



Affiliated to the Third Age Trust  
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# Newsletter

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From your Chairman

Welcome to our winter newsletter. What a miserable time we have been having with the weather but fortunately it was quite good on the Friday I attended a Suffolk and District Network meeting. What did I get from this meeting? Well, I learnt of something called MOOCs – Massive Open Online Courses . [MOOCs](#) are freely accessible and open-licensed short courses, delivered to large cohorts of learners fully online – check it out and see if there is anything to interest you there; they are free but may incur a cost for any certificates required. The link with the University of Suffolk has been formalised, more details of how we can access their resources, such as the library, will be sent out in due course.

We split into groups for workshops in the afternoon and although I was in the chairman’s group, interest groups were mentioned and apparently the up and coming thing is ukulele playing! I am reliably informed that you can strum a tune reasonably soon after picking one up. There is a U3A in our network which now has 55 members in a ukulele group!

March is in the not too distant future – AGM time! As I said in the last newsletter we will be looking for several new committee members – a general secretary, membership and lecture secretaries, plus others. Any committee member will be happy to discuss roles with you.

So with the thought of those 55 ukulele players strumming away in a room all at the same time, I think it just remains for me to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year,

Anne Ling

## West Suffolk Hospital – Present and Future

OUR September speaker, Roger Quince, Chairman of West Suffolk Hospital, provided a comprehensive account of the work of the hospital and the future challenges that it faces.

When built 42 years ago, it was expected to have thirty years of life and is now starting to show its age. Despite this, the hospital was recently rated ‘Outstanding’ by the Care Quality Commission, the highest rating in the Eastern Region.

In addition to providing general services, the hospital is a major centre for medical training. Currently it has 460 beds, employs 3,200 whole time equivalent staff and 1,250 equivalent nurses, handles 23,000 day cases and is responsible for 7 births each day. We were shown a slide of doctors practising on dummies that can talk and also cry – which, understandably, the audience found somewhat uncanny.

Like any institution of its kind, the West Suffolk cannot stand still. Developments at the hospital include a new cardiac unit, a new sterile services lab, an updated IT system and 400 additional parking spaces. More significantly, a site for a new healthcare campus has been identified on the western edge of Bury St. Edmunds, with a projected completion date ten years ahead.

Like all NHS institutions the hospital faces new challenges. These include a growing number of dementia cases (a consequence of Suffolk’s continuously ageing population), an increase in drug and alcohol related cases and the problem of obesity. In relation to obesity Mr Quince stated that 22% of children in Suffolk between the ages of five and six are clinically obese.

For the future, the West Suffolk will focus on three major priorities. Firstly, teams of nurses will work more closely with discharged patients to enable them to access local community services. Secondly, cancer patients will be provided with treatment closer to home through the use of mobile chemo services. Thirdly, there will be greater emphasis on service integration, with the hospital developing closer working relationships with the 111 Service, the Ambulance Service, and Mental Health and Social Services.

Finally, Mr Quince advised the audience that there were opportunities for non NHS employees to support the work of the West Suffolk. These include working as a volunteer, leaving a legacy in one’s will and, last but not least, always keeping one’s personal medical appointments!

Howard Chandler

### Monthly Meetings

Start promptly at 10.00am  
Coffee is served until 9.45am

Monday 9 January

**Angel Roofs of East Anglia**

Michael Rimmer

Monday 6 February

**The Vikings**

Robert Burridge

Monday 6 March

**AGM**

followed by

**The Sea and Suffolk**

**– an Historian’s View**

William Tyler

## Gardening – Then and Now

OUR October speaker, ex journalist Rodney Tibbs, provided a fascinating account of gardening through the ages.

The earliest evidence of formal gardens can be traced back to Egypt in the fifteenth century BC, with gardens of the Egyptians containing both water fountains and decks. Gardens in London's Leadenhall Street in the 16th century AD displayed similar water features and in addition wells and rectangular beds.

Since Medieval times gardens have been the focus of a number of activities, including concerts and dining. Increasingly, rectangular beds became a common feature of formal gardens.

Over the ages sheep have proved an excellent means of keeping lawns well preserved; in particular, their ability to “mow at the front end and manure at the rear end” promotes the growth of superior grass such as Cumberland turf. The first lawn mower was patented in 1830 and, interestingly, it became fashionable for ladies to use lawn mowers for exercise reasons!



The earliest watering cans were highly impractical perforated pots, which lost 50% of their contents before use, a far cry from modern watering systems which can be programmed to apply the appropriate amount of water at the desired time.

Mattocks, versatile hand tools used for digging and chopping, have been used in Britain since the late Mesolithic times. It is ironic, therefore, that they are now marketed as a “new” form of digging implement.

Although the growing of plants under glass has been practised for several centuries, it was in Victorian times that the use of greenhouses really burgeoned. However, the most modern form of gardening today is represented by the Eden Project, with its huge biomes housing literally thousands of plant species.

