



Affiliated to the Third Age Trust



Newsletter

Issue 87

December 2015

From your Chairman

WELCOME to our winter newsletter. I have some good things to report – the SGM went well and our new constitution was agreed by those present after a very good discussion session; this clears the way for another attempt at charity status. Many thanks for all those who stayed behind for the meeting. Also in October we had the Interest Groups Exhibition which again went very well and we have had some very positive feedback. Please do contact us if you have anything to add. One of our great strengths as a U3A is our wealth of interest groups – long may it continue.

We are getting very near to the end of 'our year' and we are facing the increasingly difficult task of people standing for committee. Our treasurer, John, is approaching the end of his term and must stand down in March. Without a treasurer we cannot function as a U3A, so please, please, please think about helping us; if you don't think it is for you perhaps you know someone who would be able to step into John's shoes? We are also looking for other committee members – does anyone have a hankering to be vice-chairman for example, or chairman? Now would be good time to come aboard as all the major roles are filled and you could spend the rest of the year 'observing' and seeing how we work. Any committee member will be pleased to talk to you.

It just remains for me to wish members a very Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.

Anne Ling

The Eventful Life of Elizabeth de Burgh

JENNIFER Ward, our September speaker, related the fascinating life of Elizabeth de Burgh (also known as Elizabeth of Clare), who had significant connections with our part of the world.

Born in 1295, the youngest daughter of the Earl of Gloucester and niece of King Edward II, Elizabeth married three times and had three children, one by each husband. Arranged marriages were quite normal in Elizabeth's day and at the age of 13 she married John de Burgh, son of the Earl of Ulster, and moved to Ireland. Having given birth to a son (William) when she was 17, she became a widow one year later when her husband was killed in a minor skirmish.

Her uncle, Edward II, ordered her to return to England to marry one of his supporters, but instead she eloped with Theobald II de Verdun, thereby incurring the wrath of Edward. However, six months after marrying de Verdun he died, and eight months after his death she gave birth to her first daughter, Isabella.

At this point Edward II took matters into his own hands and married Elizabeth to Sir Roger D'Amory, a knight in his service. Following her marriage to D'Amory she gave birth to her second daughter, Elizabeth, at the age of 21, but was soon to become a widow again when D'Amory died of his wounds sustained at the hands of royalist forces at the Battle of Boroughbridge in 1322.

Monthly Meetings

Start promptly at 10.00am
Coffee and biscuits are served until
9.45am

Monday 4 January

The Stone Age brought to Life

Will Lord

Monday 1 February

GM Crops – Where are we now?

Professor Wendy Harwood

Monday 7 March

AGM

followed by **The Sutton Hoo**

Stone

Brian Ansell

Following D'Amory's death, prompted by Hugh Despenser, her brother in law and also the King's new favourite, Elizabeth was briefly imprisoned at Barking Abbey and forced to cede her lordship of Usk to Despenser. Subsequently, following Despenser's execution and Edward II's exile and succession by his son, Edward III, the lordship of Usk was restored to her by her friend, Queen Isabella, and from 1330 until her death in 1360 Elizabeth lived the life of a very great lady.

She styled herself 'Lady of Clare' after her principal estate in Suffolk and also had residences at Anglesey Priory in Cambridgeshire, Great Bardfield in Essex and Aldgate in London. Although she enjoyed a lavish lifestyle, with a household of 100 servants, she was extremely devout and when visiting others often combined this with personal pilgrimages. Elizabeth was also a major benefactress, listing her alms giving and patronage towards her favourite religious houses at Clare, Anglesey, Walsingham and Denny Abbey. Her most important and long lasting foundation was Clare College, Cambridge, for which she obtained the total patronage and changed its status to support various charities.

In summary, it can be said that few individuals can claim to match the turbulent and eventful life of Elizabeth de Burgh!

Howard Chandler

Fungi Foray



IN October the Wild Life Watchers, led by Dave Shearing, spent a morning on Knettishall Heath searching for fungi that are at their best in the autumn.

Returning to Dave's wildlife garden to enjoy hot soup and jacket potatoes, the group attempted to name the forty different types picked. Even with the help of several books this was very difficult and no more than half were identified.

John Morris

Older members will remember John, who died earlier this year, for the educational visits he arranged for several years. He also enjoyed walking and led walks for the Thursday walking group.

For many years he was a very active member of Newmarket Ramblers. Some of his favourite walks were along the Peddars Way so it was fitting that, in October, members of BU3A joined the Ramblers at Knettishall Heath for a walk, led by Phil Prigg, during which John's ashes were scattered by the Peddars Way near the bridge over the Little Ouse. The spot was also thought suitable for a seat which is planned to be erected in John's memory.

