



Newsletter

Affiliated to the Third Age Trust
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From your Chairman,

It seems like a lifetime, but it is less than two years since we all thought that Corona was fizzy stuff we used to drink out of bottles when we were kids. In January 2020 the big news was the departure of Harry and Meghan from these shores, but then the arrival of a nasty virus took over the headlines and has had a dramatic effect on all of our lives ever since.

Along with many other aspects of our lives, BU3A was put on hold, and only recently resumed some semblance of normality, as we have been able to hold some actual meetings and meet up with old friends and fellow members. We have been fortunate in that we have had some really good speakers on light-hearted topics, which helped to lift us out of the doom and gloom. This is in no way to detract from the sterling efforts of Andrew, whose virtual meetings kept us from being totally out of touch, and Group Leaders who have gone to great lengths to continue activities when safe to do so.

At the time of writing we are not yet out of the woods, but hopefully we can continue to meet at Thurston, and interest groups can meet as long as we remain vigilant and observe sensible precautions.

And now for the good news. I am delighted to be able to report that we have had one or two members come forward to express interest in joining the BU3A Committee. However, as at least six of the Committee (including Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary) must stand down at the March AGM, we still need more in order to keep BU3A up and running. I am sure there are those of you out there who could do a good job, so do come and talk to any Committee member for an informal chat if you feel you could help.

May I wish you all the Happiest Christmas and New Year that you can have under the present circumstances, and I look forward to seeing you all soon.

With best wishes, Peter Lester

Interest Groups

Hello from me Liz Morgan, to all our Members!

It is lovely to be back to some kind of normal even if this is a new normal for many!

To update you, some of our Groups managed to stay in touch during our long break, even if not as regularly as before the Pandemic. A few managed to meet outside once allowed, such as the walking groups but on a smaller scale and the German Appreciation group met online.

A strange time for us all of course but while the Zoom lectures kept some of us going, it was lovely to meet in person at the September meeting. September also marked the re-starting of many groups and while there is some caution, I must say for me, it has been wonderful to play Mah Jong again.

So most Groups are now up and running which is great news!

Unfortunately, 3 Groups have closed due to the stepping down of Group Leaders who have provided so many good trips and visits of interest for us over many years. I thank them most sincerely for all their hard work. New leaders have not been found and hence those groups – Garden Visits, Art Appreciation and Church Visits have closed. But if anyone or indeed several people, would like to re-start them, then there is a lot of help and advice that can be accessed. If 2 or 3 members shared the role of organising a group then this becomes less onerous on everyone....just a thought!

In better news, we have a new Flower Arranging Group starting up very shortly as plans are made as to the timings, venue etc to suit all members of the group. A small Christmas arrangement is being planned I believe to start things off!

A Wine Appreciation and Gourmet Group is also possible with a Group leader ready and willing. To date, insufficient numbers have come forward so it is currently unviable. But I am hopeful, as more members have confidence in mixing and getting out in the New Year that this will be able to start.

To our new members especially, do look at the website and there you will find details of the groups and who to contact. Local History has recently lost a few members so I know there are vacancies in that group.

If I can offer any help or advice on forming a new Group or anything else to do with our Interest Groups then please contact me. My details are on the website and on your programme cards.

Best wishes everyone and I hope to see you soon!

Liz Interest Group Coordinator

Monthly Lectures

10.00am at New Green Centre

Tuesday 4 January

The Burston School Strike

Ann May

Monday 7 February

Gone Gongoosling for Beginners.

Life on the Canals

Neil Sadler

Monday 7 March

Illusions and Delusians

Professor Alex Carter

**This meeting will be preceded by
the
Annual General Meeting**

Social History Group

Following changes of arrangements at New Green Centre it has become necessary for the Social History Group to change the meeting date to the third **THURSDAY** of each month at 10.00am.

The change has meant the loss of some members due to conflicts of interest and the group would welcome new members. For further details contact Laurie Marshall on 01359 241859.

My Life as a Bluebird Girl

Jane Hoggar was our speaker for September – the first “live” lecture since March 2020.

This was a light-hearted ramble through the career of a very keen wannabe ballerina and a look at the life of Margaret Kelly, Miss Bluebird herself.

Margaret Kelly was born in Dublin before the First World War. Her parents left her with the local priest but never returned for her. He placed her with Mary Murphy, a spinster who made her money from dress making. A doctor suggested Margaret have ballet lessons to strengthen her frail legs and called her Bluebird. They moved to Liverpool where the dress making managed to fund dance lessons.

In her early teens she joined a team of show girls providing glamour and glitter for pantomimes, music hall and theatrical productions. She was able to send half her wages back to Mary Murphy, supporting her right up to her death.

Margaret joined a team in Berlin where she stayed several years and learnt to speak German, which would become useful later. She then covered a holiday spot at the Folies Bergère and made Paris her home. At the start of the Second World War the troupe returned to England but Margaret had in the meantime married so stayed on. She and her husband were interned but as she was Irish and from a neutral country she was released. Her husband managed to escape and she hid him in an attic for 2½ years. After the War she wanted her tall girls back so opened at the Lido with an American Company.



