

Hello Members,

I am writing this on another glorious sunny, if a bit windy, day. I enjoy the Spring a great deal with my favourite flowers, spring lambs and all the new life we can see and hear around us.

I have to mention my big birthday because I had a wonderful time. My sons spoiled me a lot and planned the celebrations as a big surprise. I had, in preceding weeks, also celebrated with good friends, doing various things including lots of eating! Again, great times in great company.

I suppose I think of our u3a as a rather large group of friends. We, and certainly I, do not know you all personally but I hope you all feel welcomed and included in whatever we do.

At national level the new "Council" has been formed and I trust at some stage, that we will meet our representative for the Eastern Region, Ian Mathews, who is also Chair of Sudbury u3a. It will be interesting to see how the changes in the running of the Organisation at national level will develop over time.

As a Committee, we have welcomed two new members, Susan Kelly and Elizabeth Chester. They are helping with the promotion of our u3a and booking speakers for our next year 2025/26, and have made a good start. We certainly value their input. Housekeeping tasks such as an updated Asset List and encouraging more of the Interest Group Leaders to use our data Management system are on-going. The Committee has agreed to purchase six folding card tables for the sole use of our u3a. These are used currently by the Mah Jong Group as it continues to grow, but are available for other groups to use when needed. Perhaps a Card Playing or Games group could be set up?

Our Membership has grown steadily and it is good to see our u3a flourishing. I shall be away on a holiday shortly, but leave you with my best wishes for a lovely summer.

Liz, Chair, Blackbourne u3a

The History of the Abbey, Bury St Edmunds

Following the AGM on 3 March, the meeting enjoyed an informative talk by Dr Francis Young about the development of the Abbey from about 939 up to the Reformation and its destruction in 1539.

Initially a church was constructed from wood to house the remains of the martyred king Edmund. This was similar to the church that can still be seen at Greenstead Green in Essex. From about 1080 abbot Baldwin started to rebuild in stone. Several examples were given of the type and size of the buildings, some of which were based on calculations from the size of the ruins.

There were also pictures of other existing buildings in parts of Europe, that were built to the same design, based on the ruins, to give an idea of the magnificence of the building, especially the West Front.

An excellent illustrated history can be seen on [English Heritage's](#) website

Mary Dunbavin



The Real Basil Brown (from Rickinghall to Sutton Hoo and Back)



FOR February's talk, attended by over 150 members, Sarah Doig gave a brief history of the life of Basil Brown. Sarah, having had a 20 year career in the foreign office, returned to her native Suffolk where she became a local historian, and now lives in Rickinghall,

Sarah pointed out that most people have now heard of Basil Brown following the 2021 Netflix film 'The Dig', starring Ralph Fiennes, which recounted the discovery of the Great Ship at Sutton Hoo. Sarah's talk covered much more than just this discovery, giving us an informative talk about Basil's life, on which she has now written and had published a book. She took a lot of the information from Basil's own notes, which were contained in some 100 books and his desk diaries from the 1960s and 1970s.

Basil was born in January 1888, in Bucklesham, near Ipswich, the only child of George and Charlotte. A few months after he was born he moved to Rickinghall, where he attended the local

school until the age of around 12 or 13. Interestingly, bearing in mind his later career in archaeology, one of his memories from his time at school was his dislike of history. On leaving school he joined his father working on Church farm, but he was determined to continue his education, which he did by attending evening classes.

Soon after the first world war he met his future wife, May, whom he married in Rickinghall Superior Church in June 1923. They continued to live and work at Church farm until 1932, when Basil gave up farming. It was about this time he had his only book published, although it was not on the subject of archaeology, but on astronomy. The pivotal moment in his life was when he came to the attention of Guy Maynard from Ipswich Museum following Basil's discovery of several Roman kilns in Wattisfield. He was taken on as an archaeological excavator, on a casual basis, being paid only when he worked for Ipswich museum, a role he undertook for the rest of his life. He was to work on many archaeological digs, with the most famous one being that at Sutton Hoo, which he did over the summers of 1938 and 1939. Sarah continued to share with us many details of Basil's life, up until his death on the 12/3/77, at the age of 89.

Paul Taylor

Medical Detection Dogs

This very educational lecture, given by Norma Howell, was attended by 133 members.

The Medical Detection Dogs charity was formed some 15 years ago by Dr. Claire Guest and is based near Milton Keynes.

The wonderful work carried out by the trained dogs proves, just in case we did not already know, that a dog is a man's best friend. The 98% success rate of the detection work carried out by the dogs requires making full use of the greatly enhanced sense of smell of a dog which is 60 times stronger than that of a human. This is why dogs spend so much time sniffing when on their walk!

Each dog is trained to detect a specific smell with the training being on the reward system where they receive a treat for each successful search.

The Bio Detection Dogs working at the charity's headquarters are trained to detect the slightest smell of diseases such as cancer, Parkinson's disease and bacterial infections and work for 20

minutes three times a day. The dogs take between 4 and 6 months to train and it costs £600 per month to support a working dog.

The other side of the charity's work is to train Medical Alert Assistance Dogs. These animals are trained to notice the slightest changes in the smell of their human partner. This skill enables people to have early notification of a crisis type episode that enables the human to take prompt action. This allows patients to relax knowing that they will be safe and also reduces ambulance call-outs. These dogs take between 18 months and 2 years to train at a cost of £29,000. The waiting list of up to three years shows the demand for these dogs.

Overall the charity uses 14 different breeds of dog although Labradors are the most popular.

This was a very interesting talk greatly enjoyed by members who, I am sure were greatly impressed by the skills of the dogs.

