



Affiliated to the Third Age trust  
Registered Charity No. 1165448

# Newsletter

Issue 89

May 2016

*From your Chairman*

*WELCOME to our May newsletter, the weather is improving but it seems to be two steps forward and one step back at the moment, though hopefully all the April 'showers' will bring forth May flowers!*

*At the AGM in March, you elected the new committee and I was re-elected as chairman, for which I thank you. We said goodbye to Ann Baker, Interest Groups Co-ordinator and John Marshall our Treasurer. I would like to thank both of them again for their sterling service to Blackbourne U3A, we really appreciate all you have both done. We must welcome some new members to the committee – Peter Seager our new Treasurer, Derrick Haley, Stella Chamberlin has returned, this time as Vice-chairman, and Joint Interest Groups Co-ordinator together with Mary Dunbavin. I hope they will all enjoy their time on the committee, it does give a slightly different take on the U3A Vision – lifelong learning through the experience of U3A! I am also pleased that Maxine Wilde, Adrian Bond, Howard Chandler, Carol Drury, Chris Ives, Elaine James and John Sutton are with us for another year.*

*Also at the AGM, I confirmed that we had achieved charity status, our registered charity number is 1165448. Given our level of income this was something we had to do. This does mean that the committee are now trustees and we are now in the process of finding out what this means for us and for Blackbourne U3A, and what changes may be needed. At our next committee meeting on May 7th our Regional Trustee Adrian Breacker will be coming to talk to us, so we will report back to you when we know more.*

*With best wishes to you all,*

*Anne Ling*

## Monthly Meetings

Start promptly at 10.00am  
Coffee served until 9.45am

Monday 6 June

**Lady Liberty**

Geoffrey Kay

Monday 4 July

**Portable Antiquities Scheme**

Helen Geake

There is no meeting in August

Monday 5 September

**West Suffolk Hospital – the Future**

## Calling all Reporters

THE Newsletter would not be the same without the excellent reports on the lectures that Carole Curtis writes at our monthly meetings. After many years of excellent service Carole has decided to retire so we need to replace her.

This vacancy needs to be filled so if you feel able, perhaps as part of a small team on a rota basis, to write a short report of our lecture meetings please contact Maxine Wilde on maxinewilde@ymail.com.

## Membership Renewal

Members paying by Standing Order are reminded that the annual subscription of £10 per person will be taken from their account on the 1st June 2016.

If for any reason you **do not** wish to renew your membership, please cancel your Standing Order and advise me as soon as possible, by contacting me by telephone 07508 601976 or e-mail caroldrury@gmx.com so that your place can be offered to someone on the waiting list.

For those few members who pay by cash or cheque there will be no further reminders. The Treasurer Peter Seager and I will be at the lecture meetings in May, June and July to collect renewal payments. Alternatively your cheque (payable to Blackbourne U3A) can be sent by post to the address below.

**Please note that if any renewal payment has not been received by the end of July meeting, it shall be assumed that you do not wish to renew your membership and therefore your place will be offered to someone on the waiting list.**

*Carol Drury - Membership Secretary  
Nutwood Lodge, Borley Green, Woolpit, IP30 9RP*

## GM Crops – Where are we now?

WITH a projected world population growth from 7.4 billion to 9 billion in 2030, the question of feeding such growth becomes an urgent question for scientists. Professor Wendy Harwood, senior scientist leading the Crop Transformation Group at the John Innes Centre based at the Science Park, Norwich, explained how her work with cereals and brassicas might engineer tolerance to drought and salt stress in these plants.

Professor Harwood specialises in CRISPR (Clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats) gene-editing which allows rapid scientific advances in many fields, including human health. When time is of the essence there is no time to wait for nature to effect beneficial changes. As Professor Harwood said “The beauty of the CRISP technique is that it can create small changes in specific genes sufficient to stop them working. Stopping particular genes from working is one way to develop disease resistant crops for example with resistance to mildew or to produce crops without unwanted compounds including toxins. The final plants produced in this way have no additional DNA inserted so they are essentially the same plants with naturally occurring changes to genes or plants that have been bred using conventional mutation breeding methods.”

