



Newsletter

Affiliated to the Third Age Trust
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Summer 2021

From your Chairman

It was third time lucky for the BU3A Committee at our recent socially-distant meeting in the open air at Nowton Park, as the weather was warm and sunny, rather than the wind and rain which accompanied our previous two meetings. Let's hope this was an omen for better times ahead for us all.

The main topic for discussion was our future at Thurston New Green, as a certain amount of doubt had arisen regarding our monthly bookings there. However, I am glad to report that at a meeting with their management attended by John and Brenda it transpires that there needs to be very little change from what has gone before in that the kitchen will still be available to us and that improved ventilation will be provided in the main hall. With this in mind your Committee decided that (subject to any changing Government guidelines) we will aim to re-commence our monthly meetings at Thurston in September, with the delayed AGM to take place in October. The present Officers and Committee have all agreed to stay on until the following AGM in March. This, of course, will allow 6 months for the never-ending search for volunteers to fill these vacancies to continue.

Our Lecture Secretary, Bernadette, has already put together a programme of speakers for the next year, details of which will be sent out during August together with the new membership cards. Also just to remind you that Liz Morgan is available to answer any queries that Interest Group leaders may have, likewise Andrew Adams can answer any problems re membership and subscriptions.

I would like to place on record my appreciation of everyone's efforts during this difficult time, particularly to Andrew for his great work in organising the Virtual meetings, to the Membership who have supported them by their attendance, and the Interest Group leaders who have striven to keep their groups active in one way or another.

Finally my grateful thanks to the Committee who have worked so hard over the past year or so to ensure that the BU3A does not wither on the vine, and to our Membership, without whom there would be no BU3A at all.

With best wishes and the hope that we can all meet again soon,

Peter Lester, Chairman BU3A

The Committee would like to welcome our new members who have joined. Please contact Interest Group leaders to express an interest even if those groups are full. If any members would like to start a new group let Liz Morgan know and she will advise how to get started!

Thanks to all who pay on standing order for their subscriptions as this does save a lot of work for our Treasurer and a reminder to those who have not paid yet that the last date to send your subscription to Brenda is the 31st July! After that we will presume you do not wish to remain a member and will remove your details from our data.

As Peter mentioned above, the committee plan to meet mid August and send out the membership cards and programme by post (or hand delivered).

Our delayed AGM will be 4th October this year and will resume the normal date next year being the first Monday in March 2022. By then we hope to have new volunteers to help on the committee as the only two remaining committee members will be Brenda and Andrew who will not be able to continue on their own! Looking forward to seeing everyone in September when we meet again!

Best wishes,

Helen Taylor (Secretary)

Monthly Lectures

Starting promptly at 10.00am
Coffee served until 9.45am

Monday 6 September

My Life as a Bluebell Girl

Jane Hoggar

Monday 4 October

AGM followed by:

For Better or Far Worst

Toni and Kate

Monday 1 November

Beyond Bucharest

A motor bike ride through eastern europe

Bob Goddard

Monday 6 December

The Origins of Surnames

Charlie Haylock

A Policeman's lot... can be quite an interesting one

ON 12 April, the first day of step two in the Coronavirus Roadmap, about 60 members attended the monthly lecture via Zoom. Before the talk members enjoyed a chat with each other and John Light welcomed new U3A members. Our Chairman, Peter Lester, referred to the sad death on Friday 9 April of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh at the age of 99. He will be remembered by us all.

John Light introduced the speaker, Neil Sadler who had a career of 30 years in the police force, starting in Bognor Regis. Neil had warrant number 006 which gave many people a chance to comment on him just missing out on being James Bond 007. The 006 warrant number was passed on to Neil's daughter who is now the target of the same string of comments.

When Neil first joined the police the standard police vehicle was a Morris Minor 1000, a car owned by many U3A members. Such a model is now of some great value which is good news for one of our members who still owns one.

Neil played a number of theme tunes from TV police series including "Z Cars", "The Sweeney" and "Hawaii Five-o". These tunes refreshed the memories of his audience and would have provided good audience participation from a live audience at New Green Centre rather than a muted Zoom audience. We were also shown some actors who had starred as policemen in these and other series.

As a police sergeant Neil was called out by a constable to a road accident where the constable had written off his police car by running into the back of a milk cart. Following this event the constable decided that he was not suited to being a police driver and resigned from the force. He then set up as a driving instructor and on the side of his car he had painted "Police trained Driver". He reckoned this was good advertising!

We were able to compare the uniform and equipment of a police constable in Neil's early career to that worn and used today.

This talk, light and easy, was ideal material for a cold spring morning.

Laurie Marshall

A Dairy Farmer's Wife

JANE BARNES, our speaker on Zoom for May, gave an interesting talk about her family's farm.

The farm is now being run by the fourth generation. It was originally a mixed farm in the centre of a village run by her husband's grandfather. Later it was split between the two sons into a dairy farm and an arable farm. The family still live in the village but the actual dairy farm has moved out of the village into a new building with its own infrastructure, so that milk tankers can have easy access. The 400 acre farm is split into many 5 acre paddocks with the cows being turned out into a fresh paddock every day. The cows are solely fed on grass in summer and hay and silage in winter, but are fed cow cake whilst being milked.

