



## Wishing our readers a Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year

From your Chairman

IT is amazing how times change. As I sit here desperately seeking inspiration for the Chairman's notes for Issue 103 of the BU3A Newsletter, I have in front of me a copy of Issue No 1, published in 1994. This was a single-sheet publication, produced on a typewriter (remember them?) with no colour and no photographs. The main headline concerned the fact that membership had reached 100. Here we are, 25 years later, with a thriving membership of over 600 and a superb website to keep the world informed of our meetings and events. But the Newsletter lives on!

It has been my privilege over the last six months to serve as Chairman of U3A and follow in the footsteps of those pioneers of 1994, and all the subsequent Officers and Committees. I have been fortunate to have had the support of a very efficient Committee, and we do our best to maintain the high standards set by our predecessors.

To mark 25 years of BU3A, the Committee decided that a small celebration would be in order, to take place at the December meeting, when it is hoped that one or two Officers from the early days of BU3A will be able to attend.

I'm sorry to end on a familiar topic, but in order to move on to the next 25 Years, BU3A will shortly be needing some new committee members, as our rules state that they may only serve for three years, and some of the present Committee are nearing the end of their term. So please give some thought to becoming involved in some way. I, or any Committee member would be happy to have an informal chat regarding what is involved.

So it only remains for me to give all members of BU3A my best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Peter Lester

### Duleep Singh, Thetford's Maharajah



SEPTEMBER 2nd marked the return of monthly lectures and nearly 200 members heard Fraser Harrison's talk on Duleep Singh, Thetford's Maharajah.

Duleep's father Ranjit Singh died in 1838, the year Duleep was born, leaving Duleep as a child ruler of the Punjab, a vast Sikh empire. He was controlled by his mother.

In 1849 Duleep was deposed, lost all of the state and exiled to Britain but retained his title and was given a vast pension by the British Government. He came to England aged 16 having converted to Christianity.

He married Bamba Muller, who spoke no English, in Cairo in 1863 and they had six children (three boys, three girls). Duleep purchased Elveden Hall in 1863 and made dramatic internal adjustments to the property to create a miniature palace. Duleep worked very hard to spend his vast income primarily by gambling and fraternising with ladies of ill repute.

In 1886 he decided to return to The Punjab but only got as far as Aden before the British Government intervened to stop his journey to prevent any possible uprising in his support in The Punjab. He then decided to live in Paris where he met Ada, a chambermaid. They married, following the death of Bamba, and had two daughters. He died in Paris in 1893 and a year later the Elveden estate was sold to the present owners, the Guinness family.

In 1993, the centenary of his death, a campaign was launched by the English Sikhs to erect a statue in his memory. The statue stands in Thetford and was unveiled on 29th July 1999 by the Prince of Wales.

Laurie Marshall

### Monthly Meetings

#### Monday 6 January

Alice Hawkins – Suffragette

A stirring and passionate account of the speaker's great-grandmother's hard fought campaign for the right of women to vote over a 100 years ago.

Peter Barratt

#### Monday 20 January

Interest Groups' Exhibition

A chance to meet the convenors. (see back page)

#### Monday 3 February

The Guildhall, Bury St Edmunds.

Sandra Nicotera

#### Monday 2 March

From Barrow to Bagdad

The speaker's experiences in the Middle East whilst running oil services companies in Dubai and Iraq.

Philip Caine

**This meeting will be preceded by the AGM**

## Twit Two Owlets



At Watching Wildlife's September meeting to Devils Dyke, one of our members informed us that she had barn owls nesting in a box on her farm and invited us to watch the ringing of two owlets.

We were very fortunate to have dry warm weather on the day and nine of our members attended Sandyway Farm, Langham, to observe and learn about the owlets.

A loose ring was placed around the leg of each owlet and the number from the ring was recorded along with their weight. It was also noted that both birds were female which were identified by spots seen under their wings.

When everything had been recorded we were given the opportunity to hold the owlets (who were surprisingly quiet



due to them having full bellies and of course it was daylight), before being returned to their nest box.

The ringing was done by Patrick Barker, a member of a local farming family which has won many awards for wildlife conservation and who has a special interest in barn owls

A big thank you to Marion Gotto for inviting us to attend her farm and Patrick Barker for what was a wonderful experience for the group.

Angela Lee

## From Toytown to Buckingham Palace

THE October lecture was given by John Stirling who was born into a theatrical family, his mother being contracted to Rank for a number of films. As a result his early life was somewhat chaotic. He was sent to boarding school at 6½ but was expelled after 3 months as having no academic potential. He was then enrolled at the Italia Conti Stage School. At the age of 9 years he was cast as Noddy in the show "Noddy in Toytown" despite having failed the audition but because Enid Blyton felt he most resembled Noddy.

