

Su3aN



Sudbury Newsletter

u3a learn,  
laugh,  
live



## Chairman's message

Having served on the committee for several years I was pleased to have been nominated as chairman and thank you for supporting me.

We are very fortunate that we have a full, strong and experienced committee. We welcome one new member to the committee, Bruce Clegg, who is responsible for Publicity, a role which due to the present circumstances is important in the re-launching of our u3a.

I must pay a tribute to Anita Floodgate, my predecessor who served as chair for three years, who worked so hard to keep our u3a active and vibrant, particularly in the last year and despite the pandemic.

Spring is very much in the air and with it is coming the end of the lockdown. Starting slowly from the end of March with the resumption of outdoor activities through to the end of June when, if all has gone well, all our interest groups should be getting back to normal.

What we have all been missing through the lockdown is human contact and at last it looks as if we shall soon be able to meet again face-to-face.

When you receive your new membership card you will see that Colette Bentley has assembled a full programme of interesting and varied speakers and groups co-ordinator Jennie Leech has almost 80 interest groups ready to re-start as soon as we are able to.

In addition to our newsletter please remember our website [www.u3asites.org.uk/sudbury](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/sudbury) which is regularly updated and gives full information of events and groups.

I am confident we can look forward to an exciting year of learning, laughing, and living.

*Brian Orton*

## It's membership renewal time again

It is time to renew your annual membership, at the new reduced rate of £5. **Everyone needs to do this**, except those of you who joined earlier in this year (2021) and paid the full £5; if so, you should ignore this request as your membership will continue through until the end of March 2022. The renewal form is either on page 9 of the emailed Su3aN, which you can print out, or was included as a separate sheet in the printed version. If any of your details have changed since the last time you renewed, please indicate on the form where this has happened. This will help me to keep my records up to date. An increasing number of members are transferring £5 directly into our bank account. This is very helpful to both the Treasurer and myself. Details of our account are on the renewal form. Please make sure that your name and, if you know it, your membership number, are included in the transfer details.

*John Freeborn*

Membership Secretary

## Next Newsletter

For the May issue please send your contributions by **Thursday 6 May 2021**.

If you miss the deadline we may not be able to include your copy. Please, wherever possible, send details by email as a **Word attachment to the email in Arial 12p font in plain text, 350 words maximum, to [heavenly\\_white\\_one@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:heavenly_white_one@yahoo.co.uk)**

Alternatively handwritten contributions may be sent to:

**Jean White, 64 Vicarage Lane, Acton, Sudbury CO10 0UQ. Tel: 01787 370654**

Whilst every care has been taken in the compilation of this newsletter, errors and omissions are not the responsibility of the publisher or of the editor. Opinions, where expressed, are not necessarily those of the publisher or the editor.

If a group isn't mentioned in Su3aN, please check your Membership Card or the Sudbury u3a website, for details of Leader and Telephone Number.

**Printed by Indigo Ross, Spectrum House, Woodhall Business Park, Sudbury CO10 1WH  
Telephone: 01787 880260**

## Speaker's report for January

### *The Bronze Horseman of St Petersburg*

by Jenny Anthill



Our knowledgeable speaker gave us a brief history of the Tzar of Russia, Peter the Great, 1672-1725, as well as the story behind his statue and of Puskin's poem, *The Bronze Horseman*.

Peter was a larger than life character, as well as being 6'7" tall. He was named Tzar when he was only ten years old, but had to oust out his older sister Sophia when he was seventeen, then, when his older brother died in 1692, he became the Tzar. He disliked the stuffy religious atmosphere in Moscow, the then capital. After a

trip to England and Holland in 1697 he was taken with the European styles of dress and on returning to Russia insisted his courtiers shave off their beards.

He wanted to build a port city on the Baltic, to be a 'window into Europe' but first he had to get rid of the Swedes who held the land. Having succeeded, he went on to create a beautiful city, but in the process 7000 workers died during the construction. The land was prone to flooding and was frozen for 150 days a year.

The statue of him mounted on a rearing horse was commissioned by Catherine the Great. Designed by a French sculptor, it took twelve years to complete and was unveiled in 1782. It was mounted on an enormous rock from the forest and stands in the centre of the city. Today it is a popular backdrop for newly wed couples to have for their photographs.

Alexander Pushkin's poem of 1833, *The Bronze Horseman*, described a man whose wife had been drowned in the floods, having an illusion and being chased to his death by the rider and horse. The meaning of the poem is ambivalent. It was later interpreted by the Bolsheviks as supporting the 'little man', but many of Pushkin's friends were exiled by Tzar Nicholas to Siberia. The poet himself died in a duel defending his wife's honour. The gesture of the horseman is also ambivalent; he was known to be cruel and autocratic, but he certainly left his mark for posterity. The city has now reverted back from Leningrad to be called St Petersburg. For modern tourists there is much to ponder, even 'virtually'.