Scott, Amundsen and the Race to the South Pole

THE age of science, adventure and daring-do at the beginning of the 20th century gave us two very different explorers, namely, Englishman, Captain Robert F. Scott (1868-1912) and Norwegian, Roald Amundsen (1872-1928). The South Pole was their goal. Robert Burridge, our October speaker, showed how their preparation contributed to either success or failure.

Amundsen, a born explorer, as a teenager accompanied Fridtjof Nansen on the first cross-country trek of Greenland. In 1903 he traversed the North-West Passage and learned Arctic survival skills from the Innuits, such as use of dogs for pulling sleds and as meat, wearing animal skins instead of heavy woollen parkas and using grass for boot insulation. His ship, the Fram, had a revolutionary cone-shaped hull to survive pack ice. He carried no weighty tinned food but frozen meat and fruit which staved off scurvy, etc. To survive the trek to the South Pole Amundsen left food at each campsite for the return trip. On 14 December 1911 Amundsen reached the South Pole, 34 days before Scott. All Amundsen's party survived the expedition.

Captain Scott, this being his second Antarctic exploration, valued science above common-sense. His ship, the Terra Nova, was a wooden ex-whaling ship and early in the voyage developed problems both with pack ice and bilge pumps. His sleds were heavy, pulled by a combination of dogs, Manchurian ponies and tractors. Both tractors and ponies fell through the ice. The expedition manhandled sleds without skis, suffered frostbite and ultimately starvation – there were no survivors.

It seems 'good luck' equals meticulous preparation whereas 'bad luck' is neglect of precautions. Captain Scott and his team were posthumously fêted by the nation. Amundsen, conqueror of the South Pole, was hardly mentioned. At least the Fram was built by an Englishman – Colin Archer!

Carole Curtis

Wicken Fen

MEMBERS were given an insight by Peter Green, a National Trust volunteer speaker, into the history and current-day conservation of the first nature reserve obtained by the National Trust. The purchase of four acres at Wicken Fen in 1899 for £10 was partly due to the vision of social reformer, Octavia Hill, who wished to give "the life-enhancing virtues of pure earth, clean air and blue sky" to the urban poor.

Wicken Fen is in a low-lying wetland area of East Anglia formed after the Ice Age, being mostly peat over gault clay with chalk islands. Hence Ely, 'the Ship of the Fens' is perched defensively on a chalk island. The rivers Ouse, Nene and Welland drain through the fens into The Wash and the Romans harnessed these waterways into navigable lodes. Over the centuries these lowland marshes were not only a safe haven for Fenlanders but a major trading area. If you could stand the mosquitos there was an abundance of wildfowl, eels, reeds and peat.

The dissolution of the monasteries allowed the Earl of Bedford to purchase most of the fen areas. He employed a Dutch engineer, Vermuyden, to drain them for agricultural land. The Fen Tigers protested in vain for their boggy land but profit not biodiversity was on the Earl's mind. During the last two centuries dedicated organisations have acquired large tracts of fen farmland.

Peter told us that the long-term plan is to purchase the land between Wicken Fen and Anglesey Abbey and restore it from its denuded state to a wild but managed landscape with flowering meadows, sedge and reed beds. Grazing herds of Highland cattle and Polish Konik ponies help maintain this diverse range of habitats.

Octavia Hill would have thrilled to see walkers, riders and pond-dippers enjoying the managed wilderness of Wicken Fen.

Carole Curtis

Pensioners and Poppies

THE Educational Visit on 28 September was to [The Royal Hospital Chelsea](#), home to the Chelsea Pensioners, where we were taken on a tour of the grounds and buildings by two of the pensioners in their famous scarlet coats. On that day some of the pensioners were being moved into new accommodation, consisting of a study, bedroom and en-suite bathroom, a far cry from the original small berths situated on long corridors.

The Hospital was founded by King Charles II in 1682 as a home for soldiers who were unfit for further duty either because of injury or old age. The criteria now for admission is that the pensioner has been a serving member of the army, is single, 65 years of age or older and in receipt of an Army or War Disability Pension which is surrendered upon entry. If not in receipt of such a pension they pay £175 per week as a contribution towards their living costs. Before moving into the Royal Hospital there is a four day trial period to see if the new members are suitable and if the new way of life suits them.

The Hospital is now home to around 300 British ex soldiers and amongst their number are seven female veterans, the first being Dorothy Hughes who joined in 2007. The Hospital records show that another woman, Mrs Christina Davies, was admitted circa 1717, having been awarded a pension for her service in the army and wounds she received in the service of the King. She died in 1739 and was buried at the Hospital with full military honours.

We were shown around the Great Hall, where all meals are taken, and the Chapel, both of which were designed by Sir Christopher Wren.

Pensioners are entitled to come and go from the Hospital as they please and are permitted to wear civilian clothing wherever they travel. Within the Hospital and surrounding area they are encouraged to wear a blue uniform with a peaked cap, known as a shake. Travelling further afield and to ceremonial occasions they wear their scarlet coats with a tricorne hat and their medals, ribbons and the insignia of the rank that they reached while serving with the Armed Forces.

