A SUFFOLK GIRL – LEARNING TO BE AN OPERA SINGER – Clare Presland

Clare, who is a local girl, proud of her Suffolk roots and the support of Suffolk people, began her career as a dancer during her primary school years. At middle school she took an interest in acting, but her passion for singing did not begin until she was given six singing lessons as a Christmas present.

After becoming a finalist in the West Suffolk Musician of the Year competition, she applied to the Royal Academy in London where she studied for the next four years. She achieved a Bachelor of Music with Honours degree and went on to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. As well as learning musical skills, Clare has realised that the whole performance is vital – even beginning with an introductory speech to the audience. A vocal technique is important – training the muscles, balancing the voice and positioning the body. She tries to show emotion to her audience, who in turn will respond to her.

Clare has sung in various UK venues as well as the USA and she ended her entertaining talk by singing to us.

Audrey Barrett

# INTEREST GROUP NEWS

## TRAV2 GROWTH STABILISES



Due to the large numbers expressing interest when we opened up our membership to anyone in BU3A we now have our meetings in the main hall at New Green. 57 people turned up to our first meeting last November and we now have a paid-up membership of 85. Since then the attendance figures have hovered around the 60 mark – not always the same people. Some came along to see what we had to offer and decided to join, others can't fit us into their busy schedules.

With the larger group we are trying to establish a variety of trips to suit large and small parties. This coming year we are avoiding exchange rate variations by concentrating on trips in England. Our first trip is to a Health and Beauty Weekend at the Peterborough Marriott. For some of the 18 of us, we are not expecting miracles but we are looking forward to a fun time. At the end of April, 38 of us will be going on a tour of the Peak District. In June a dozen of us will be taking a five-day four-night all-inclusive cruise on the River Severn and in September 40, of us will be touring the Lake District.

We are trying to finalise a trip to Sorrento and the Amalfi Coast in October - more numbers are needed to get a good price break. In 2010 we are planning a seven-day trip for a small group to Kyrenia in Northern Cyprus, and also a five-day trip to Honfleur – the latter is already fully subscribed.

We meet at 11a.m. in the main hall at New Green on the third Monday of the month. Feel free to give us a look. £1 for visitors or an £8 annual subscription.

Bob Mountfort

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## FRIDAY WALKING GROUP

This additional group was set up at the start of the year and already has 40 names on the list. The first walk in January was around Felsham when 27 members completed the four and a half mile course. Bad weather forced the cancellation of February's walk from Bacton but we hope to fit this in later in the year.

In March the walk was just over five miles from Pakenham to Norton past Little Haugh Hall and back through a rather marshy Grove Farm nature reserve, after which 16 enjoyed a hearty meal in the Fox.

April's walk will be another five miler starting from Bradfield St. George village hall on the 17th. Future walks will be posted on our website as the programme evolves.

Bryann Ward

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## GARDEN VISITS GROUP

In **January**, about 60 of us were pleased to hear [Reinhild Raistrick](#) speak to us about her *"Travels as a Botanical Artist"*. We were enthralled listening to her tell us about the number of countries and conditions in which she has worked. Her meticulous attention to detail was amazing and we could appreciate why she is so respected by the Royal Horticultural Society (having been awarded four Gold Medals by them), and centres like the Cambridge University Botanic Garden where she tutors.

Many of us took advantage of the opportunity to purchase her brilliant book *"Flowers of the Rainforest"* which contains reproductions of her superb paintings of African Violets; Reinhild has done botanical drawings of every known variety of this beautiful plant.

On a cloudy but dry **February** day over 50 members travelled to [Chippenham Park Gardens](#) for a private visit to view the display of snowdrops.

We were met by the owner, Mr. Eustace Crawley, who apologised for his wife Anne – the plantswoman – not being present. He explained that although there are over 200 varieties of snowdrop only about five had been planted at Chippenham Park. We were then free to wander at leisure around the landscaped and woodland gardens. The formal garden near the house contained varieties of hellebore and the colourful trunks of the bare trees were reflected in the waters of the lake.