From then on he appeared regularly on TV in such shows as Whacko with Jimmy Edwards, Dixon of Dock Green and various Dickens' dramatisations. At the age of about 19 he decided that he would prefer not to appear on stage but go into production. He was introduced to Morecambe and Wise and produced their pantomimes and summer shows for a while before moving on to other production work in television and on stage. After a while he moved back to the live stage writing musicals such as "Gert and Daisy".

After Patricia Hayes' success as "Edna the Inebriated Woman" he wrote a TV play "Marked for Life" for her which involved twelve donkeys. This never made it as Miss Hayes' health had deteriorated. He was left with the donkeys and went against the suggestion that they should be taken to the local slaughter house. They were taken home and eventually a donkey sanctuary was set up providing homes for over 300 donkeys and a chance for many disadvantaged children and adults to experience time with the donkeys.

Various charity walks with donkeys were organised including one that terminated at Buckingham Palace. When they arrived they were invited in and the Queen came out to meet them and fed carrots to the donkeys.

Mary Dunbavin

## November's lecture

At our November meeting, we were thoroughly entertained by Wendy Smith's talk "Wimbledon – Tales of a Line Judge". Wimbledon is reputed to be the world's best tennis tournament, and Wendy has officiated at 37 of them. Once British line judges have passed their various training courses (2-5 years), they are very highly regarded and can officiate at any international tournament. Applicants need not have played tennis themselves, there is no upper age limit and, somewhat surprisingly, no eye test is required.

The strictly-adhered-to "designer" uniform costs £3,000, supplied free to the judges, and is changed every three years. The line judges are formed into two teams per court so that each person changes shift every hour and could be on duty from 10am to 11pm – the concentration levels are immense – for which they receive a fee and travel expenses, but need to find their own accommodation throughout the tournament.

Wendy described the changes in the job over the years, as well as the various colourful characters and their antics (McEnroe only ever complained when he was losing!), and the perks the players receive.

Apart from the actual line judging, Wendy's other duties would include looking after the ball-kids, ensuring that the strict "all-white" rule for players' kit is followed (including underwear!), getting off the court in a quick but orderly fashion during any rain delays (presumably to avoid Cliff Richard?!), crowd-watching for any bare chests or anyone feeling unwell, and any suspicious behaviour such as illegal on-line betting.

The famous Kent strawberries are delivered fresh every day and, being one of the world's biggest sporting occasions, everything to do with the catering is seemingly counted in the tens of thousands!

Wendy received a warm round of applause for her most insightful lecture.

Stella Chamberlin

## New year, new resolutions!

As the new 2020 year commences many of us will be making new year resolutions. If you are anything like me it isn't always easy to commit to that later in the year! As a suggestion for a good start it would be great if our BU3A was committed to welcoming new members and those arriving on their own to the monthly lectures.

Sometimes it can be daunting when confronted by a room full of folk who know each other well, have saved their places in the hall and you are new or on your own.

The interest groups do give an informal chance to be included but when arriving at the New Green Centre for a lecture it would be great if members spoke to a new person even just to say hello and introduce yourself, as I know many already do.

So Happy New Year fellow members and thanks for reading!

*Helen Taylor (Secretary)*

## Wrest Park

SEPTEMBER'S educational visit was to [Wrest Park](#), Bedfordshire, which has been



in the care of English Heritage since 2006.

For over 600 years the Wrest estate was home to one of the leading aristocratic families in the country, the de Greys. In the 17th and 18th centuries the formal gardens, the Long Water and formal woodland gardens were created.

In 1833 the 2nd Earl de Grey, Thomas

Robinson, inherited the estate with a house of medieval origins. De Grey, an accomplished amateur architect, demolished this and between 1834 and 1839 built the house you see today. He adopted an 18th century French style of architecture for the house and created the gardens immediately to the south in the same style, linking the architecture of the new house with the gardens of his ancestors.



The Chinese Temple

The morning was spent exploring the extensive grounds, some making use of a motorised buggy with commentary by the driver.

A ramble around revealed other buildings that had been built in de Grey's time – the Orangery, Bath House, Bowling Green House and, at the end of the Long Water, the Archer Pavilion with its marvellous tromp l'oeil painted dome. Walking through the woodland one comes across statues in the clearings and the Chinese Temple and bridge.

After lunch there was time to visit the house which has a splendid staircase around which portraits of family members are hung. There is also an exhibition of the history of the house and de Grey family.