Currently, the Centre is trialling barley plants which have four times the drought resistance of their parent stock which is exciting news, especially as the Ethiopian rains have failed again and over 8 million people in that country will need food aid in 2016. The Centre is very much aware of the ‘butterfly effect’ but CRISPR gene-editing allows rapid advances using the plant's own genes. Unfortunately, a warming climate and ever-adapting and virulent plant diseases mean there is no time to wait for a boy to come along with five loaves and two fishes to feed the multitude.

*Carole Curtis*

## The Sutton Hoo Stone



FACED with tactile historical objects, don't your fingers just itch to handle their ancient surfaces? Locked away in museums these articles are too precious to be passed around. That is where our March speaker, master mason and ecclesiastical architect, Brian Ansell, is so valuable. He is tasked by museums to reproduce ancient artefacts in every detail.

When challenged to reproduce the Sutton Hoo Sceptre, which is housed in the British Museum, Brian first had to source the hard, grey stone. He discovered it was greywacke (whetstone) which may have been mined from Arcow Quarry, Yorkshire or, alternatively, it could have been a glacial irregular. Definitely not a native of Suffolk though.

Using traditional stonemason's tools and methods which would have been familiar in Anglo Saxon times, he painstakingly surveyed and carved the block of whetstone into a four-sided smooth object with a rounded knob at each end. It was found that the exceptional craftsmanship of those ancient masons achieved a perfectly balanced piece. The sceptre's centre of gravity allowed it to stand unsupported with the copper stag standing proudly at its apex. Brian's carving of the sceptre was so fine that one lunchtime the museum locked away the copy leaving the original unattended. The only difference between the two sceptres was Brian's tiny initials on his copy.

The sceptre has many unanswered questions. Who were the four intricately carved ladies decorating the staff and the four bearded warriors looking up at them? Historians speculated that the misshapen eyes in the male masks might represent Odin, who lost an eye in return for wisdom; but the mystery remains. Is it indeed a sceptre or has it another function? It could be the grandest sharpening stone for all those Viking swords or a knobkerrie to bop ones enemies!

*Carole Curtis*

## Theatre Visits

WE have had a good start to 2016 with a January visit to the Noel Coward Theatre in London to see Jim Broadbent as Ebenezer Scrooge in “A Christmas Carol”. It was an wonderful performance, supported by a cast that included puppets acting the parts of Tiny Tim and the other Cratchit children.

In March we went to Cambridge Arts Theatre to see Martin Shaw as Henry Hobson in “Hobson's Choice”. This comedy, first performed in 1915, has stood the test of time and Martin Shaw was brilliant as a domineering father of three daughters, who liked a drink or two!

In May we are going to see “Les Miserables” at the Queen's Theatre, London and to Southwold in August to see John Buchan's “The Thirty-nine Steps”.

In October we are arranging to see “Pride and Prejudice” at Norwich Theatre Royal.

*Philip Webber*

## Facebook for the Older Generation

**– for those of us who do not comprehend why Facebook exists!**

I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook, while applying the same principles.

Therefore, every day I walk down the street and tell passers-by what I have eaten, how I am feeling at the moment, what I did the night before, what I will be doing later and with whom. I give them pictures of my family, my dog, of me gardening, taking things apart in the garage, watering the lawn, standing in front of landmarks, driving round town, having lunch and doing what everyone and everybody does every day. I also listen to their conversations and give them the ‘thumbs up’ and tell them that I like them.

It works just like Facebook!

I already have four people following me ..... two police officers, a private investigator and a psychiatrist!

## The Duke of Wellington



THE speaker at our April meeting was Mark Mitchells, who gave a spirited account of the life and times of the Duke of Wellington.

Born Arthur Wellesley in Dublin in May

1769 he attended school at Eton but following the death of his father and the subsequent financial difficulties of his family he then went to Brussels. His mother worried about him, "I don't know what I shall do with my awkward son Arthur", but he enrolled in the French Royal Academy of Equitation, where he became a fine horseman, learnt French and developed a love of France.