The new building covers a large area including the milking parlour, housing for the cattle in winter with 200 cubicles supplied with cow mattresses made from recycled tyres. There is also a classroom for demonstrations. They have their own water supply from a spring on the farm, the water being pumped to a tower. The main cost is electricity. Milking takes place twice a day with 48 cows being milked at a time. When the cow has given her milk there is an automatic cluster remover and the milking machine switches off automatically when not in use.

The herd is a mixture of Friesian and Ayrshire cows and some cross breeds of the two. Calving takes place twice a year, half in spring and half in autumn. The calves spend 48 hours with the cow and then are fed twice a day with powder mix. The bull calves are sold on but the heifers remain on the farm. All the milk goes to make Stilton Cheese at the Long Clawson Dairy, which is a co-operative owned by the local dairy farmers.

We were encouraged to support the British dairy industry and reminded that whole milk was 96% fat free. The lecture ended with a recitation of the poem "Lament of the Artificially Inseminated Cow".

Further information can be found on Facebook at Farmer Barnes Dairy.

Mary Dunbavin

Wild life Watching



What have our members been up to during Lockdown?

Probably all of us have spent time out walking for exercise and appreciating our close surroundings with more time spent in our gardens.

At first members were sharing their daily findings through photographs and text. I would then collate them to share with all members once a month. After some time ZOOM arrived and in April this year we held our first Zoom meeting with a quiz. This was followed with a further meeting and Quiz in May.

Here are some tasters for you.

- Which mammal can truly fly?
- A honey bee has how many eyes?
- Name the fastest bird in the world.

Answers on back page

We arranged to have our first meeting outside for 16 months in June at Knettishall Heath but unfortunately the weather wasn't kind to us. Our next meeting on July 15th is at Bradfield Woods.

Angela Lee

The Story of a Suffolk Bevin Boy

OUR June speaker, Barbara McElroy, is the Archivist and Treasurer of the National Bevin Boys Association, having become interested in this subject because her father served as a Bevin Boy.

There was a great shortage of miners at the start of the second world war because the government of the day had not classified mining as a 'reserved occupation', so that many of the miners (particularly the younger ones) left their jobs to sign up for military service. Once this mistake was realised, the Minister of Labour & National Service, Ernest Bevin, devised the scheme in 1943 whereby men were conscripted by a monthly impartial ballot to become miners, even though most of them had absolutely no experience of nor wish to do this work. These "Bevin boys", aged 18 to 24, came from a cross-section of society and some, like Barbara's father from Bulmer near Sudbury, came from very rural and sheltered lives, never having travelled out of their village. However, very few exceptions were made so the boys had no choice but to start their initial four-week above-ground training in what was then a very dangerous occupation in terrible conditions with no mechanisation in the privately-owned mines. The government did try to get experienced miners to return to the job but most did not as military pay and conditions were far better than they had experienced in the mines. To begin with, nearly 22,000 somewhat reluctant Bevin Boys were recruited and, if they refused, they were imprisoned, initially for three months, but it could be for the duration of the war if they still refused to take up the 'offer' of mining.

The usual training for a miner would have been eighteen months, but the Bevin Boys trained for a total of just six weeks, which included building them up physically as it was a very demanding manual job. Barbara's father started at the Creswell Colliery in Derbyshire, where overalls were provided for the initial training but had to be returned at the end of the six-week period. However, experienced miners told the boys that, because of the extreme heat and working conditions in the mines, overalls would not be required – most of the miners worked semi-naked.

The majority of boys lived in mining hostels (mostly Nissen huts) but some had to search for local lodgings with sympathetic householders. Often they had no showers to clean themselves after their long shifts underground (48-hour weeks over six days), just tin baths, but at least most had extra rations and were well

fed for this hard physical work. They had to pay for their spartan accommodation, laundry, own clothes and equipment, some food and union membership – all this from their ration coupons. They were provided with a compressed-cardboard helmet and steel toe-capped boots.

Because Barbara's father had some knowledge of horses, he was put in charge of the pit ponies which was not a popular job as it meant walking the ponies up to seven miles underground to the coalface each day for the start of the shift, rather than riding on the mine's mini railway. The ponies lived down in the mines, only coming above ground for one week of the year for their holiday, after which it was difficult to persuade them to return underground – perhaps understandably.

After three months, the boys were usually asked to join a gang of miners, and Barbara's father became a "ripper" which involved setting the explosives at the coalface – a dangerous job but with better pay! Generally, most Bevin Boys were treated well by the experienced miners and some stayed on after the war, as did Barbara's father who remained until January 1948 when he received the official notice that he could stop. By this time, about 48,000 boys had been recruited under this scheme.

The National Coal Board was set up in 1947, after which conditions improved, and the Bevin Boys Association started in 1989 with 60 active members, and still remains today. However, it was not until 2008 that the Bevin Boys Veteran Badge was devised and awarded to the few surviving members, and in 2013 the Bevin Boy commemorative plaque was unveiled at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire.