Used as a hospital in the first World War it was damaged by fire in 1916 and was sold in 1917 falling into decline until used by the Sun Insurance Office during World War II. In 1948 it became home to the National Institute of Agricultural Engineering and when this closed in 2006 English Heritage took over the house with an ambitious 20 year project to restore the gardens to their pre-1917 state.

*Bryann Ward*

## SOCIAL HISTORY GROUP

Our November session took the form of a group input about Christmas. We had an interesting, informative meeting interspaced with dry humour! Noreen surprised us by bringing along some superb match-box sized buildings which could be used as Christmas tree decorations. She had made these in tiny beads at her beading class, over the last two years!. They were exquisite, and had obviously taken hours of concentration to produce - the detail was tremendous - that of the church even had a stained glass window. We were all most impressed.

*Barbara Milner*



## Interest Groups

### Canasta Group

I have had an offer from a lady to lead a Canasta playing group and would like to invite you to join. All members are welcome and I will be really pleased to hear from you.

This will likely start in the New Year and probably after our Interest Group Exhibition in January .

Please contact me, in the first instance with expressions of interest and I will be very pleased to pass on your details to the Group Convenor and see the start up of this new group in the New Year.

Liz Morgan, Interest Group Coordinator. Tel 01284 749819  
lizmorgan90@gmail.com

**The Book Group** and the **Music Listening and Learning Group** have vacancies and new members would be made very welcome.

Please contact the relevant Conveners

## Watching Birds



ON Thursday the 31 October a trip across the border into Essex brought eight members of the birding group to the Essex Wildlife Trust Reserve at Abberton reservoir. The reservoir supplies water to a large part of Essex under the management of the Essex and Suffolk Water Company. Essex Wildlife Trust manage the site for wildlife.

We met in the impressive visitor centre and sat for a while as we drank our coffees and hot chocolates. The weather was quite cool with a stiff breeze so thick coats and hats were required by all except Bryann! From the visitor centre we were able to see goldfinches flitting between the enormously long feeders and the teasels on the other side of a pond. We also saw moorhen, hen pheasant, cormorant, mallard, blue tit and great tit.

We visited the three well built hides and at the first one we were treated to an extended display by a male and female stonechat. From the middle hide we spotted two unusual ducks – a long tailed duck and a pintail. At the third hide a beautiful great white egret flew in to the waters edge and we were able to see the orange bill, long neck and black legs that confirmed what it was. At each hide there were also good numbers of goldeneye bobbing on the waves and the next second diving for food. Six of the group went on to the Donkey and Buskins pub for lunch and I understand that the fish and chips were very good. Gill and Dave had a quick look along the dam wall before heading off for a meeting and were quite astounded at the number of birds on the water. There were thousands of wigeon, hundreds of shoveler and many cormorants perched in the willow trees along the edge of the water.

Not counting the wigeon and shoveler the group saw a total of 36 species.

*Dave Shearing*

## Art Group



ON 2 November the Art group held their third exhibition in Pakenham Village Hall. Over 100 paintings, in a variety of mediums, were on display for the public to see and purchase should they so wish. The attendance was

down on previous years due no doubt to the rugby cup final and inclement weather.

This is a relaxed and friendly group that meets twice monthly on a Tuesday afternoon whose members will be available at the forthcoming Interest Groups' exhibition to provide information to anyone who feels they would like to join.

Deadline for February newsletter is 19 January 2020

Items for inclusion should be sent to:

[bryann@brysuward.plus.com](mailto:bryann@brysuward.plus.com)

## Interest Groups Exhibition

This will be held on the 20 January 2020 in the Main Hall at Thurston New Green. Starting at 10am for new members then 10.30am to 12.30 for current members.

There will be free tea /coffee and pastries!!

Group convenors and members of the groups, will be present to answer any questions you may have about a particular group.

New members will have the first half an hour to find out about the groups we have in BU3A and to join any in which they are interested. There are vacancies in some Groups.

From 10.30, all other members are welcome, so do come and join us, we will love to see you - if only to share a cup of coffee..... and that pastry!

*Liz Morgan*

## Educational Visits

### 2020

Linda and Maureen have again worked hard to put together six more varied visits for the coming year.

#### Monday 27 January

Lords Cricket Ground. Guided tour and lunch.

#### Monday 30 March

Pump Street Chocolate, Woodbridge, in the morning followed by an afternoon visit to Bedfield Hall, Framlingham, to include tea/coffee and cake.

#### Tuesday 26 May

National Memorial Arboretum.

#### Monday 27 July

Tower of London.

#### Monday 28 September

Amazon Distribution Centre Peterborough in the morning and Peterborough Cathedral in the afternoon.

#### Monday 30 November

Norwich Castle

Bookings, normally made at the monthly lecture meetings, must be accompanied by payment