*Howard Chandler*

## Shorelands Wildlife Gardens

AS August is not usually the best month for watching birds the birdwatching group decided to try something different. We went to [Shorelands](#) near Dickleburgh, a small private zoo where Ben, the owner, and his wife Sarah look after many birds and other animals that are either unwanted by large zoos or have been rescued, such as the large flock of white storks from Poland which had been injured by flying into telegraph wires. Many different species can be seen roaming freely in the gardens as they are only caged when it is absolutely necessary.

The rarer species at Shorelands are managed as part of European co-ordinated breeding programmes and native species are conserved in co-operation with landowners and conservation charities.

Sarah told us that they earn no money from the animal and bird side of the business as money never changes hands between the various organisations; when they went to Poland to pick up the white storks they had to fund the journey themselves. She explained that, in 2013, to help fund what they do for conservation, they opened the gardens to the public and set up a tea room, gallery and shop.

*Ann Sear*

## Koniggratz 1866 – Bigger and more significant than Waterloo

WAS the battle of Koniggratz in 1866 historically more important than the Battle of Waterloo? This was certainly the contention of our November speaker, John Drewienkiewicz, who explained that the Seven Weeks War of 1866 between the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia, of which Koniggratz was the decisive battle, led to the unification of Germany and sowed the seeds of what would later lead to the First World War.

The impetus for the war was a desire for a change in the German constitution. At the time that the war broke out the German Confederation consisted of several countries with ten languages between them. At the outset the Austrians possessed muzzle loading muskets with a limited firing range but the breech loading “needlegun” rifles of the Prussians were quicker to load and discharge and had a range of 3,000 yards.

The outcome of the war, however, was decided not by the artillery of the two warring armies, but rather by the tactics employed by the two sides. While the Austrians

relied upon heavily consolidated positions in the theatre of war, the Prussians employed a threefold pincer movement to encircle the Austrians. Additionally, they employed a tactic of dispersing into surrounding woods where the superior fire power of the Austrians was effectively neutralised.

Following a narrow Austrian victory in the first major clash at Trautenau, the Prussians then scored major victories at Nachod, Jicin and finally Koniggratz, in every case inflicting heavy casualties on the Austrians. In the aftermath of the defining battle of Koniggratz the Prussians became the predominant force within the German Confederation and prevailed upon the other constituent nations to organise their armies in line with the tried and proven Prussian model. This was to prove a very significant legacy and subsequently enabled the Federation to defeat the French conclusively in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870.

*Howard Chandler*

## Interest Groups' News

### October's Exhibition

Many thanks to all our Convenors who put on such excellent displays of their group's activities, and grateful thanks also to all those who helped on the day. There are several pictures of that morning's activities on our website. We do hope that new members in particular found something to their liking and were able to join one or two groups of their choice. If not, we are always trying to start up new groups, but do rely on members coming forward to facilitate this. Convenors or either of our two Interest Groups Co-ordinators, Stella and Mary, would be delighted to hear from you and to offer their support and advice on how to get started.

### Trav2

Bob Mountfort is retiring after many years running this successful group for which we thank him very much. From January 2017, Bob is handing over to Mary-Jo Pinder (01953 688268)

### Bridge, Canasta, Railway Enthusiasts, and Then & Now

Sadly, these four groups are about to or have now closed, unless a member wishes to take these over in the very near future (could this be YOU?).

Our sincere thanks to Karen Murdoch Jean Wilkinson, Chris Williams, and Doug Cox for their sterling efforts in running these groups until now.

### Garden Visits

In 2017 all outings must be paid for by cheque when you make your booking.

### New Interest Groups

Due to popular demand, we are in the process of trying to start a second Quilting and Patchwork Group and a third Dining Out group. Members who have been on these waiting lists have been invited to preliminary exploratory meetings at the New Green Centre's Thurst café to try and find a way forward.

The meeting for the Dining Out group will be at 10.30am on Thursday 8 December.

If you are interested in either of these two groups, even if you've not been on their waiting lists please contact the co-ordinators on the numbers below.

Stella Chamberlin 01359 242601

Mary Dunbavin 01359 233045

## Fungus Foray

AT 10 am on an October Thursday 14 members of the Wildlife Watching group assembled at Suffolk Wildlife Trust's nature reserve at Knettishall Heath for a fungus foray.

Our meetings are invariably outdoors, at a different rendezvous each month. Autumn is the best time for finding mushrooms and toadstools, and this time our guide was the County Fungus recorder – Neil Mahler.