*Andy Edgecombe*

### *Future Speakers*

**27 April at 10am:** David Allen on *Blood, Guts and Gore*. True Stories of Murder in Victorian England. David is a talented speaker and storyteller with a fascination for Victorian history. His knowledgeable presenting style is fun and energetic with a touch of humour

**25 May at 10am:** Tim Young on *Spitfire Ladies / Ladies of the Air*. The part played by women in the development of flight and flying but little was known of their exploits.

*Colette Bentley*

### ***Collision in the Clouds***

by Anne Grimshaw



Anne's talk was about the challenge she set herself to find the owner of a pair of flying goggles which had been in the possession of René Petitjean, who had been four years old in 1945 in Eastern France. Anne's previous research, written up in her book *The Last Flight of Lancaster LL919*, had led to her having a strong connection with this region of France. On revisiting the village of Landéville in 2016 she was given the goggles. Through hours of detective work, she learnt that two Flying Fortress bombers from the American 18<sup>th</sup> bomb squadron 34<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group based

at Mendlesham had collided on 4 March 1945 on their way to Ulm and Ingolstadt and crashed at the village of Mandres-en-Barrois. All the crew of both planes had died, except the tail gunner of one of the planes.

She was lucky enough to get in contact with that survivor, Robert (Bob) Koppen, via his son who worked in his father's law firm. Bob was delighted to have been 'found' by Anne and sent her drawings to show how he had escaped the stricken plane, with his parachute harness loosely fastened, and miraculously landed unhurt near a farmhouse. He found he was in a part of France that had been liberated, so was able to pass on his parachute, which he initially tried to hide, and it was later made into a wedding dress. He was flown back to the States and married Betty in May 1945. Photos he sent to Anne show him as a handsome young man. Now in his nineties, he is heartened that people in France and England still remember with gratitude the sacrifices made by the American pilots and crew. Anne found the details of all those who died in that fatal crash, all in the prime of life.

In 2017 Anne went back with her friends Brian and Jane Penson to Mandres-en-Barrois and laid a poppy wreath in the church in their memory. René Petitjean who had given her the goggles also gave her a small fragment from the wing strut which he had kept in his barn. One of the villagers recognised herself as a girl in an old photo standing on part of the plane's wreckage and told Anne about the devastation caused to the village and livestock.

Anne cannot be sure that the goggles were Bob's but there is a strong probability. So they are now displayed in the National Museum of the Mighty 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force in Savannah, Georgia as part of the Robert A Koppen Collection, along with Bob's uniform, badges and drawings.

Anne herself, and Bob Koppen via Skype, had three minutes of fame when they appeared in a BBC *Look East* programme in 2017 about the Mendlesham goggles. Well done for uncovering this story, both tragic and heroic.

*Andy Edgecombe*

## Architecture

### **The High Street Project and getting out and about again**



*Before the end of March we aim to complete the first stage of our contribution to the national u3a High Street Project which records the premises along our high streets now, and again in a year's time. We are photographing and scheduling data for the heart of Sudbury. Alan Powers, lecturer, historian and writer on twentieth century art and architecture is giving us two free Zoom talks in March and April. Members of the group now have the full 2021 programme which, fingers crossed and subject to a successful roadmap out of lockdown, includes Birmingham Lite, a basically outdoors trip to Birmingham, London walks and closer to home, Lavenham, Colchester, Glemsford, the Hedinghams, Cambridge and Ickworth.*

***Left: Perfect architecture detail for the High Street Project.***

## Garden Visits



With the coming of spring, nature is waking up from its winter sleep and our gardens are bursting into life. Snowdrops, primroses, crocuses, hellebores, daffodils and camelias in our garden, and even some early tulips, all a promise of better things to come. For our group I am optimistic that we shall have some garden visits this year from June as we emerge from lockdown and if the government's 'road map' goes to plan, so have booked some visits for us. In summary:

- 7 June:** Moat House, Little Saxham, Bury St Edmunds (see photo above)
- 5 July:** Fullers Mill, West Stow, Bury St Edmunds
- 2 Aug:** The Place for Plants, East Bergholt
- 6 Sept:** Shrubs farm, Lamarsh.

I shall be contacting members soon with full details and look forward to meeting you all again in some beautiful places.

***Maira Orton***

Leader - Telephone: 07928 092402

## Strollers

The Strollers intend to start on Friday 16 April at 10.30 from the Quay Lane Car Park. We will walk on the first and third Friday. Booking is needed due to Covid rules.

*Lyn Gray*

01787 883368

## Walking

**Leaders: Brian Orton 07508 093631, Moira Orton 07928 092402**

We are very pleased to say that as walking (in groups of six) can resume from 29 March we will begin again from April on our regular walking day. The necessary risk assessments will continue for the time being and walkers will be contacted in due course to arrange the groups. We are looking for group members to plan and lead walks or lead a sub-group. Please get in touch. Looking forward to seeing you again soon.



