



Newsletter

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Summer 2024

Hello to all our Members both existing and new!

I enjoyed a short break in Norfolk several weeks ago and now look forward to visiting sunny Andalucia enjoying the splendours of Granada, Cordoba etc. Our soggy Spring will be a distant memory I hope!

It is good to see that month on month our membership is increasing and we welcome newcomers. We have four new or duplicate Interest Groups being set up once we identify Leaders and the Improvisation group will be meeting at the end of May to get started.

Hopefully more ideas will generate more Groups and we can offer even more variety to our schedule of activities. Support as always is offered to anyone considering establishing a new group.

The administration of the Interest Groups is generally very straightforward and this is aided by using our new database with its' various features. More of the Group Leaders have been shown how it can benefit them.

The Committee has been continuing the work on updating the website and while this is still "work in progress," we have achieved greater consistency across the site generally. Many photographs relating to the various Interest Groups are more attractive and relevant and I hope we will have images for the main front page, Interest Groups page and Lecture page replaced soon. Give it a look!

Our Theatre and Garden visits remain very popular and I hope the recent "lectures" have been enjoyed. We have next year's programme well underway.

I wish you all a bright and drier summer, best wishes

Liz, Chairwoman

Committee 2024-25

Chair

Liz Morgan

Treasurer

Brenda Last

Secretary

Sue Adams

Interest Groups

Geri Collingwood

Membership Secretary

Chris Ives

Names registration

Stephen Cubitt

Newsletter distribution

Julie Cubitt

Minutes Secretary

Bill Blackaby

Member

Sarah Robinson

There is a vacancy for Vice Chair and the committee will be very pleased to receive nominations at any time.

Blackbourne u3a finances

I thought I would write a bit about our u3a finances as normally they only come to members attention once a year at the AGM. Besides the accounts for the year, which is of course looking back, we also prepare a budget which looks forward. The budget process involves quite a bit of what I call educated guesswork. We do not know the numbers of members we may have in future years and subscriptions account for most of our income. Numbers are now rising again as are the numbers doing gift aid which gives us an extra £2.50 per member. If you are a tax payer who would like to do this or if you have done it in the past and no longer pay tax, please contact me.

Unfortunately our expenses are also rising, the most expensive being our payments to the national Third Age Trust. At the moment half of our subscription income is paid over to the Trust for our subscription and Beacon service. In return we get insurance cover, advice and assistance and improved connections to members by email. We aim to keep costs as low as possible but the costs for speakers have gone up materially and we work hard to keep everything under control and good value for members.

We are fortunate that we have some savings, currently around £4200 but as I expect our u3a to make a loss this year I may to have to move some of that to our bank account late this year or early next year. Our budget forecasts a loss of around £1500 this year and I expect this to be the same in 2025. The committee is keeping a good eye on our funds but each year we have to review the member subscription. It increased from £8 to £10 a number of years ago and we plan to keep it at £10 for both this year and next year but we will have to consider an increase for 2026. We will keep you informed about any changes we have to make in the future. In the meanwhile I hope everyone makes the most of the very

reasonable subscription by coming to our monthly meetings and as many of the groups as you can.

Brenda Last
Treasurer

Witches in Suffolk



Pip Wright, our speaker in March, who has written nearly 30 books, started by saying that he intended to expand the area covered by his talk to include Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex as this would enable him to include more interesting subjects.

We all have a vision of how a witch should look and this basically is not a pretty sight and yet Anne Boleyn, the second wife of Henry VIII, was thought to be a witch. It was suggested that she had six fingers on one hand, an obvious sign of witchcraft. Pip suggested that to cover this problem she had a picture painted with gloves draped over her hand but the glove itself had six fingers. Interesting.

The image of witches being burned alive is gruesome but wrong. Witches in England were hanged, but not all convicted witches were hanged. We were told of a coven of 13 witches found guilty in St Osyth in Essex. They were sentenced to be hanged but at least one of them was still alive several years later.

Many pleaded guilty because they were told that they would receive better treatment, but they were still hanged. Others pleaded guilty because they had been denied food and sleep for three days.

Matthew Hopkins, the self titled Witchfinder General, born in Great Wenham near Manningtree in Essex developed a quite financially successful career. In 1645 alone he was responsible for the trials of 117 witches or wizards of which 80 were found guilty but only 30 were hanged. Stowmarket paid Hopkins £27 (well over £4000 today) for his services. 3 witches and 2 wizards were found in Rattlesden. Some judges worried about the quality of the evidence given against witches and delayed signing the authority to proceed with the hanging.

Eventually the correctness of Hopkins' approach was challenged and once a single challenge was successfully made, many others followed. Hopkins two and a half year reign came to an end and he returned to Manningtree and died of tuberculosis.

In 1736 the penalty for witchcraft was reduced to a one year prison term.

The last person imprisoned for witchcraft was Helen Duncan who held seances during the Second World War and the Witchcraft Act was finally repealed in 1950.

Pip Wright had retained the interest of his audience for an entertaining and educational talk.

Laurie Marshall

Selfie Power – A History of Self Portraiture

Our speaker for April was art historian Tania Harrington

Self-portraiture is an interesting area of Art History. As most painting was usually commissioned, it is likely that any early self-portraiture was either experimental or an image used to be circulated to show the ability of the artist for commercial reasons.