Just a few yards from the car park, and we were underway – with a host of well camouflaged fungi peeking out from the fallen leaves. Neil's expertise allowed instant identification of this fascinating group of organisms. We found large bracket fungi, including the birch polypore, which kills its host, the silver birch, and later looked at a death cap, which kills people. Our Thursday morning good weather guarantee let us down on this occasion with a series of showers, but these did not dampen our spirits as we looked at some nice boletus species (mostly edible, including the cep) and some common brightly coloured specimens like the sulphur tuft, fly agaric and false chanterelle. Our wicker basket was filling up with specimens as we added to our list. Some only have scientific names, but most have quirky vernacular couplets like cramp balls, split porecrust, hairy curtain-crust and blushing bracket. The weirdest and rarest was a nail fungus, which only grows on the droppings of wild ponies. This arrived a couple of years ago, brought in via the stomachs of the Trust's Exmoor ponies. Quite remarkably, our species list had reached 50 by noon, at which time we decided to call it a day, although the total increased to 56 when Neil added extras which he had identified, but we had not immediately added to the list. A genial lunch followed nearby, hosted by members Dave & Gill Shearing.

*Rob Parker*

## Henry Moore Foundation

THE Art Appreciation Group recently enjoyed a visit to the [Henry Moore Foundation](#) at Perry Green, Herts.

Our guide spoke of Moore's early influences and how his interest in forms and objects in nature came to be the focus of his work. We saw his studios with collections of bones, stones, rocks, wood and flints and understood how his pieces progressed from maquette to huge finished bronzes. Henry Moore was also a draughtsman, printmaker and lithographer producing more than 260 lithographs and etchings during his life time.

Seeing his monumental bronzes in the settings for which they were intended was a magical experience.



Moore was regarded as one of the greatest sculptors of the 20th century and his pieces are exhibited worldwide. He died in 1986 leaving a huge body of work for us all to enjoy. A visit is highly recommended for any art lover and those with an open mind. There is a café and acres of peaceful grounds in which to wander at leisure.

*Gill Heath*

## Educational Visit on 29 September

DUE to weather conditions our cruise to London on the paddle steamer [Waverley](#) was changed at the last minute and, rather than Clacton pier as planned, we sailed from Gravesend. From there we sailed to Southend to pick up a large number of other passengers who's day was completely changed as they had also been due to leave from Clacton. We then sailed back to Gravesend and finally made our way to London!

The paddle steamer Waverley, launched in 1946, is the last seagoing paddle steamer in the world. It is owned by a charity who have restored the funnels, timber decks and with lots of shiny brass and gleaming varnish to complete the renovation. The engines that turn the famous paddles can be seen at close quarters.

Despite leaving Thurston in torrential rain by the time we boarded the weather had changed, and although we had a 'bracing breeze', we did have quite a lot of sunshine. After lunch we all ventured onto the decks to find a good spot for our sightseeing before the other passengers boarded at Southend. The changing scenery was interesting with a lot of industry along the Essex and Kent coasts including oil and gas refineries and the Thames Gateway Docks. One bonus for the area is that the largest landfill site in Europe has been regenerated and is now a nature reserve. We also passed the Ford factory and the Tate and Lyle building.

As we progressed along the Thames the changes that have taken place are incredible. New apartment buildings, the majority of which are probably foreign owned, take up much of the river front and are very expensive. The O2 Arena covers a large area and we went under the Emirates' Pod which is a way of getting there from north of the Thames.

Having been to London earlier in the year it was really interesting to see things from the water. Passing through the Thames Barrier was an experience – you don't realise how massive these structures are until you see them close up. The Docklands area was particularly impressive as we saw it from several different viewpoints due to the meanders in the river.



The Tower of London looked very forbidding in the early evening light, but I think the highlight must be Tower Bridge, illuminated in a lovely shade of purple, which had to be raised for us to go under – quite a beautiful sight.

Linda Wells

## Educational Visits for 2017

MONDAY 23 JANUARY  
**Kenwood House and Hampstead  
Highgate Cemetery**

MONDAY 27 MARCH  
**Kings Lynn Museums and Downham  
Market**  
**Guided tour**

MONDAY 22 MAY  
**Boughton House and Gardens,  
Kettering**  
**"The English Versailles"**

MONDAY 21 JULY  
**The Guildhall London and The  
Emirates' Pod**  
**Guided Tour**

MONDAY 25 SEPTEMBER  
**Newmarket**  
**Museum, Art Gallery, Jockey Rooms  
and Stud Tour**

MONDAY 27 NOVEMBER  
**Ely – Cathedral and museums**

COSTS AND TIMES TO BE ADVISED AT  
A LATER DATE.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR  
CHEQUE BOOKS TO THE MEETINGS  
AS WE ASK THAT YOU PAY WHEN  
YOU BOOK.

Linda Wells  
Maureen Morris

## Theatre Visits

We are now arranging our 2017 programme.

On 9 March we are going to see *Mamma Mia* at the Theatre Royal Norwich and on 4 May we have booked to see *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford upon Avon. The Norwich trip is full but we still have a few seats left (£58 each) for Stratford.

We have also made a tentative booking to see Julian Fellows' new musical *Wind in the Willows* at the London Palladium on 27 June. We have been offered special ticket prices (and good seats) which has kept the cost to £45 per head.

Philip Webber



**Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and  
a  
Happy, Healthy New Year**



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25 January  
Contributions please to:  
[publisher@blackbourne-u3a.org](mailto:publisher@blackbourne-u3a.org)