Barbara felt that, generally, the boys were treated very shabbily by the government, which did not even retain the paperwork and figures of the boys' active war work in the mines, and they always remained classified as civilians, so were awarded no military honours or pensions. Ernest Bevin himself was reviled throughout the war, although he had voted to class miners as a reserved occupation (but was out-voted), and he himself came from a very poor background. However, while many of the boys never spoke of their wartime mining experience, some did by drawing, writing and speaking about this, and kept in touch with their fellow Bevin Boys throughout their lives. There is now a Mining Art Gallery in Bishop Auckland with some of their artwork.

Stella Chamberlin

Walking Groups

The Thursday and Friday longer walking groups have started again as has the Friday short walks. If you would like to join either of the longer groups please contact the convenor. The short walks group is full however.

The following comments from Sylvie Marshall sum up the feelings of all three groups.

The short walks group restarted in July. A small but resolute group. It was so good to meet and catch up with people who we had not seen for many months. Stella led us on a very relaxing and pretty walk around the Wetherden countryside. After being isolated for so long, it was so good to feel comfortable in a group of friends once more. We are now planning a programme for our future monthly walks for the remainder of this year and the next. Our membership is currently full, but please contact me if you would like to be placed on the waiting list.

THE GREAT BRITISH ECCENTRICS

THE 5 July Zoom meeting speaker, Paul Robbins, confirmed my thought that this country has been covered with eccentrics right through the ages to the present time and in his opinion this would be one subject where the United Kingdom would be unchallenged World Champions.

The talk covered a number of truly eccentric people many of whom were previously unknown to me.

One example was John “Mad Jack” Mytton, who like many other true eccentrics came from a wealthy family and managed to squander huge amounts of money but undoubtedly enjoyed life. He went to Cambridge University and took 2,000 bottles of port with him. In order to gain election to parliament he spent £10,000 paying each voter £10 for their support. Not money well spent as he did not stand for re-election. He was very interested in horse racing and horses and on one occasion rode a horse up the staircase at a hotel, onto the landing and then jumped the horse over the balcony and rode out through the window.

A modern eccentric, blessed with instant humour, was Spike Milligan famous for his appearances in The Goon Show and his books and poems. In 1994 he received, at the British Comedy Awards, a “Lifetime Achievement Award” and suggested that as he had not

appeared on television for over ten years this was probably a golden handshake. Jonathon Ross read a letter of praise from Prince Charles (himself an avid Goons fan) and Spike intervened to say “Little grovelling bastard”.

I would not consider Her Majesty The Queen as an eccentric but she obviously has a great sense of humour. There was an occasion when the Queen was walking in the grounds at Balmoral with a member of her security staff. On seeing two Japanese tourists the Queen went up to them and asked what they were doing and was told that they were hoping to meet someone who knew the Queen. She told them that they should speak to her security guard who had met the Queen often and knew her very well. The idea of the Japanese tourists going home with pictures of themselves with someone “who knew the Queen” when it was indeed the Queen who had actually taken the photographs of them was indeed very funny if not actually eccentric.

An interesting talk which would have been much better with a live audience so that Paul could have heard us laughing and been able to fully appreciate our enjoyment.

Laurie Marshall

QUIZ GROUP



The quizzers are very keen to resume their sessions on the first Wednesday afternoon of each month, so we are hoping to re-start on

Wednesday 1 September at 2pm prompt.

This will be at a **new venue** – Elmswell’s brand new **WESLEY HALL** complex, in School Road, IP30 9EE (opposite the Fire Station). It has an on-site car park and is also easily reached from the 384-5 bus stop and train station with a short walk on level ground.

We take turns at being the Quiz-setter, so enjoy a great variety of topics and questions; of course, the Quiz-setters are always right, even when they are occasionally wrong! We generally have teams of four, with attendees randomly allocated so that the same team does not win each month. Winning team members are awarded a small (and insignificant!) prize, but we do not really meet for that, more just for the fun of gently exercising those ‘little grey cells’ in a friendly and sociable atmosphere.

I would be grateful to hear from those quizzers who have not yet replied to my earlier e-mail to confirm whether or not they will be returning to us and, if any new members would like to join our monthly quizzing sessions, please contact me. There’s an initial once-only £2 fee to join the Quiz Group, and then £1.50 per person at each attendance. At the half-time break, optional hot or cold drinks and yummy cakes are available from the on-site café at £1.50 each, or bring your own refreshments.

Stella Chamberlin – Group Leader

01359-242601, or e-mail stellachamberlin@yahoo.co.uk

Theatre Visits

Philip Webber, organiser of these popular outings, advises that he does not intend to look at booking new shows until the autumn. Several members are not confident to go to the theatre yet and he needs to see how things go once lockdown restrictions have been lifted.

However, the postponed trip to the open air theatre at Tolethorpe Hall to see *The Importance of being Earnest* will go ahead on Sunday 8 August. A 53 seater coach has been booked but only about 37 will be going so that there is room for social distancing.

As there may be room for a very few more please contact Philip (01359 270499) if you are interested.

Answers to Wildlife Quiz

a) Bat b) Five c) Peregrine falcon