



STOWMARKET AND DISTRICT
LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN RETIREMENT
(UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE)
Registered Charity No. 1002987



Newsletter No. 28

July 2011

From the Chairman

When one reads the U3A News it is very noticeable that those around the rest of the country and especially the south coast have developed strong connections with their local Universities and not only learn from them but also work alongside as well. Of course Cambridge is really a bit far away, but Anglia Ruskin has a centre in Colchester and the University of Essex is represented in Ipswich. This year I have been investigating the possibility of establishing some sort of co-operation with them on behalf not only of us, but also for the Suffolk and District Network of U3As. This is, of course, very early days so I cannot report any great advance or success in this as yet. But who knows with more work, and hopefully with your help, maybe we can achieve something useful. Surely this is a worthwhile project.

Philip Weir

01449 676 528

From the Secretary

There's been a lot of activity on the 'Groups' front since Tony Taylor has taken on the mantle of Groups Co-ordinator (see his piece below). Our May meeting was devoted to displaying all that our groups have to offer and was structured as a social event open to all, not just U3A members. Andrea Burton set the scene with an illustrated talk about the walking groups and amused us with humorous anecdotes along the way. Most groups had set up a table where information was freely available and where any queries could be answered, whilst in the Fisons room, the Play Reading and Keep Fit groups gave real time demonstrations of their activities. Many groups reported that they'd had new recruits as a result and the general consensus was that it had been a very successful day, much more so than previous similar ones.

In contrast to the previous two years, there was a disappointing response to the annual summer outing to Thursford when finally only 24 members took part. However, those who did go had a very enjoyable day which also included a stop-off on route to the Swaffham Eco Tech Centre (see Mike Hitchcock's article). The Committee will be discussing this at the next meeting to investigate if and how the summer outing in the future can be organised to make it more attractive to the members. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please pass these on to any Committee Member.

At the AGM in September, Helen Freeman our Programme Secretary will be resigning and our thanks go to her for the interesting and variety of speakers she has organised for us all (complete to August 2012). If you think that you or anyone you know may be interested in taking on this role please let any member of the Committee know and/or complete the nomination form which will be published shortly.

Peter Dakeyne

peter@dakeyne.com

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Notes from the Group Coordinator

Interest has been shown in starting a number of new groups in the Stowmarket U3A. If they can be developed, they would add to the many successful current activities enjoyed by local members, offering even greater diversity. Also, we often experience problems where more people want to join a group than can be catered for. Second groups would help to provide more opportunities.

Getting new groups up and running is not a simple task. There are things to sort out, e.g. Where will the group meetings be held? Who will host it? If equipment or resources are needed, where will they come from? Which morning, afternoon or evening would be the best time? With good will and a little effort, solutions can be found.

As the local groups coordinator I can, hopefully, be helpful in sorting some of these things out. If you have an idea for a group, or want to join one you have heard something about, or want to discuss venues or equipment or other matters about interest groups, please contact me. The address & telephone number are noted below.

Here is a list of the new groups that have been suggested so far. They don't exist yet, but if you want to be involved in one or some of them, please contact me and I will do what I can to help.

BOOK GROUP - (a second) & BRIDGE, CANASTA, & FRENCH CONVERSATION GROUPS

Tony Taylor,

30 Danes Court Ave, Stowmarket IP14 1QE

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Since the last Newsletter :-

March :-

Weather forecasting as seen and done by Suffolk Radio forecaster stimulated a lot of questions and showed how specialized and difficult this operation is.

April :-

Mrs Kate Jewell's talk on 'Cakes, Ale and Partying' in medieval Suffolk was perhaps a bit academic but the points raised were very enlightening and indeed surprising. It proved to be a very good talk.

May :-

Our groups day this year was well attended and would appear to have been the most successful so far.

Each group played its part and much interest was raised by their efforts.

June :-

Unfortunately our Summer Outing this year had very poor support, however those that went were extremely pleased and entertained by their visits to Swaffham's Eco Centre and on to Thursford and the two tours there: behind the scenes and the history of the complex -not to mention the music from the Wurlitzer by Robert Wolfe. A really nice day was had by all.

July :-

'In Search of the Smoking Gun' part 2 by Mr. Brian Heard.

And now for :-

August :-

This year's Garden Party will take place at the Rugby Club Grounds from 2.30pm. Please see the Notice board for further details.

September :-

The AGM followed by a short talk by Mr Pat Leon.

October :-

Mrs Joyce Kimber will talk about 'Codes, Ciphers and Enigma'.

November:-

Mr Mike Robinson will enlighten us about 'Life in a Country Cottage before Electricity and Running Water'

News from the Groups.....

