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Chairman's April message

I hope that you have all spent a pleasant Easter, a time for families to be together perhaps sharing time in leisurely activities out and about or relaxing at home. It is a wonderful festival and all the better for being a whole lot less commercialized than Christmas although having said that who doesn't like indulging in a chocolate egg?

I hope that you enjoyed the last Speaker, Helen Frost who made her second visit to Thrapston, this time with an illustrated talk on events dating back to the Great War. This was a perfect illustration of just how diverse the topics and what a balanced programme our Speaker Seeker produces. There will be another enthralling talk at our meeting on 19th April.

By the time you read this we will have held our Open Day at the Plaza on 6th April and if all the planning and hard work that went into it is any measure of success, I think we can be confident that it would be a very rewarding day for all who helped in any way or visited to see what we do.

You will see official notices elsewhere in this Newsletter referring to our Annual General Meeting scheduled for 19th May ahead of our normal Speakers presentation. At this meeting all serving committee members must stand down and some will not be seeking re-election. Unfortunately, after having served the specified three years in the role Wendy our Business Secretary is standing down. She taking a well-earned break and we are in urgent need of a replacement. Wendy has filled this crucial role with great panache but is now taking a rest.

The nomination forms for the AGM will be available at the April Plaza meeting and they are on the website. Completed forms must be returned by 26th April to the Business Secretary Wendy Davies or to the postal address on the form.

I promise you that a Trustees role is not onerous and I have found it to be rewarding to have input into the decision making and being part of a team committed to ensuring the continuing success of OUR u3a as we head towards what we all hope will be a warm and dry Summer.

Paul



19th April 2024 Meeting

Presentation starts at 10:30 after AGM



“WW2 Double Agent -The Life and Crimes of Agent Zigzag”

19th April 2024 Speaker: Paul Barwick

Arnold ‘Edward’ Chapman was one of the most remarkable men ever employed by the Secret Service Mi5, not least because at the same time he was also a German trained secret agent parachuted in wartime Britain to commit sabotage and spy on his own countrymen. But Eddie Chapman always had a plan. His incredible story, immortalised in the film Triple Cross is a tale of an adventurer, rogue and criminal for who life was an opportunity.

Paul Barwick, who after a career of 34 years in police service has now retired and set up his own walking tour business in London, focused on real Life International espionage



17th May 2024 Meeting

AGM to commence at 10:15—followed by Presentation

Doors open at 9:45

AGM

Followed by

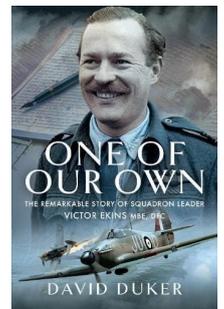
*The Remarkable story of Battle of Britain pilot
Squadron Leader Victor Ekins MBE DFC*

17th May 2024 Speaker: David Duker



This is the enthralling story of a young man who found himself at the epicentre of one of the biggest turning points in recent history-The Battle of Britain. Guided by the diaries that he meticulously kept throughout his wartime experience and that lay unread for over 80 years, Victor Howard Ekins’ story is one of duty, loss, friendship and love.

He would meet his wife Kim, a ‘plotter’ serving at RAF Kenley, during the intensity of the Battle of Britain and their relationship would go on to flourish against all odds. He also rose through the ranks to become a Squadron Leader who was admired and respected by those who served with him.





“Keeping Faith at The Front during the First World War “

15th March 2024 Speaker: Helen Frost

Hellen’s talk was largely about the work of chaplains in the first world war, but also about the role of faith in the lives of your average Tommy. She reminded us that in the Edwardian period, faith was at the centre of most people’s lives and ruled and regulated what they did and how they lived. However, surprisingly, only 25% of people went to church regularly although 90% sent their children.

At the start of the war there were 117 full-time chaplains. By the end of the war there were 3,700 of which 50% were Anglican. Catholic chaplains numbered just 17 at the start and 649 by the end. There were of course, many other faiths as soldiers from countries such as: India; Nepal; Morocco; The West Indies and China (Chinese Labour Core), fought or worked in construction throughout the war.

Many chaplains lived amongst the troops in the front line, though initially, the Church of England prohibited its chaplains from visiting the front, making them very unpopular with the troops. Shelling and fighting made formal services impractical and chaplains would hold informal meetings whenever conditions allowed. The French army even dug small trench chapels in the front line.

Chaplains did much more than attend to the spiritual needs of the men. Some of their roles were:

Postmen, delivering mail to the troops – 12 million per week along with 60,000 parcels.

