

From Peter Shannon, Chairperson (16/12/2014)

We had 125 members attending our monthly meeting held at the Public Hall Beccles on Wednesday December 10th. Our guest speaker was Dean Parkin, a local poet who gave us an insight into his life as a poet and the people who had influenced his thinking. His light hearted talk informed us when he starts wearing long johns for winter, and included several poems. His poem “Beccles Is, Beccles Was, Beccles Says” was particularly well received by an appreciative audience. Dean announced that his next project is A Poem for Suffolk which may be premiered at Beccles Public Hall later in 2015. We have included a link to Dean’s [website](#) so that you can follow this new venture. Hopefully Dean’s poems will inspire members to take up the pen or to start up a poetry group.



One of our members Brian Glass has already produced a poem following the December meeting which I hope you enjoy.

*The U3A has at last arrived here in Beccles
In a room full of people with more wrinkles than freckles
They all want to learn, no classes, no fuss
Arriving here by car and many by bus
Grey hair, glasses and happy faces abound
Entry to hear interesting speakers is just a pound
Meeting new people, getting out of the house
Not staying home being quiet as a mouse
Get fit, have fun, making new friends
Do something amazing for learning never ends.*

Existing interest groups were on offer again and received much attention. Two new groups were introduced: Spinning (Craft) and Short Tennis. During this festive period and into the New Year it is hoped that all groups will have met and will begin to establish themselves with the help and guidance of our Group Coordinator, Sandy Perrin. Interest groups are the life blood of U3As Our groups will be self managed co-operatives with a convenor who will help guide the group in its activity and be the contact point for the Groups Coordinator. We are now looking for convenors to volunteer to help start groups in 2015. If you have a good understanding of a subject which can be run as an interest group, please contact our Group Coordinator via the contacts page on the website.

Just a reminder that the following interest groups are holding their inaugural meetings in January.

- The Local History group will have its first meeting on 26th January in Hungate Church, Hungate Beccles starting at 2.30pm. It is anticipated that the attendance at this meeting will be 70 plus and that a number of History interest groups will be set up at this meeting.

- The Gardening group are also meeting for the first time at 2pm at St John Ambulance Hall Blyburgate Beccles on January 8th.
- French Conversation Group will meet for their first meeting on January 13th at the British Legion Club from 10am to 12 noon.
- Theatre Studies are holding their first meeting at No 7 Saltgate Beccles on 15th January at 2pm.

Trips and Visits – a full listing can be found on the events page. Please note that two very popular shows next year, **Barnum and Jersey Boys now have to be booked and paid for by 8th January**. Apologies for this deadline but it is a requirement of the Theatre Royal. There is a link to the Booking Form for all events on the Events page where all the outings/trips for the year are listed. Please book early to avoid disappointment and meet the deadline dates stated. Remember you must be a U3A member to join a group or attend an organised U3A trip or visit.

Keep looking at our website as Felicity Hillier our webmaster is working hard to make it a dynamic centre of communication which will inform and advice on all aspects of Beccles U3A.

The site has attracted a great deal of interest as indicated by the recorded number of contacts (hits) on the various pages.

The programme of speakers for our monthly meetings for 2015 is now being finalised and will be available in January. There will be a hard copy newsletter also produced in January which will include the speakers for the monthly meetings, a listing of all events plus the list of interest groups with their details and any updates. This newsletter will in the main be for our members who do not have an access to the internet. In addition to this, members are encouraged to attend the monthly meeting for a regular update on all things Beccles U3A. It also gives you the opportunity to speak to Steering Committee members who will be able to either answer your query or direct you to someone who can fully answer your question.

Our speaker for the next meeting in January will be Mark Mitchels who will be talking about The Lost City of Dunwich. The attendance fee will be £1.00 for members and £2.50 for guests.

Finally, I would just like to say

Merry Christmas and a Happy and Peaceful New Year to you all from the Beccles U3A Steering Committee, Minutes Secretary, Webmaster and Accessibility Officer.