Art Appreciation :-

Stowmarket Art Appreciation Group in U3A is coming to the close of its Spring and Summer meetings. The final session will be spent reviewing where we have been and where we plan to go next in our tour of the world's art. Some of the locations and artworks have been quite exotic – with the art of Holland, Spain, Scotland, the USA, featuring excitingly amongst the many places we have 'visited'. Apart from these we have looked at the nuances of *portraits* over the ages, *architecture*, and the often jolly and scandalous subject of *cartoons*. Very recently we had a look at what art looks like today – Art Since 2000. Mmmm!

The class remains very full. While we hate to turn away prospective members, we are limited by space. If any of you jointly fancies the idea of setting up a second group, we have lots of resources to hand and willing helpers to get you underway.

Tony Taylor :-

01449 258 192

Computer Group :-

Since the last Newsletter we have had some very interesting discussions and presentations. In March, Marian gave us a comprehensive introduction to photo manipulation using the installed 'Photoshop Elements' programme on the network. Because of the numerous bank holidays in April, the school's Easter break came very early so we had to temporarily move back to the Woodfields Bowls Club where I gave an illustrated talk all about PDFs. Back at the school in May, Roy took us further into the delights of Photoshop Elements. June was a particularly exciting session when we were allowed (with our laptops) to access the teachers' network so that we could download and install 'Skype' a programme that allows anyone to make free video calls around the world (many thanks to visiting lecturer, Steve Crooke for an excellent presentation). For the session in July, I will be giving an introduction to Windows Movie Maker. The August meeting will be at the Bowls Club when Philip will giving hints and tips on 'Windows' and 'Word' and in September we will be having a look at 'Online Banking' in a talk given by a lady from NatWest Bank in Stowmarket.

All meetings start with 'Agony Corner' when members can raise any computer related issues or problems for discussion. There's usually somebody around the table who's had the same problem and solved it or, if not, some research is done later and the answers passed to everyone. If you go onto the Computer Group page on the website (please log on to www.u3astowmarket.org.uk, then click 'Groups' then 'Computer') you will find links to notes for all meetings back to November last year.

As always, we want to encourage beginners and the more experienced alike and although we are already a fairly large group, there is still room for new members.

Unfortunately, there needs to be a change to our scheduling from September as I've recently been informed that due to changes in the pupil timetable we will not be able to have our usual Monday morning slot. Although another possible venue is available, it was agreed at our meeting on 11th July that we would continue at Stowupland on the 2nd Wednesday, meeting 1:30pm for coffee then a 2:00pm start - commencing 14th September. However, as noted above, our August meeting will be at 10:00am for 10:30am at Woodfields Bowls Club on Monday 8th August.

Peter Dakeyne peter@dakeyne.com 01449 781 562

Country Strolls :-

Longer :-

Despite the dry weather bringing the bluebells and other plants to bloom early, our walking group enjoyed a good walk around several woods near Bentley where we saw lots of beautiful bluebells. In May we enjoyed a walk around Mendlesham including a wooded path around their recently planted Millenium Wood. Another lovely day saw us stretching our legs from Norton Church and having a good meal at the local pub. The June walk took us through The Grundle near Stanton, an interesting 'gorge' possibly formed during the Ice Age. Our programme for the next six months is now on the website.

Andrea Burton

01449 774 869

Shorter :-

A warm welcome to Monica, who has joined the strollers. Hope that you will enjoy the walks with fun.

The weather was kind to us when we did a lovely walk led by Judy to Bury St. Edmunds, taking in a wonderful view of the Cathedral.

Angela kindly led a walk at Gislingham: another lovely warm day. A rural setting at Rougham, led by Marion was very tranquil. Thank you Barbara for a very enjoyable walk at Haughley. All our walks end with tea and cakes. Again a 'Big Thank You' to all the leaders. Happy walking.

Helen Mead

01449 673 660

Discussion Group :-

This year our membership has shrunk a little but our range of subject has been not only very wide but has also stimulated a lot of voiced opinion which has always been listened to with great tolerance and understanding. Our new season starts in September and we would like to welcome more new members.

Philip Weir

01449 676 528

Myths & Legends :-

Whilst we are but a very small group we have had a great season discussing all sorts of myths and legends both from the very old and even those of surprisingly up to date ones. We have a very interesting and wide ranging programme for next season starting in September and we would welcome any new members whole heartedly.

Philip Weir

01449 676 528

Play Reading Group :-

Since our last report we have read The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde in which we found so many well known quotes, and enjoyed the flow of the play so much that we got carried away and completely lost track of time so almost lost our tea break!!! Next we read A Dolls House by the Norwegian play write Henrik Ibsen which was in its day a startlingly bold exposition of hypocrisy in a seemingly happy marriage, although this was written in 1879 it still had a lot to say to us today. The play is made up of many one to one conversations which carried on over several pages so I think we can all feel justly proud of the way we kept the pace up during this reading

We now look forward to restarting in September and have chosen six classic plays to get our teeth into and look forward to becoming other people for one afternoon a month.