Chelsea Football Club has been affiliated with the Chelsea Pensioners for many years, the club's first nickname was The Pensioners and until the 1950's the club crest featured a Chelsea Pensioner.

[The Poppy Factory](#) in Richmond was our afternoon visit. Here a guide, using original films, gave an informative presentation which told the story of the origins of the poppy as a symbol of remembrance.

The Factory was established in 1922 as an independent charity to provide employment for disabled servicemen after the First World War making poppies, crosses and wreaths for the annual remembrance tide. After 90 years they remain independent with the aim of enabling wounded, injured and sick ex-Service men and women to find



paid, meaningful civilian employment. They continue to make remembrance poppies, crosses and wreaths and every November the annual Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey is organised by them.

We visited the factory floor and saw the various stages of poppy making taking place and also had the opportunity to make one of our own.

In Flanders Field, the famous poem written by Lt-Col John McRae, an army doctor, was inspired by the sight from his first aid post of a sea of wooden crosses mingling with the wild red corn poppies growing in the fields. Some years later his poem was seen in a magazine by Miss Moina Michael who lived in Georgia but adored Flanders where her ancestors lived. She can be credited with finding a way to mass produce simple silk poppies which she planned to get war widows, living in the devastated battle zones of northern France, to make and sell wholesale to veterans' associations around the world.

When Earl Haig, one of the Legion's founders, saw the poppies he was touched. The Legion signed up to the poppy and nine million were ordered for the first Poppy Day to held in Britain on 11 November 1921. They were not sold but donations were requested in exchange for a poppy.

Miss Moina Michael penned a further verse to the historic poem:



We cherish too the poppy red
That grows on fields where valour led
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies.

Linda Wells

THEATRE VISITS GROUP

We have had an interesting and varied programme of visits during 2015. We started with a production of TOP HAT at Norwich Theatre Royal, followed by MISS SAIGON at the Prince Edward Theatre in London. In the summer we had a day in Southwold to look round the Lighthouse before seeing HOW THE OTHER HALF LOVES at St Edmund's Hall and in August we went to Stratford upon Avon to see THE MERCHANT OF VENICE at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Our autumn shows have included AN INSPECTOR CALLS at the Cambridge Arts Theatre and Tchaikovsky's NUTCRACKER performed by Northern Ballet at Norwich Theatre Royal.

We are now looking at our 2016 programme. So far we have booked to see Jim Broadbent as Scrooge in A CHRISTMAS CAROL at Noel Coward Theatre and LES MISERABLES at Queen's Theatre, both in London and we are hoping to see Martin Shaw in HOBSON'S CHOICE at the Cambridge Arts Theatre on Thursday 17 March at 2.30.

Details are shown on our Interest Group web-page.

Philip Webber

UNIVERSITY CAMPUS SUFFOLK in partnership with
U3A IN SUFFOLK
presents

Professor Richard Faragher

OPEN LECTURE : WHAT IS AGEING AND WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

18 FEBRUARY 2016 17:30-20:00

Waterfront Auditorium, University Campus Suffolk

The Lecture opens for registration at 17:30 and finishes at 19:30 with refreshments.

Summary

In this lecture Richard Faragher explains what the ageing process is, why it evolved and the science which has led to our modern understanding of how a failure of healthspan maintenance mechanisms contributes to the many problems and pathologies which older people face. However, we now stand at a moment in human history where it is becoming possible to use our understanding of these mechanisms to design drugs and interventions which will improve the resistance of older people to infectious disease, potentially treat cognitive impairment and lead to healthier, happier and possibly even longer lives.

Places for this Open Lecture are free of charge and should be booked by contacting Rosemary Lury. You can either email her on www.ucsopenlectures@ucs.ac.uk, or phone 01473 273395.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS FOR 2016

These are the visits we are planning for next year. Costs and timings and to be confirmed when booking.

Monday 25 January

Barrow Boys and Bankers

With a Blue Badge Guide we have a walk around the Spitalfields and Whitechapel area followed by a visit to the Bank of England Museum in the afternoon.

Monday 21 March

Hampton Court

Palace and gardens.

Monday 23 May

Leeds Castle

Special event celebrating The Chelsea Fringe Festival with alternative floral displays.

Monday 25 July

Suffolk Cheeses and Great Blakenham Recycling Centre

Thursday 29 September

A Trip with Waverley Cruises

Leaving Harwich or Clacton for a cruise up the Thames to Tower Bridge and returning early evening by coach.

Tuesday 29 November

Brooklands Aviation and Motor Museum

To include a presentation and optional Concorde Experience.

*Linda Wells and
Maureen Morris*

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*Wishing all our readers a Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year*