His brother helped him to obtain a commission in the army and his first experience of fighting was at the Battle of Boxtel in 1794. Here he commanded, as Duke of York, the 33rd Regiment which held off the enemy cavalry, allowing neighbouring units to retreat safely. He understood that the failure of the campaign was due in part to the faults of the leaders and poor organisation at headquarters. He said later of his time in the Netherlands, "At least I learned what not to do and that is always a valuable lesson".

At the battle of Mallavelly, he led his men against the enemy in a line of battle of two ranks, to a gentle ridge and gave the order to fire. After firing extensive volleys, followed by a bayonet charge the enemy troops retreated. An officer at the battle of Assaye in 1803 wrote of him, "The General was in the thick of the action the whole time.....I never saw a man so cool and collected as he was". Wellesley however was troubled by the heavy number of

casualties and remarked "it was the worst battle I will ever know".

He returned to England with his brother In 1805, stopping at the island of St Helena and staying in the same building to which Napoleon would later be exiled.

In 1806, Kitty Pakenham accepted his proposal of marriage and they had two sons, but it was not a happy relationship.

He went to Portugal where he trained and armed the Portugese army to join his troops in the fight against the French in the Peninsula War. He was created Viscount Wellington after the town in Somerset. In 1813 the French were pushed out of Spain at the battle of Vitoria but the behaviour of his troops afterwards led Wellington to call them "the scum of the earth".

In 1814 Wellington was created ambassador to France and named Duke of Wellington. He lived in the British Embassy in Paris with a succession of mistresses!

Napoleon escaped from Elba, returned to Paris and the Waterloo campaign followed. The battle was Sunday 18th June 1815. The casualties were very high - 30,000 French, 20,000 English and Prussian soldiers, the injured remaining on the battlefield until they too died. Wellington said "The army never conducted itself better" but perhaps more important was a later comment, "I should have given more praise".

In 1818 he resigned from the army and took a position in the government. By 1828 he was Prime Minister. He supported Catholic emancipation in Ireland, but opposed the Reform Act of 1832. After a duel with Lord Winchilsea he was given the nickname The Iron Duke. He died in 1852 and was given a State funeral in St Paul's Cathedral.

It was said of him

"He is easy to admire, harder to like".

*Sue Prime*



## Barrow Boys and Bankers

The first Educational visit of the New Year was a tour, accompanied by two Blue Badge guides, around the Spitalfields and Whitechapel areas of London. We walked around the areas' historic buildings including streets which have been left unchanged and are often used for filming. We were able to see some of the continuing development in the vicinity, some of it not very attractive, and to see the historic churches surrounded by the new buildings.

The name Spitalfields is thought to have derived from the 12th century priory or hospital of St Mary which owned the land. Late in the 17th century an estate of well-appointed terraced houses was built to accommodate the Irish and Huguenot weavers of the silk industry. Following this industry's decline the houses were found suitable for tailoring, attracting a new population of Jewish refugees drawn to live and work in the textile industry. By the late 19th century the dwellings had degenerated into slums and the area had the dubious distinction of being the worst criminal area of London with the infamous Jack the Ripper carrying out several gruesome murders.

After years of neglect lots of these houses have been renovated and retain the many windowed roof areas which enabled the workers to see more clearly to carry out their trade. 23 Fournier Street, pictured, is a good example.



Following lunch we had a coach tour around the City known as the 'Square Mile'. This is the world's leading international financial and business centre, as well as being the most historic part, although it was preceded by the Roman's Londinium. We were able to see buildings with names linked to their shapes – the Gherkin, the Cheese-Grater and the Walkie-Talkie, nicknamed the "Walkie-Scorchie" as the reflections of the sun from the concave glass panels damaged the paintwork of the cars parked below.

After our coach tour we visited the Bank of England Museum, entry to which is free – no free samples unfortunately – but we were able to hold a gold bar, if you had strong enough wrists to lift it! The bank has a unique role in our economy, working to keep inflation steady and low, ensuring the wider financial system is stable, protected from economic shocks, and issuing banknotes.