Helen Freeman

01449 613 060

Poetry Group :-

The group have been on an adventure through our poetry books over the past few months, as having chosen a subject instead of a poet we have found a wide ranging amount of poets, some well known and many less so or who have some how fallen out of fashion at this time. We have read poems on War and Peace, Named places, The Spirit World, by Anonymous writers, and surprised ourselves by the amount we found on Out of Space.

We enjoyed a visit to read for the activity group at Partridge court, where we read a mix of humorous poems and some old favourites which many of the listeners were familiar with from school days.

It gave us great pleasure to share our love of poetry with others.

Helen Freeman

01449 613 060

Gardens and Things :-

Harold Turner

01449 676 882

Memoirs Group :-

Pat Smith

01449 675 568

Town and Village History :-
Terry Potter 01449 770 256

Wine Appreciation Group :-
Zoe Bystricky 01449 676 220

Book Club :-
Mary Bradley 01449 775 628

Democracy & Election Systems :-
David Chapman 01449 736 223

Entertainment (Theatrical) Group
Joan Varley 01449 612 767

Luncheon Club :-
Angela Bentley 01449 780 274
Pauline Taylor 01449 678 954

Keep Fit :-
Pauline Taylor 01449 678 954

Music Appreciation :-
Connie Ruegg 01449 674 673

Scrabble Groups :-
Sheila Dobey 01449 677 265

P.S THINKING ABOUT INTEREST GROUPS

Often members express a desire to explore an interest, join a group of like-minded people in an educational and social activity, or experience something new. When it comes down to it though, the effort of getting involved in the organisation of the activities appears greater than they want to expend. Consequently, the life enriching experience becomes a non-starter.

Stowmarket is very well blessed with activity groups: art, sports, music, educational, historical, social groups abound in the town. Where, then, does U3A fit in if the range is already so wide? Well, belonging to Stowmarket U3A costs £10 a year. Not many societies and interest groups can match that for value. Most of the U3A groups meet during the day. The people in the interest groups are of a similar age group. There is a sharing in the way in which the studies are put together. There is no need to compete, match a challenge, or write an evaluation.

Groups do not necessarily have to meet long-term. Perhaps we should consider study groups that meet for five or six sessions only to look at a specific subject, say, a period of history, or an Italian film season, or a polar explorer, or a current affairs topic. The essence of U3A activities is shared learning: *'The learners teach and the teachers learn'* is a fine maxim.

Often people are reluctant to express an interest because of the thought of the responsibility of running a group. Many of the existing groups share the 'leadership' amongst the members, some doing this bit, some arranging that bit, some arranging one session, some arranging the next. It should be possible, surely, to bring together people with an existing interest or those wanting to explore something new, without having to put **all** our time and effort into it. Just a little bit shared would go a long way.

Anon

U3A Suffolk & District Network: :-

The last S&D Network meeting was hosted by Lowestoft U3A on 12th May. There were only 5 of the 13 member U3As represented with a total of 14 attendees (including 5 from Stowmarket!). The full minutes and much more information can be viewed on the web site, www.u3asuffolknetwork.org.uk.

The big success this year has been the Spring Symposium, **'Celebrating Suffolk'** held at Stowupland School in May. Stowmarket was well represented – see picture. Here is a report about the event by Frances Lewis, Chairman Suffolk and District Network of U3As

"On Saturday 21st May, 150 members of U3As across Suffolk met at a school in Stowupland for a Study Day 'Celebrating Suffolk'. And it certainly was a great celebration! Four speakers gave us their ideas and information about special aspects of life in Suffolk.

Mark Mitchels, a popular lecturer and author of several books about East Anglia, described the development of the county from earliest times, through the prosperity of the wool trade and the development of mechanised farming, to the more recent growth and essential economic input of tourism. The second lecture was given by David Dougan, one of our own members, who stood in for Dr Lucy Marten at the last moment, as Dr Marten was unwell. David spoke about the Civil War, especially as it was influenced by Oliver Cromwell, an East Anglian man whose meteoric rise to power, impelled by his brilliance as a military commander, brought such a vast change to English life in the 17th century.

After the lunch break, when members were able to enjoy their picnics outside in the sunshine, Charlie Haylock, known for his skill in local dialects, and his knowledge of the development of Suffolk speech, explained how our language has grown through the injection of words from 'invaders' and the reasons why we so often have two words for the same thing. He demonstrated a variety of dialects with his own special brand of humour. In the comments of one member 'It is not often that entertainment comes along together with education. We enjoyed it immensely.'

The final speaker of the day was Tim Passmore (the Chief Executive of Choose Suffolk, which promotes our county as a great place to live, work, visit and do business), who spoke to us about the prospects for Suffolk in the next fifty years. The working group, led by David Dougan, who had organised the Day, were congratulated on the success of a really interesting day spent studying the riches of our county."