In the 12th century when illuminated manuscripts were being illustrated there are instances where there is a representation of the artist, both men and women, in their workshop with the tools of the trade, frequently signed.

By the 15th Century oil paintings were achieving a more lifelike effect. In the Arnolfini portrait Jan van Eyke had included a mirror in the background showing the rear of the sitters and the artist. At that time mirrors were domes made of polished metal and could distort the image which some artists liked to produce.

As time progressed, self-portraiture was to impress possible clients about the type of person the artist was, and therefore the type of art that could be produced.

We were shown a range of self-portraits right up to the current date including various themes used by artists to include their image in a work of art. Several artists who were producing paintings of events would sometimes include themselves as one of the characters in the painting, for instance Caravaggio as the head of Goliath, Michelangelo as a victim in "The Last Judgement".

Several artists' self-portraits are showing them working at an easel. This usually has the easel down one side of the painting. Others would include images illustrating the special areas of their work, or placed themselves in a scenario that reflected their own self-image.

Mary Dunbavin



Allowing for the Bank Holiday, the May meeting was held on Tuesday 7th May. Unfortunately the booked speaker was unable to attend but 109 members were entertained to a talk by one of our members, John Sutton , who, at very short notice, gave a well illustrated talk covering a holiday taken by John and his wife, travelling 3000 miles in just under four weeks along Route 66 in the United States of America.

John said that this was their first visit to USA and his obvious enjoyment of the trip is reflected in the number of visits he has since made there. His talk was really enjoyable and with the quality of his photography provided an excellent replacement talk.

Thank you John for entertaining us so well.

Laurie Marshall

Flower Arranging Group.

In March we celebrated St Patrick’s Day, and we all came up with different arrangements, using green flowers and foliage, moss and shamrocks. One member saw things differently and celebrated Guinness within her arrangement, which was a pedestal style and very different to everyone else.



After honouring St Patrick in March in April we made arrangements to reflect St George’s Day. Different styles were created and we were challenged to do a design that we had not done previously. Overall, we were all really pleased with the results.



Simply the Best!

WHAT a show! We went to see Tina, the musical at the Aldwych Theatre in London, and it was great, highly recommended if you have not already seen it.

We had an excellent journey to and from London and arrived in plenty of time to enjoy theatre land, Covent Garden and a leisurely lunch. Three of our group went to Jamie Oliver’s new restaurant and Andrew Lloyd Webber was there at the same time as them.

We had great seats in the stalls and sat back to enjoy the show. The actress who played Tina was amazing and her performance was energetic to say the least! Some of her family were in the audience and I am sure they were very proud of her. All the cast worked hard and every one had really good singing voices, I especially enjoyed the young girl who played Tina as a child.

The finale had us all on our feet singing and moving to ‘Simply the Best’ and a melody of other great songs from the show. We arrived back on the coach very uplifted and returned to Thurston before it was dark.



Margaret Knock

Monthly Lectures

Monday 1 July

From Beer to Bolognese

Steve Ruthen

There is no meeting in August

Monday 2 September

The duties of an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer

Jen Bacon

Monday 7 October

A Tour Manager’s Tales

Graham Dossett

Walks With Interest

Eighteen walkers joined the March walk, a 5.5 mile circular route starting from Rougham church taking in Blackthorpe Barn, the tumulus at Eastlow Hill and Kingshall Street. There was more road walking than usual to avoid some muddy areas following rain but we enjoyed a fine day. We finished with a group photo, during which we were lucky enough to see a Red Kite circling above our heads. We enjoyed a very good meal at the Roots Café at Blackthorpe Barn



Our April walk was different in that it was an urban walk. 16 of us followed The Talbot Trail in Sudbury. The Talbot was the breed of dog, now extinct, owned by Simon of Sudbury.



The Talbot

The trail consists of fourteen red bollards with statues on top dotted around the town depicting various episodes in its history, from a possible visit by Boudicea in AD44 through to Pongo and Perdita stopping for a

drink of water in 101 Dalmations .

It is an excellent way to explore Sudbury and reveals some intriguing and surprising information about the town's history, architecture, residents and visitors. We added in a stretch of the water meadows which were mostly dry in spite of the overnight rainfall and had our tea/coffee stop at the impressive St Gregory's Church, arriving just in time to catch the end of a bell ringers rehearsal. We later visited the Heritage Centre which has a very good free exhibition about the history of the area as well as a range of free leaflets with circular walks. Our last statue was harder to find as it was in the middle of a market stall which caused some amusement. In all we covered 5.5 miles and finished with a tasty lunch at The Hare in Long Melford.

Lynda Heywood

Thriplow Daffodil day

Members enjoyed a lovely day on Sunday 17th March at Thriplow to celebrate the daffodil. The whole village was closed to traffic and all the greens within the village had craft and plant stalls. There was a beer tent and a stage outside the pub with live bands playing throughout the day.



Morris dancers entertained at various times near the church in which there was a flower festival. There were many places selling food, tea and cakes. Some residents had opened their gardens to visitors and carts pulled by Shire horses were giving rides.



A fabulous day out.

Tina Taylor

Produced by Bryann Ward
Items for the next Newsletter please to:
bryann@brysuward.plus.com
Dead line - 23 August