Laurie Marshall

East of England's best kept secret?

Situated in Lamarsh, four miles downstream from Sudbury on the banks of the river Stour is Daws Hall. This is a 25 acre Nature Reserve on the Essex, Suffolk border dedicated to environmental education for Early Years through all the Key Stages into Further Education and Adult Studies. The aim of the trust is to spark a lifelong passion for nature in everyone.

On 20th February 12 members of the Watching Wildlife group went to Daws Hall for a visit led by Lesley an Education Officer. Daws Hall is only open to the public on event days so we were lucky to have a one off tour.

Our tour began with an introduction to their work with school groups and adult education from across East Anglia throughout term times. We then took a walk around the site beginning with some identification of trees and then on towards the beautiful sight of snowdrops that were in abundance in a wooded area. This was followed by looking for and identifying some mini beasts and fungi whilst on route to one of the ponds on the site to complete some pond dipping and identification. The tour ended with a walk down to the river Stour which flows along the border of the site.

The highlights of the morning for the group were I believe, the looking for mini beasts and the pond dipping. Oh and no rain! Which was then rounded off by an enjoyable lunch at The Henny Swan.

The 25 acre site is small in comparison with some nature reserves. However, one thing that is often said about Daws Hall is that "Every acre is different" and to that end we are planning another visit next year in the summer time.

Angela Lee



Starlight Express - What a show!



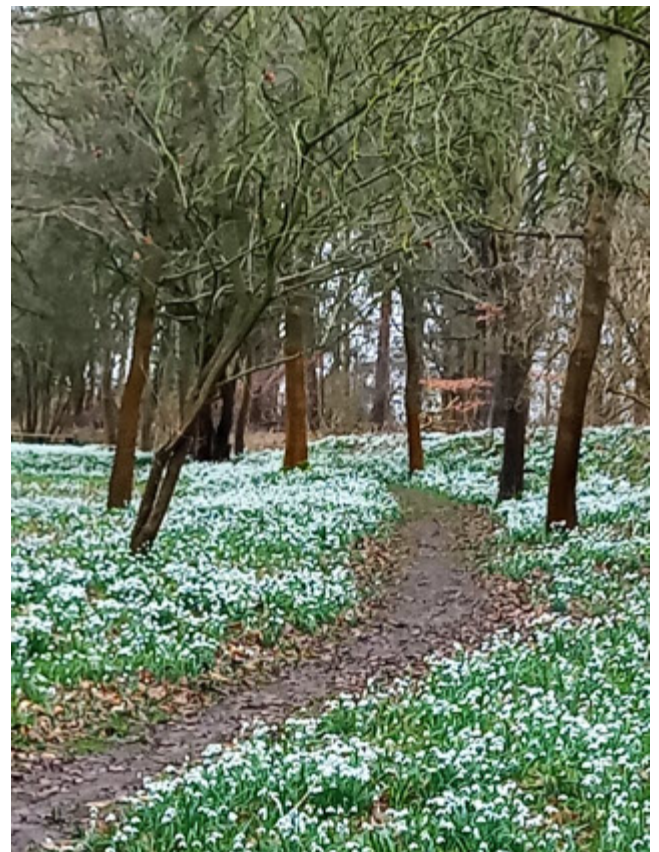
We had a great trip to see the new production of Starlight Express in the specially designed Starlight Auditorium at Wembley Park.

Our brilliant seats were in the first class carriages set around the central stage. The skaters whizzed around and above us at a fast speed, which made it an exciting afternoon!

Andrew Lloyd Webber's music and songs enhanced the experience and we all came out with the lyrics of 'Light at the end of the tunnel' ringing in our heads.

If you haven't seen it, it is highly recommended.

Margaret Knock



Snowdrops at Daws Hall

Opportunity to learn, enjoy and play Mah Jong

Mah Jong is a tile-based game, developed in China and now played across the world. Four players use the tiles to create different combination of hands to score points and win the game. It is fun and has the right mix of luck and skill. Blackbourne U3A has two long standing Mah Jong groups.

Having moved to a new home the Mah Jong II group can now welcome new members who may have played the game before or are beginners. The group meets in the morning on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month in the Bowden meeting room, New Green Centre Thurston. The group is a lively bunch and, although competitive, the game is played in good spirit. If you are interested in joining, please email Jerry Massey at masseyjerry@hotmail.com.



The Mah Jong group at the Thurston New Green Centre

The group's move to the New Green Centre was only possible with the help of the U3A Committee who kindly purchased 6 card tables for use by the group. This generous support means the U3A now has 6 soft top card tables stored at New Green that can be used by new or existing groups for card and other games. They may not be suitable for craft-based activities. If this opportunity is of interest to you, please email Geri Collingwood the Interest Groups co-ordinator at gericollingwood@hotmail.co.uk

Items and pictures for the newsletter should be sent to bryann@brysuward.plus.com

Flower Arranging

This is a photo of the Spring flower arrangements we did for our March meeting
We meet on the third Monday of each month at 2pm in the Wesley Cafe, Elmswell .

Every month we have a theme to inspire us to create an arrangement, using materials we bring with us.

We have a few spaces if anyone is interested in joining us.

Tina Taylor



Short walks Group

The March walk was about 3.5 miles long and took in the Culford estate. Led by Sue Ward it started from West Stow church, passing in front of the school to reach Culford church before turning back to cross the iron bridge and pass the lake to complete the circle



U3A websites

National u3a website.

<https://www.u3a.org.uk>

East of England region

<https://eastofengland.u3asite.uk>

East of England Regional Monthly Bulletin

<https://eastofengland.u3asite.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-03-E-of-E-Bulletin.pdf>