Plans for Autumn Academy, AA6, are well advanced. Please be aware that applications must be received by the end of July. Leaflets and application forms will be available at the July meeting, or contact Sally Taylor direct or download (via the 'Meetings' page) on our website www.u3astowmarket.org.uk.

Peter Dakeyne	01449 781 562	
Sally Taylor	01449 258 192	or
Philip Weir	01449 676 528	

U3A Central Office :-

Full details have now been published for the 2011 AGM and Conference at the East Midlands Conference Centre, 16th - 19th September. An impressive line up of speakers, Baroness Estelle Morris, Prof. Peter Kalmus (Emeritus Professor of Physics, Queen Mary College, London), Prof. Heinz Wolff (Emeritus Professor of Bioengineering, Brunel), Prof. John Benyon (Learning and the Ageing Society) and Dr. Eric Midwinter (Look Back in Wonder) ensures there's something in the programme for everyone. On the Saturday afternoon there will be a series of interactive themed seminars/discussion groups covering such topics as communications; keeping your U3A vibrant; publicity; networks; finding group leaders and committee members; organising study days and residential schools, and dealing with waiting lists. See Peter for a full information pack or visit the member section at www.u3a.org.uk and click on 'Document Downloads' to get your own.

THE CHASE – GENERAL KNOWLEDGE QUIZ. The U3A have been approached by the producers of this programme who are looking for contestants for series 5. It is described as a game of strategy and team work and the idea is to use your general knowledge to outwit the Chaser. If you are interested, please apply online at www.itv.com/thechase or email thechase@itv.com. Auditions will be held across the UK from August 2011. Peter Dakeyne 01449 781 562 peter@dakeyne.com

Summer Outing to Thursford, 15th June

Our first port of call was the Swaffham Eco Tech Centre. The centre piece is the wind turbine with 30m blades and a viewing platform. I didn't attempt the climb!

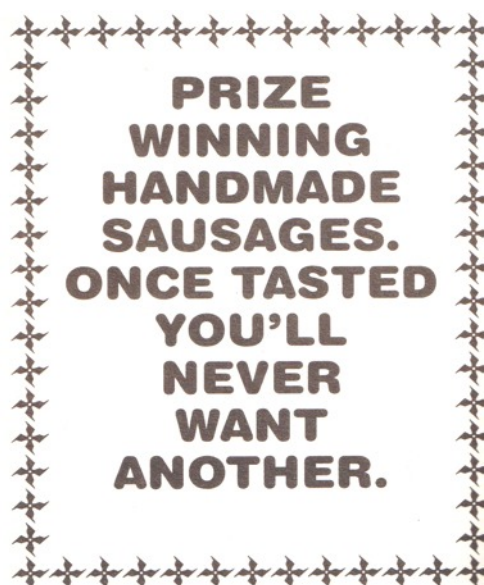
Thursford itself is in a remote part of North Norfolk and is best known for its Christmas festivities. From January to October they plan for the Christmas Spectacular which is held in November and December and which is the largest of its kind in the U.K. During the 2 months there are 86 performances, each accompanied by a Wurlitzer organ and orchestra, with 115 performers/singers, and always with several changes of costume. There is a separate Winter Wonderland for the children, where there are 1 million light bulbs! (Secret: 4 Father Christmases in separate grottos - they make sure the children only see one!) There's seating for 1,500 people each performance, with coaches from all across the U.K.

For our visit we were able to see the 'Thursford Collection' of all types of steam engines and roundabout rides. Then there were the 'Back Stage' and the 'Behind the Scenes' tours. Amongst many other things we saw hundreds of costumes and two Wurlitzer organ performances.

We had a wonderful day and everyone seemed particularly pleased and satisfied.

See the pictures on page 6.

Mike Hitchcock



Sign at a farm shop



Scenes from our June Outing to the Swaffham EcoCentre and on to Thursford Steam Museum with the two tours - One behind the scenes.



Charley Haylock speaking at our Spring Symposium



Scenes from the Town & Village History Group's visit to Cressing Temple

Group leaders and future contributors, - if you wish to be remembered in this Newsletter next time, Please note the dates at the bottom of the last page and ensure that your copy is in on time !!

Our August meeting this year will be

A Garden Party

On Wednesday the 17th

At the Rugby Club Rooms

- just beside Stow Lodge on Chiltern Way.

***There is a large free car park
and the site is on a bus route.***

You are all invited to join us at 2.30 pm

There will be :-

Refreshments

Some games & competitions

Plenty of friendly chat and conversations

***We hope the new venue will provide plenty of
space and that a good time will be had by all --
and at no cost to you !***

Come & enjoy yourself with us

Deadlines for the next issues :-

30th September for the October copy, and 28th February for the March copy.