Jane herself had ballet lessons as a child and had an ambition to be the next Margot Fonteyn, however she was much too tall to be a ballerina. She went to a stage school in Surrey but being too tall for Pan's People or Legs and Co. she was often told to contact Miss Bluebell. However she auditioned and joined a group where the minimum height was 5ft 8ins. There were worldwide engagements at hotel cabarets and on cruise ships. Encountering a problem in Japan she ran away with a friend to Tokyo. After six months there she returned to Paris, made contact with Miss Bluebell and was hired. She said that this was the most exciting and exhausting period of her career.

Mary Dunbavin

Beyond Bucharest

Looking at the screen showing the cover of our November speaker Bob Goddard's book "Beyond Bucharest" I noted the caption which read "2 motorbikes, 12 countries, 16 borders and one helluva tale to tell". Bob said his talk was about two trips not just the motorcycle one described in his book.

Bob and his wife Viv are very keen supporters of a charity known as "Every Child" and they had, for some time made regular donations to support a young girl called Tamala in Malawi. They managed to persuade the head of the charity to allow them to visit Malawi to see Tamala but they needed to make their own travel arrangements. Malawi is known by the natives as "the warm heart of Africa" but is truly poverty stricken with the people walking many miles to find very contaminated water. Bob showed photos with everybody looking happy and contented in spite of their poverty.

When they eventually met Tamala they found that she had little experience of the country so they took her to Lilongwe the country's capital and gave her money to buy souvenirs. She chose mosquito nets and blankets. I wonder how many of our own grandchildren would make a similar choice.

Bob found that a borehole could be provided for about £1200 that would dramatically improve the life style of the community and for just over £2000 an additional unit could be built at the school so that the 600 students would then be able to attend school all day rather than the present half day. The finance for these two projects was found, I rather think from their own resources.

Having completed their trip to Malawi Bob and Viv decided to follow the example of Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman and make the trip to Romania on their very powerful Honda motorbikes to visit another Every Child site in Bulgaria, beyond Bucharest, hence the title of his book. So in the summer of 2005 they set off to cover over 4800 miles to cross 12 countries in weather conditions that varied from extreme heat in France and Germany to horrendous thunderstorms in Bulgaria where 62 people were killed in Bucharest in one day. They found that one night they had taken a room in a brothel. They travelled on roads where there were massive potholes. They saw some beautiful scenery and at the farthest point of their journey they saw examples of the wonderful work carried out by Every Child to enable children with learning and physical problems to be trained to live in the community.

A most interesting talk given by a very caring man.

Laurie Marshall

For Better or FAR Worse!



A very intriguing title for our October talk but all was made clear by our October speakers, Toni Neobard and Kate Broad. Both are family historians and researchers and they gave us a very informative and entertaining look at marriage through Victorian eyes.

They explained that Victorians generally married within their own social class, and there was pressure to do

so, certainly for women who were deemed “past it” by the age of 30. Of course, two could live more cheaply than one, but “living together” was completely frowned upon as it would inevitably lead to the unwanted pregnancy of an illegitimate child. We were given the example of poor unfortunate pregnant Kate with her ne’er-do-well but innocent-looking boyfriend Bill (plucked from the audience!) saying “I can’t remember”. Toni & Kate estimated that 60% of Victorian brides were pregnant when they got married, or there were certainly very many “premature” babies! There was great stigma of being a “fallen woman” and it was the local parish’s responsibility to look after the mother and child. However, strenuous efforts were generally made by the parish authorities to find the expectant child’s father who, once found, would have been jailed and sometimes forced to marry by having the wedding banns read while he was imprisoned. However, the local parish could give him a Maintenance Grant to help with his marriage expenses. Before 1926, one could not legitimise a child by marrying, nor would that child inherit anything unless specifically named. In fact, the intestacy rules did not change until 1969.

We were shown a number of Victorian newspaper reports of brides being jilted at the altar, which was a criminal act as a promise to get married was a legally binding contract, and this law did not change until 1970! There were cases of false marriage ceremonies, i.e. women being duped by unscrupulous men into believing that they were legally married.

Divorce was generally not an option because, before 1858, one needed a private Act of Parliament to divorce which was something very few people could do. Men had to prove

adultery, but women had to prove adultery plus several other reasons to divorce. Some husbands resorted to selling their wives, although this was never legal.

We were then told about the secret of a happy marriage – the record would appear to be one Welsh couple who had been married for 77 years. Still continued to this day, Great Dunmow in Essex holds an annual competition to find the happiest married couple, for which the prize is a Dunmow Flich (side of bacon). Such honorary titles were awarded to Prince Andrew & Sarah Ferguson as well as Prince Charles & Diana Spencer – with hindsight, neither of these were perhaps warranted.