It was in the woodland area that the drifts of snowdrops, interspersed with aconites, really amazed the visitors as they meandered along the grassy paths.



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### LECTURE MEETINGS

Monday 11 May

**Work of St Nicholas Hospice**

*Ian Norris*

Monday 1 June

**Le Chemin de la Liberté**

(WW2 Escape route to Spain)

*Bernie Millard*

Monday 6 July

**Step by Step**

The Norwich Shoe Trade

*Barbara Miller*

### EDUCATIONAL VISITS

Contacts:

Sheila Linke 01284 766474

Audrey Barrett 01284 723345

Mon. 27 April

**Felbrigg Hall, Norfolk.**

Mon. 29 June

[Chatham Dockyard](#)

### GARDEN VISITS

Contact:

Barbara Milner 01284 761508

Wednesday 22 April

**Old Vicarage Gardens, East Ruston**

Leave New Green Thurston 9.30am.

**SUNDAY 10 May**

**Buckingham Palace Gardens**

Leave Thurston 8.30a.m.

Wednesday 27 May

**Capel Manor Gardens, Enfield.**

Leave Thurston 9.30a.m.

Wednesday 24 June

**Peckover House, Wisbech**

Leave Thurston 9.30 a.m..

### THEATRE VISITS

Contact:

Sue Russell 01359 231285

Wednesday 20 May

**Sign of the Times**

*A comedy by Tom Firth*

Wednesday 1 July

**Dinner Ladies** by *Victoria Wood*

Both at The Theatre Royal, Norwich

## "DIRTY DANCING"

Forty of our theatre goers relived 'The Time of Their Lives' at the Aldwych Theatre on Friday 20 March..

*Dirty Dancing* is set in 1963 at the Kellerman holiday resort. It's the time of Martin Luther King and the start of the Beatles phenomenon. The production takes the story of Johnny and Baby and incorporates 35 hit songs including "Hungry Eyes", "Hey Baby", "Do You Love Me?" and the heart stopping "I've had the Time of my Life."

On the ever changing set the dancing was exciting, sexy and culminated in the wonderful iconic lift at the end of the show, and we all remember - "Nobody puts Baby in the Corner".

But we still missed Patrick Swayze!

Sue Russell

## U3A WEBSITES

Visit the U3A website to find out more about the Third Age Trust, and resources offered for your particular interests:

[www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)

Our own website is [www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk](http://www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk)

Please send your contributions, with relevant photos about your current activities to our Webmaster, Sue Prigg, at

[webmaster@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk)

If you do not have Internet access you can contact Sue on 01638 751289  
Items for the Newsletter send to [publisher@blackbourne-u3a.org](mailto:publisher@blackbourne-u3a.org)

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[www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk](http://www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk)

## "ODE TO SPRINGTIME"

Oh, springtime, sweet springtime  
you're finally here!

The snow is all gone and  
the skies are so clear

The robins are back  
from their winter retreat

The air is so fresh  
and the flowers are sweet

I've waited so long  
for your joyous return

All through the winter  
oh, how I did yearn

to witness the splendour  
that only you bring

The bursting of colour  
a new song to sing

You warm up the air  
and the soil of the earth

To renewal and beauty  
you gladly give birth

No other season  
can rival your deeds

You wash away gloom  
you fulfil many needs

Your rains cleanse the air  
of the winters bleak look

You loosen its grip  
on each babbling brook

You wake all of nature  
from its winter sleep

(even the insects that we wish  
you'd keep)

You bring forth the blooming  
of flowers and trees

You dust winter's ashes  
with your gentle breeze

Your crocus and tulips  
and daffodils too

put on quite a show  
with their colourful hue

The birds sing your praises  
with songs crisp and clean

Oh, springtime sweet spring  
you're a glorious thing

You work your magic oh, so well  
There's just one mystery

You bring such beauty to the  
world

Why can't you work on me?

written by and@pansy1999

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As the Committee has decided future issues will no longer contain reports of the monthly lectures, contributions from Interest Groups and individuals are needed more than ever if the Newsletter is to continue in its current format.  
COPY DEADLINE FOR JULY EDITION IS JUNE 15