

From your Chairman

I will start this newsletter with a reminder that we have elections in March 2019 when three members of the existing committee are due to end their three year term.

We now have members who say they are willing to join the committee in which case I hope they put their names forward for election when the time comes.

After representations from several members, the committee has discussed again why there was no interest group exhibition this year. We agreed that such an exhibition was a chance to showcase the work of the groups and to get together in a social event. The committee agreed that next October might be a good time to hold such an event, with the possibility of using outside caterers. This however is for the next committee to decide which would fit well, as next year our U3A will be celebrating 25 years.

It has also been mentioned that some members feel isolated at meetings; this does concern the committee because nobody should feel that. The object of coffee and tea before the lecture is an opportunity to mix and chat so can we please bear this in mind.

Last but not least, I confirm we will be serving mince pies and wine after the end of the December meeting.

On behalf of the committee and myself we wish you and your families a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Derrick Haley

Astronomy – A Beginner’s Guide

ALTHOUGH our September speaker, David Murton, had been pursuing an interest in astronomy for only five years, he provided an information packed introduction to the subject, which was augmented by spectacular photographs taken at night from his Suffolk garden.

His overview of the universe incorporated a description of our own galaxy, reference to other galaxies and data concerning distances and time scales which verge on the unimaginable. As an example, he mentioned that if Earth were the size of a tennis ball the Sun would be the size of a small house. Furthermore, there are more stars in the universe than all the grains of sand in our world.

The Sun comprises 98% of all matter in the solar system, although the Moon can also appear very large when near the horizon. The planets (i.e. Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune) actually move around, thereby going through various conjunctions.

The position of the constellations - namely stars as opposed to planets - in our universe also change throughout the year, rising and setting two hours earlier per month. The most notable constellations are Ursa Major (The Plough), Cassiopeia and Orion. Meteors are also common, as are comets, which are occasionally visible to the naked eye.

Also visible in the sky of our universe are the Milky Way, which comprises millions of stars, and certain man-made objects including the International Space Station.

Concerning galaxies other than our own, the nearest is Andromeda, which is 2.5 million light years away, while other galaxies are estimated to be over 500 million light years away.

Our speaker concluded his presentation by offering some useful tips on observing the night sky. In addition, he described some potential telescopes for beginners, while at the same time counselling that the most expensive are not necessarily the best!

Howard Chandler

Future Lecture Meetings

Starting at 10.00am

Monday 7 January

Over paid, Over sexed and Over here. US Air Force in East Anglia
Dr Geoffrey Kay

Monday 4 February

Great Ormond Street Hospital
Speaker to be advised

Monday 4 March

AGM

followed by
Capability Brown—an insight into this famous gardener

Dr Twiggs Way



More Stories from the Tower

OUR October speaker, Horry Parsons, was making his second presentation to the Blackbourne U3A concerning Bury St. Edmunds Cathedral, having addressed the Group ten years previously to describe the first phase of the construction of the Tower. He commenced by stating that next phase was officially launched in August 1999 by Dean Atwell driving a JCB.

Following a three month hiatus to allow archaeologists to examine the location concerned, the eventual launch was commemorated by the issue of official Christmas stamps. Early setbacks included the use by the architect of the same colours on the plans to indicate different types of stone, and the fact that initially the plans included every single brick, thereby potentially making it impossible to complete the project on time. This could prove to be an expensive issue, given that the penalty for missing the schedule was £700 per week.

We learned that stonemasons invariably leave some sign of their involvement in a project, including, for example, copper coins or empty cigarette packets. Other significant trades included flintknapping, glazing and plastering, the glaziers in particular struggling to meet established timing schedules. Several of the tradespeople, however, had previously worked on the restoration of Windsor Castle and earned awards in recognition of their expertise.

When funds eventually became available for the completion of the ceiling our Speaker was commissioned to act as a consultant and then subsequently appointed as Project Manager despite, at that stage, having already retired. The entire ceiling was constructed in the workshop and it was a testament to the craftsmanship of those involved that it fitted perfectly when finally installed.

In conclusion, our Speaker mentioned that he was eventually invited to discuss his work on the 'Richard and Judy' television programme. However, having attired himself in a formal suit he was requested at the last minute to remove his jacket and appear in short sleeves because the producers wanted him to "look more like a builder"!

Howard Chandler

The History of the Theatre Royal

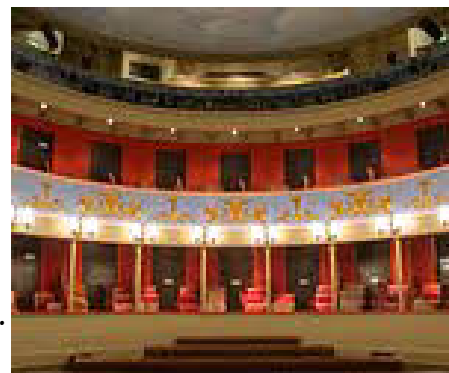
Speaker: Peter Green

THE Theatre Royal has experienced something of a chequered history since its original opening, having been closed and then reopened on three separate occasions. It is one of eight Grade I listed theatres in the United Kingdom and is considered the most perfect example of a Regency theatre in the country.