The history of the Bank, established by Royal Charter in 1694, which is on display, is depicted in galleries around the building. Our currency was decimalised in 1971 and notes and coins of that time, along with much earlier examples are also on display. We saw the procedures taken to ensure that the counterfeiting of notes is much harder. New £5, £10 and £20 notes, made of polymer, are to be issued in 2016, 2017 and 2020 respectively. The £1 coin is due a makeover.

Although we were not able to visit the gold vaults, we watched a video presentation and learnt that each gold bar is individually numbered and weighed, 28lb or 13kg for each, stored on metal racks and transported around the vaults on fork lift trucks!

The term "Old Lady of Threadneedle Street" comes from a cartoon by Thomas Gilray in May 1797, referring to the financial crisis of the time, with the issue of paper money not backed by gold.

There was indeed an old lady of Threadneedle Street, Sarah Whitehead, who had a brother called Philip, a former employee of the bank, who was found guilty of forgery in 1811, and executed for his crime. Sarah was so shocked she became 'unhinged' and every day for the next 25 years she went to the Bank and asked to see her brother. When she died she was buried in the old churchyard that later became the bank's garden, and her ghost has been seen on many occasions in the past.

*Linda Wells*

## Hampton Court Palace and Gardens



THE second educational visit was on 21st March to Hampton Court Palace, the former home of King Henry VIII who extended and developed it in the 1520's. Subsequently throughout the centuries other royal occupants have furnished the palace with many paintings and tapestries. Set in 60 acres of formal gardens including the Privy Garden, Knot Garden, Tiltyard and Rose Garden and Great Fountain Gardens to mention just a few, the whole park covers 750 acres.

The Great Maze is reputed to be the most famous in the world and the Great Vine Vineyard was planted in 1768 by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and still produces good crops of grapes every year which are sold in the palace shops in late August/September.

There is also The Royal Tennis Court where Real Tennis is still played. Henry VIII, Charles I, William III and Prince Albert all played there.

The Palace itself is believed to be haunted by a 'screaming lady' thought to be Catherine Howard and the 'grey ghost', Dame Sybil Penn, is believed to haunt the Clock Courts. The Cumberland Art Gallery has a large number of the Queen's paintings on display and the Great Hall, which is the last and greatest Medieval Hall in England, saw the performance of Shakespeare's "King's Men" in 1603.

The Chapel Royal is a masterpiece of religious architecture with a rich colourful design in Tudor style. The gilded ceiling took two years to complete and contains a total of 60 gilded winged Angels and is one of the finest examples, in England, of a Tudor pendant-vaulted ceiling. Kings and Queens sit in the Royal pew, which contains a replica of Henry's crown. It looks down on the main body of the Chapel which is where Archbishop Cranmer handed Henry VIII the letter which accused Catherine Howard of adulterous behaviour.

The Tudor Kitchens are the largest of their era, built between 1530 and 1737. They served up to 600 people twice a day as well as preparing the royal banquets. Working in the kitchens was hot and dirty work due to the heat created by the huge fires needed to cook all the meals – one visitor in 1554 called it a 'veritable hell'.

There are so many other things to do that to mention them all would take ages. Despite a traffic holdup we had a very pleasant day, and it didn't rain!

*Linda Wells*

## Bury's Science Study Day

THIS most enjoyable and informative event, organised by Bury U3A, took place at The Apex on 16th April. It consisted of four lectures given by eminent lecturers in their respective fields.

Britain's Geology – with the help of some amazing photos and diagrams, we learnt that several thousand million years ago, before the Atlantic Ocean was formed, Britain was part of a huge land-mass situated 60° south of the equator, and has moved north at about the speed of your finger-nail growth(!) to its present position. The driving force of this movement, and our resultant wonderful landscape, is the heat rising from the magma at the earth's centre.

Next, we tried to understand that Black Holes are places where gravity is so strong that no object or light signal can escape, but that recent sophisticated equipment has been able to detect these 'invisible' holes by the way light and gravitational waves are 'distorted' in the atmosphere – incredible, and made us all feel very small.