The current legal age to marry used to be 14 for boys and 12 for girls but Bramwell Booth (of the Salvation Army) and other reformers campaigned to increase the age of consent to present-day levels which are 16 with parents’ consent, or 18 without consent.

The church gave a number of rules and regulations about prohibited marriages (Cannon Law), most of which were taken into civil law in due course. We were shown examples from home and abroad of such prohibited marriages, with one Creeping St Peter example being of the Squirrels, John and Fanny. John Senior was in his 80s while his bride Fanny was in her late teens, but at that time the Census showed 21-year old John Junior also living in the same household. John Snr. died soon after fathering his first child with Fanny, after which she married John Jnr. who was John Snr’s grandson so this subsequent marriage was deemed prohibited. For this Fanny was jailed for one month, while John Jnr. received no punishment at all, and it was always wondered if John Snr. was actually the father of Fanny’s children or had it been John Jnr. all along!

We were then regaled with the story of Gloucester Gale, bigamist extraordinaire, who married at least 12 women, for which he was imprisoned for some considerable time.

Examples of advice for Victorian married men were, amongst others, “no impure conversation” and “no politics” to be discussed with your wife, and for married women it was (paraphrased) “lie still in bed and make no noise” when your husband approaches the marital bed in the darkened bedroom, with the hope that he would trip over something and therefore injure himself before he could do the “deed”!!

Stella Chamberlin

The 2021 AGM, delayed from March, was held prior to the lecture meeting on 4 October.

Some 100 members were in attendance and there were 16 apologies. Chairman Peter Lester expressed his thanks to all the committee and convenors for keeping our U3A as active as possible during lockdown and to the members for their support including the Zoom lectures. We now have 543 paid up members.

Secretary Helen Taylor confirmed that the present committee would continue until the next AGM in March 2022. Sue Adams, having been proposed and seconded, is an additional member. However new committee members will be required in March as many will be standing down having completed their three years (or more).

Brenda Last, treasurer, stated that there was a healthy balance and the accounts are available on the website. Grant Elliot is reappointed as Examiner.

Under “Any other business” it was stated that the current “tea ladies” will retire after the December meeting so volunteers are sought for this important task at the monthly lecture meetings.

Liz Morgan, Interest Groups’ Coordinator announced that the Church Crawling, Garden Visits and Art appreciation groups have closed down. Anyone interested in reopening these should contact her. However two new groups are set to go – Flower Arranging and Wine Appreciation/gourmet.

A walk in Wyverstone with some history thrown in

They say nothing has happened in Wyverstone since the Domesday Survey, or has there?



On September 2 a somewhat grey day saw a small band from the Thursday Walks Group treading the paths of Wyverstone, a small parish with a population of 370. The name is said to derive from Wigfrith's Homestead. From the village hall the group walked west along Rectory Road and soon observed the Old Rectory (built circa 1830), Methodist Chapel (1899) and the first pair of council houses built in the 1920's. The group glimpsed a barn conversion that featured on Grand Designs Television show in October 2010. The site included what is thought to be the UK's smallest surviving Tudor civic building that was originally described as a stable but has now been converted into a dining room.

Then on to Mill Road (once called Parsonage Street) where the original parsonage was thought to be have been demolished in the 1850's. The walkers passed the old Plough beer house (closed in 1958) where, during World War II, the young people of the parish congregated before walking to the "drome" (Great Ashfield Airfield) to see the Glen Miller band perform. The walkers of 2021 followed the same footsteps passing the site of the original bomb dump for the airfield. Nearby was a field where thousands of animals were slaughtered, especially horses returning from the Great War.

The group turned north along Hundred Lane, which marked the boundary between the Hartismere and Blackbourne Hundreds and the old East and West Suffolk County Councils. A short break was taken at the cross roads of Hundred Lane with Kiln Lane, a spot where some local people will not walk after dark as it is said to be haunted!

We then traversed a short part of Kiln Lane towards Potash Lane. Nearby on 19 May 1955 an F-84 Thunderstreak jet fighter had crashed after taking off from Shepherds Grove (Stanton) airfield. After crossing Potash Lane it was but a short walk back to the village hall along footpaths where evidence has been found of the Romans walking through the same landscape.

A lovely walk where little snippets of Wyverstone's history were shared and yes, some interesting things have happened in this small parish since Domesday!

Bill Blackaby

Educational Visits

The following visits are proposed for 2022. More details will be available at the monthly lecture meetings where reservations may be made, accompanied by payment.

The Tower of London

Monday 28 February

National Memorial Arboretum

Monday 23 May

Orford Castle and Orford Ness

Monday 22 August

Norwich Castle

Monday 28 November

2022 pocket diaries



If you have not yet bought your next year's diary now is your chance. Helen, our secretary, has ordered some U3A diaries for 2022 at a

cost of £3.50 each. If you would like one please let her know.

They will be available at December's lecture at New Green Centre or contact Helen 01359 251625 or 07757 404198



Wishing our readers a Very Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year