In 1818 William Wilkins, an eminent architect, was granted a licence to build a new theatre and the Theatre Royal first opened its doors to the public in 1819. Theatre going in Regency times was a very different experience from that of today. The wealthy occupied boxes, the middle classes were seated in the pits, and the lower classes were located in the balconies. There was no allocated seating, with the result that there was a great deal of fighting and shoving as the theatre goers battled among themselves for favourable seats.

Like other provincial theatres, the Theatre Royal suffered declining audiences during the latter part of the nineteenth century as the advent of the railways enabled wealthier clients to attend theatre performances at more upscale London theatres. The theatre recorded something of a landmark in 1892 by staging the first ever performance of 'Charley's Aunt', but in 1903 it was forced to close for economic reasons. It reopened in 1906, but then closed again in 1925.

Following the purchase of the freehold by Greene King the theatre served as a barrel store for the brewery, until reopening once more in 1965. Unfortunately, it continued to



struggle economically and in 1975 it was vested in the National Trust on a 999 year lease. The theatre then closed for a third time in 2005 to enable the building to be restored to its original 1819 configuration and Regency decorative scheme. This was largely achieved with some concessions to modern tastes, although, significantly, the original capacity of 780 is now reduced to 350.

The Theatre Royal reopened in 2007 with a performance of 'Black Eyed Susan' and it continues to remain a prominent feature of the Bury St. Edmunds landscape.

Howard Chandler

Educational Visit – The Lee Valley

ON 17 September in beautiful weather we enjoyed a three and a half hour cruise on the [River Lee](#) aboard The Lady of Lee, where we also had our lunch. It was very peaceful watching the wildlife, with a heron posing for us as we glided by. We passed through several locks, some more than once, and watched our 'skipper' expertly opening and closing the lock gates single handed.



The River Lee originates in the Chiltern Hills and flows southeast through East London where it meets the River Thames at Bow Creek. Much of the River has been canalised to provide a navigable route for boats into eastern Hertfordshire, known as

the Lee Navigation.

Lee Valley Park Regional Park Authority was created by a unique act of Parliament as a green lung for London, Essex and Hertfordshire.

For much of its distance the river runs as a boundary to the Lee Valley Park feeding Tottenham, Walthamstow and Hackney Marshes, the latter now drained. In the early days Tottenham and Leyton Orient played their amateur football matches on the marshes.

Linda Wells

Trav 2 Trip to Croatia September – October 2018

ON 26 September, 21 of us travelled to Gatwick for the flight to Split, arriving at our hotel in Biograd na Moru in early evening.

The following morning we went to Zadar with our guide and saw the light installation on the promenade "the greeting to the sun", solar panels by day and at night a psychedelic light show! We listened to the sea organ playing wave powered music and then walked to the old part of the city. The church of St Donat stood next to the Bell Tower, where nuns had hidden precious gold and silver religious artefacts during WW2. These are on display in a special museum and were magnificent. The Roman ruins nearby included a forum, decorated columns and communal toilets! Some of us climbed the Bell Tower – 130 steps, but worth the effort for the wonderful views over the city and port and a golden photographic opportunity.

View from the Bell Tower, Zadar

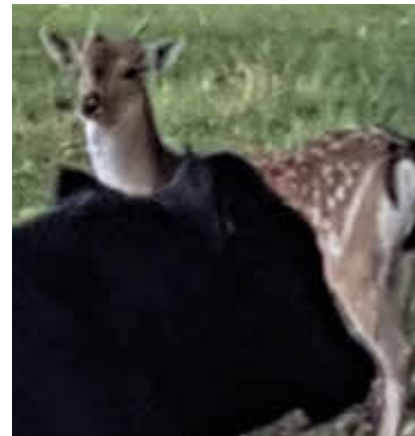


Photos by John Sawyer

Friday Short Walks Group

OUR Group has been well attended throughout the year and we have enjoyed our morning walks in the Suffolk countryside.

Currently we have no vacancies but I am about to start a waiting list for any member who may like to join us. Our August walk had to be cancelled due to the very hot weather at that time.



During our October walk from Pakenham we came across a very interesting scene, an almost tame deer which had been sitting amongst the cattle stood up to pose for Angela's photograph. It is surprising to see some of the things we come across during our walks!

Sylvie Marshall.

On our free day some of us went for a ride in a semi submersible submarine, which took us around the islands in the harbour. The size of the fish we saw is still a subject of debate, but the water was clear and we also spotted sea cucumbers and sea urchins.

At the Krka National Park we walked with our guide for more than an hour, looking at the magnificent waterfalls and rapids with a large variety of shrubs, trees and flowers.