A recent PhD student explained that there are some 925,000 different named insect species, leaving an estimated total of 2.5 – 10 million still to be found, one of which, ironically, was recently found in the garden of London's Natural History Museum. We learnt why bio-diversity matters, conservation strategies and, if we want to help climate change, we must all consider eating insects instead of meat – they are a nutritious delicacy in some countries.

It was truly fascinating to learn of the cognitive abilities of corvids (crows, jackdaws, rooks). However, a questioner was not happy that 'clever' crows were attacking his group's barn owl nests, although he was given a possible solution to this problem.

*Stella Chamberlin*



Kg walkers outside Culford School



## AGM 2016

THE meeting was well attended with 212 members present and 6 apologies received.

Anne Ling, our Chairman, outlined our achievements for the year. Membership badges are now scanned on entry to the monthly meetings and we amended our constitution at the SGM in October as a result of which we are now a registered charity. Anne thanked all members, those who served on the committee, as well as Interest Group convenors, helpers at monthly meetings and others who helped make our U3A so successful.

John Marshall presented the accounts and gave a very clear explanation of the Income & Expenditure Statements. John has retired and our new Treasurer is Peter Seager. We will have a new Examiner this year too as Grant Elliot agreed to take on this position. Anne thanked John Marshall and the retiring Examiner, Ralph Brightman, for their hard work over the previous years.

Anne Baker, our Interest Groups Convenor, has also retired from the committee, with our thanks for all her hard work last year. We are pleased to welcome three more new Committee members – Stella Chamberlin, Mary Dunbavin and Derrick Haley.

Ann Ling was elected as Chairman, Stella Chamberlin as Vice-Chairman, Peter Seager as Treasurer and Maxine Wilde as General Secretary. A list of committee members and their contact numbers is listed alongside and can also be found on our Website <http://www.blackbourne-u3a.org.uk>. Please visit this website regularly for up to date information on monthly meetings and Interest Groups.

*Maxine Wilde*

## Interest Groups' News

Following March's AGM, the Interest Groups Co-ordinator's role is being shared between Stella Chamberlin (01359 242601) and Mary Dunbavin (01359 233045), who are available to take your calls or e-mails (via the website) on any Interest Group matters or queries.

### New Group Leaders

**Scrabble** – Cynthia Goodlad,  
01449 736743 – please note changed dates.

**Local History & Beyond** – Angela Gibbs  
01359 233494

**Quiz** – Stella Chamberlin 01359 242601

**Kg Walkers** – Karen Murdoch

## ANNUAL CONVENORS' MEETING AND LUNCHEON

**Monday 20th June, 12noon – 2.30pm**  
**at the Cavendish Hall, Church Road, Thurston**

Invitations have been sent out for this, our third such meeting, to all Convenors and Group Leaders (or their Deputies) who do such an excellent job in running our many and varied interest groups, which are the backbone of our U3A and much appreciated by all members.

This is a great opportunity for all our convenors to get together and share their views on anything and everything to do with running their particular group, as well as Interest Group matters in general. The committee feels this is also a good chance to thank them for all their hard work over the past year.

Please could Convenors/Group Leaders **reply** to their invitation by **6th June** latest, and remember to wear their name badges on the day as an 'aide-memoire'.

## The new Committee

### Chairman

Anne Ling 01359 231419

### Vice Chairman

Stella Chamberlin 01359 242601

### General Secretary

Maxine Wilde 01359 230842

### Treasurer

Peter Seager 01449 673620

### Lecture Secretary

Adrian Bond 07561 295131

### Membership Secretary

Carol Drury 07508 601976

### Names Registrar and Newsletter distribution

Chris Ives 01359 231746

### Joint Interest Groups'

#### Co-ordinators

Mary Dunbavin 01359 233045

Stella Chamberlin 01359 242601

### Committee Members

Howard Chandler 01359 230404

Derrick Haley 01359 230251

Elaine James

John Sutton 01359 231419



Adverse weather forced the Short Walks group to curtail their walk from Ram Meadow but they enjoyed a cup of coffee in the Cathedral Refectory instead!

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Please send contributions for the  
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[publisher@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk](mailto:publisher@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk)

**DEADLINE IS 20th AUGUST**