Education – teaching illiterate men to read and write so they could communicate with their families via letters, or writing letters on their behalf.

Accounting and pay.

Medical Orderlies and stretch bearers.

Cobbling.

Physical and mental support for troops who were homesick, frightened and in many cases, suffering PTSD (shellshock).

By the end of the war:

179 Chaplains had been killed.

3 had been awarded the Victoria Cross (VC).

67 had been awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).

487 had been awarded the Military Cross.



This months story : Sheila Brownsea



There I was lying on a sunbed by the pool in sunny Puerto Rico, Gran Canaria, reading my book. Along came a group of svelte looking people in wetsuits asking sunbathers to join them in the pool for a trial scuba dive. Well, I thought I'd give it a go.

The mask was a biggie for me as you don't use your nose at all to breathe, just the regulator (mouth piece) which is attached to the air cylinder supported on a BCD (buoyancy control device). Your brain is telling you that you can't breathe underwater, that's the first hurdle you have to get over! Following the try dive I said to my husband Keith, I'd just like to have a try in the sea so off we went down to the pier to the dive centre. I was then persuaded to take the PADI Open Water course. Having purchased the tuition book I thought what have I let myself in for? However, I managed to complete the course and was drawn to the sport. On a later holiday I completed my Advanced Open Water certificate which enables divers to go a little deeper.

I joined a BSAC club first of all in Norfolk. However I later left them and joined Gildenburgh Water, Whittlesey. They have a large lake, and are PADI certificated. Very different from the open sea. However, I stuck with them and first gained my Rescue Diver, then Master Scuba Diver and finally Divemaster certificate. This last one enabled me to assist with training new divers. I stayed with Gildenburgh Water (working without pay, just your lunch) for many years. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and got a real thrill when the newbies gained their certificates.

My son-in-law Matt phoned one cold January day and said his Solihull club were doing a wreck diving holiday to the Red Sea and asked would I be interested in joining him. I had a very long think about this and finally decided I would go. So, in November 2005 I set off on a new adventure.

They take you to a 12 metre spot to get you correctly weighted as the Red Sea is much more salty. Normally I use about 8 kilo and after several add-ons I ended up with 12 kilos! The first dive was to the wreck of the SS Carnatic, a clipper ship of 871 tons, built at Sunderland by Pile in 1867. The ride out to the site on a small Zodiac rib was really scary, as the waves were about 1.5 metres. BCD's had to be fully deflated meaning upon entry to the water you would sink immediately – not the way I was used to – and all eight divers had to leave the boat on the word go to ensure we got through the rough sea - no time for errors! As we started our decent, WOW what a sight awaited us, an underwater cathedral with the sun shining through the ship's spars. Dive over and back to the ship for the debrief.

Since that trip I have done 5 trips to the Red Sea, so beautiful. I've also dived on the Great Barrier Reef, the Bahamas, Madeira, St Abbs and the Maldives. Of course my comfort zone is always Gran Canaria where I started my diving career. The dive school has changed hands and offices many times and now there is a relatively new set up there.



I've dabbled in underwater photography for a few years, The course I did was with film so that tells you how long ago that was! Anyhow I realised I was a better spotter than I was a photographer and was also missing what was going by! We've also done a lot of walking, but that's another story...



Me in my favourite place and a Lion Fish in The Red Sea

If you have a story to tell, give me Kelly, a call 07718386330 and we can have a chat and hopefully it will be your story next time.

Thrapston & District U3A Annual General Meeting

May 17th 2024

The Plaza, Thrapston

To commence at 10.15. Doors will open at 9.45.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the 2023 AGM
3. Chairman's Report
4. Group Co-ordinator's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Approval of the examined accounts
7. Approve appointment of the Examiner of Accounts
8. The Constitution to be amended to allow committee members in exceptional circumstances to serve beyond the existing three year limit
9. Election of the Committee for 2024/25 - Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Business Secretary, (the Executive Members), and a committee of 8 other members.

* Please note all written nominations must be received no later than 10:00 am on Saturday 20th April 2024.

Nomination forms are available from Committee members and on the website www.thrapstonu3a.co.uk

Wendy Davies

Business Secretary

04/04/2024

Registered Charity Number 1179593

Butterfly & Birdwatching group, Barnwell Country Park outing 6th March

Thanks to everyone who came for the walk around Barnwell country park, it was warm and sunny with hardly a breeze, perfect bird watching conditions.

We arrived at Barnwell to find two Robins brawling in the car park, it was a real battle with them rolling about on the ground, fortunately they were both ok and the loser flew off unscathed.