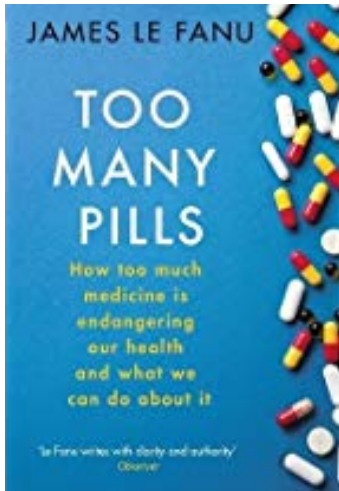
On our trip to Split we saw the Diocletian Palace, an impressive Roman building, which is still inhabited in parts. We were entertained by four male singers with a selection of traditional Dalmatian songs. On the northern side of the Palace stood an immense statue of Grgur Ninski, the first bishop of Nin and we followed local tradition by touching his toe and making a wish. Later we drove to Trogir, a city known as the "Beauty of Stone", where we enjoyed a guided tour.

The last day ended with a boat trip around the Kornati Islands. We had a tasty barbecue lunch on one of the islands. It was an enjoyable relaxing day, with wonderful scenery and a fitting end to a varied, interesting holiday, with many promising to return.

Sue Prime

ONCE the seasonal festivities are over, here is a possible New Year's Resolution.
Are you or anyone you know taking "Too Many Pills"?

Drawing on 50 years of experience in medical practice, in his latest book entitled "Too Many Pills", Dr James Le Fanu reveals the truth about medicine's metamorphosis from modest beginnings in alleviating pain to the massive global phenomenon it is today. He sounds the alarm about the dangers of over-medication, and shows us how the future of medicine can be if we would just stop taking the pills! The number of prescriptions issued by family doctors has soared threefold in just 15 years, with millions now committed to taking a cocktail of half-a-dozen (or more!) different pills to lower blood pressure and sugar levels, statins, bone-strengthening and cardio-protective drugs.



Dr Le Fanu examines with clarity and authority how this progressive medicalisation of people's lives now poses a major threat to their health and wellbeing, responsible for a hidden epidemic of drug-induced illness (muscular aches and pains, lethargy, insomnia, impaired memory and general decrepitude), a sharp increase in the number of emergency hospital admissions for serious side effects and, against all expectations, is implicated in the recently noted decline in life expectancy.

Whilst espousing the admittedly laudable aspiration of "prevention" of certain conditions for the whole populace, but downplaying the inevitable and sometimes severe and debilitating side effects, the drug companies have chosen to gloss over the small matter of treating those side effects with another drug, and another one, and another! However, a very handy and lucrative side effect of this policy is making huge profits for those very same drug companies!

The paradoxically harmful, if increasingly well recognised, consequences of too much medicine are illustrated by the remarkable personal testimony of the readers of Dr Le Fanu's weekly medical column, coerced into taking drugs they do not need, debilitated by their adverse effects – and their almost miraculous recovery on discontinuing them. The only solution, he argues, is for the public to take the initiative. His review of the relevant evidence for the efficacy, or otherwise, of commonly prescribed drugs is written very clearly and should, therefore, allow readers of *Too Many Pills* to ask much more searching questions about the benefits and risks of the medicines they are taking.

I found this book incredibly eye-opening, particularly the extent to which drug companies have organised (and paid for) secret trials of their new medicines, not allowing anyone else to see this data for it to be evaluated by non-biased independent experts, and hence the way they have manipulated the statistics to suit their own ends, i.e. to make huge amounts of money all over the world. Also, the explanation of how and why our GPs are paid for perceived "results", i.e. box-ticking, as I'm sure we've all become more and more aware. This book is not telling anyone to stop their medications without discussing this with their own GP, but it gives one the ammunition to discuss this confidently in a much more informed way.

Dr Le Fanu has combined his career as a GP in South London with writing about medicine and science in numerous well-regarded national newspapers and medical journals. His book costs £13.99.

Stella Chamberlin

Wishing our readers a Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year

Please send contributions for the February newsletter to
publisher@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk by **20 January 2019**

Educational Visits for 2019

Tuesday 29 January

Christchurch Mansion with guide. Ipswich Museum

Monday 25 March

Sizewell B Power Station with buffet lunch. Photo ID will be required.

Monday 20 May

Dover Castle

Monday 5 August

Supreme Court of Justice and London Postal Museum

Monday 30 September

Wrest Park, Bedfordshire

Monday 25 November

Tour of Essex Villages with Blue Badge guide, including morning coffee/afternoon Tea

Once again our thanks to Linda and Maureen for producing such a varied programme for the coming year.

Booking must be accompanied by payment

Mixed Media Art

THE Group held a very successful event in Pakenham Village Hall at the beginning of November. This gave us an opportunity to display our work and share our interest to a wide range of people.



Our friendly group meets on the first and third Tuesday of each month in Pakenham Village Hall to paint together and share ideas.

Please contact me if you would like to have a go. No experience is necessary.

David Morley – 01359 230193