Colin, Maureen, Anita, Theresa, Wendy, Steph and myself headed along Mill lake towards the bird hide and stopped on the way to feed the lakes resident swans, on arrival the bird hide was already occupied with a group of pre-school children and their assistants, they were fascinated watching the birds flying onto the logs close to the hide to eat the bird seed.



Blackbird



Wren



Squirrel



Blue Tit

After they vacated the hide we took up our places there and after a bird seed top up, in flew Great tits, Blue tits, Dunnocks, Nuthatches, Robins, Wood pigeons, Wrens, a Blackbird and a couple of Squirrels, it was lovely to see and photograph them in such close quarters.

After half an hour in the hide we moved on, following the path by the river and saw five Cormorants perched in a tree drying their wings, there was a couple of Small Egrets in the distance. Paul arrived and caught up with us just in time to see a flock of Redwings and fieldfares sitting in the trees enjoying the sunshine.



Fieldfare

We followed the path to the bridge over the North Lake where we were met by an aggressive white Goose known by the park rangers as "King Cuthbert" quite a scary bird, after feeding him and the swans, Canadian geese and some Mallards it was time to go home. Barnwell is a great place to visit in the winter with a lovely bird hide and with a good variety of birds to see, well worth the visit and thanks to Colin for some of the photos.



King Cuthbert

Finally for the Nordic Walking Group: - April is the start of the butterfly season, look out for the following spring butterflies on your walks:



Orange Tip



Brimstone



Comma



Peacock



Red Admiral

Also look out for Small Tortoiseshell, Speckled Wood, Grizzled and Dingy Skippers and a few others.

Bob Simpson

Day Trips & Outings



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

Originally this trip to see the State Rooms at Buckingham Palace was booked for Thursday 19th September. However there was so much interest in this trip, (75 names taken at the last count), that I have decided to run a second, earlier coach trip on Monday 2nd September. The cost will be between £50 & £55, dependent upon the number of members on each coach, but will be the same for everyone.

I now need all members who originally signed up, to let me know which date they would prefer. This means that I can ensure everyone who wants to go to Buckingham Palace can get on one or other of the coaches. There is, of course, now availability for any other member(s) to add their name(s) to my booking lists.

Either see me at the monthly meeting, text me on 07736 445 658, or email me on peterandjeanmole@btinternet.com together with your mobile phone number. **Jean**



TURKEY & TINSEL

This year's Turkey & Tinsel will be from **Friday 6th to Monday 9th December**, and the cost will be around **£260 - £265** to include the coach and 4 days/3 nights at The Suncliff Hotel in Bournemouth. This popular event includes a-la-carte 3 course meal on every evening, followed by in-house entertainment. Also included is tea and coffee on arrival, a sherry reception on the first night and a Bucks Fizz reception on the Sunday. On the Saturday night which is designated "Christmas Day" there will be a traditional Christmas dinner with crackers & a Christmas gift. The hotel also has a heated indoor pool and sauna if you just want to relax. On the Monday we will be stopping on the way back at Winchester Christmas Market where you can stroll around, buy a coffee or have lunch...provided it is not pouring with rain!! **Jean**



PANTOMIME ~ JACK & THE BEANSTALK

For those of you coming to Bournemouth, I have booked 52 seats for the afternoon performance of Jack & the Beanstalk at the Bournemouth Pavilion. The cost of this is **£35** for a seat in the stalls, and includes a free ice cream. See me at the monthly meeting to sign up for the Pantomime. **Jean**

DEPOSITS

Unfortunately if members cancel an event after final costings have been calculated, it may put the event into a loss making situation. Therefore in order to avoid this I am now asking for a **£10** non-refundable deposit in order to secure your place on all trips that I organise. **Jean**



Telephone numbers given in the newsletter are usually preceded by the Thrapston STD code—01832.
Any Raunds numbers (indicated by R) need the STD code 01933

Thrapston and District U3A Committee 2023/2024

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Off Committee Roles 2023/2024

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A note from the Editor

This newsletter is published on behalf of the committee of the Thrapston and District U3A. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Editor, or of the committee of the Thrapston and District U3A, or of the U3A Trust.

Please note that items for inclusion in the next newsletter should reach the Editor by the last day of the month.

Editor and publisher : Tina Jones - email: editorthrapstonu3a@gmail.com

Website : www.thrapstonu3a.co.uk where details of the committee and their roles can be found along with details of all the groups.

You can also join us on **Facebook** — **Thrapston and District U3A**

APRIL

Thrapston & District U3A is a registered charity number 1179593