**12 April: Kentwell Downs - 5 miles**

Meet at the old schoolroom car park, Long Melford.

Meeting times and groups to be arranged.

Leaders: Moira and Brian



**26 April: West Bergholt - approx. 5 miles**

From West Bergholt through Hill House Woods and hopefully some early bluebells. Towards Fornham then return along Essex Way. Meeting times and groups to be arranged.

Leaders: Janet and Ian Cruttenden

**3 May to be arranged.** Volunteers please.



**31 May: The Nethergate Walk - 5 miles**

Meet 9.45 for 10.00 start at Long Melford Country Park car park, Rodbridge, for a varied walk along railway embankments, farm tracks with views across open farmland where you can spot the towers of Long Melford, Lavenham and Acton churches on a clear day. The walk crosses what should be a dry river bed. (Note: if the weather has been wet the track may be covered in shallow water so have suitable footwear.)

Leaders: Moira and Brian

## Bradford Art Visits trip



We are pleased that at last we can look forward to the new date for our delayed visit (Covid!) which will be Monday 26 July 2021, returning Thursday evening. The trip is three nights, all inclusive, visiting Saltaire, Haworth, the Hepworth Gallery and the Yorkshire sculpture park (photo).

A few people have had to drop out so I can offer a place to any u3a member who is interested. The total cost is £299.00 per person, travelling by coach from Sudbury and staying at the Midland Hotel Bradford. If you are interested do give me a ring, first come first served.

*Lyn Gray*

## The Golden Serpent



George stirred in his sleep. A woman who was searching his pockets, froze. The supervisor of the Night Shelter had left the dormitory to get a mug of instant coffee from the staff room.

There was a faint smell of carbolic in the building. Each current inmate was obliged to shower as a condition of their stay. George had fallen on hard times when his partner ejected him from her house. She said he was, 'surplus to requirements' and someone else was coming to fill his half of the bed. George knew that Joan had early-onset dementia and there was no reasoning with her. He had to go. He packed his essential and favourite belongings into a duffle bag. Where could he go? He had no close family since his kind big sister Janice had passed on. She had always looked after her baby brother as their mother expected but now there was left only George and Janice's daughter, Annette. And she had married and moved away to Bristol. The old man was unsupported.

After many years on the road, George had barely survived but survived he had. Mostly he walked between Wickford and Halstead. Hostel to hostel. He was a man of few needs and no aspirations.

Unlike most of his fellows, he had not taken to alcohol or drugs to keep out the cold. Most of the villagers on his route knew him and several donated food to be collected from the village stores as he passed by. Many farmers turned a blind eye when he slept in their barns. Unlike some other vagrants, George was trustworthy and honest. He carried a collection of useful tools and sharpening stones that he was skilled enough to use for the odd repair and maintenance job that the man of the house had not got round to doing, in return for a meal.

All who met George felt his aura and were enriched by his charisma. He attracted gentle people and he calmed the troubled souls he encountered. So much so, that the frightened and disturbed were brought to him to be blessed.

You see, when George was a boy he was entrusted with a precious thing. A thing of beauty that had been passed from one generation to the next for as far back as anyone knew. Oral history holds that it originated in the Far East and was brought to this land by an Arab ancestor in the thirteenth century. It was given to him by his mother, who had possessed it since her aunt had given it to her when she was seven years old. It had immense financial value too, because it was not only made of 18 carat gold but was perfectly smithed, chased and jointed, with rubies for eyes. It was 5 inches long and as smooth as a slow-worm.

"This is the golden serpent that I've told you about, George. It will give you strength throughout your life. Keep it safe and pass it on to your child before you die. Remember it's a secret and belongs to the family. You'll never be alone now and will always have happy dreams."

Soon after that his mother died. George always held it close to him and told no one outside of the family of it, exactly as she had commanded him. It was his talisman. Ever since he had possessed it, the snake had accompanied him on his dreams and whatever had happened to him George was able to cope because of the confidence that the golden serpent gave him. Each night George slept as peacefully and soundly as a swaddled baby. It is said that the serpent enabled the custodian to enjoy the most delightful and favourite fantasies that they could imagine. George shared with the gilded reptile, dreams of unassisted flight; soaring above mountains, oceans and deserts; was lifted on thermals accompanied by condors, storks and albatross and skimmed above phosphorescent waves with flying fish. He always awoke elated, wherever he laid his head.

The woman frisking George in the hostel, found the snake and left the building. The beloved old man was then alone in his dreams and his strength softly ebbed away during that night so that by the morning he lay cold and lifeless on the wooden bed.

The thief was frightened. She felt dreadfully uneasy since taking the jewel and felt compelled to return it to the hostel. She told the warden that it belonged to the old man called George, then she fled before she could be questioned. The police took charge of George's possessions and with the aid of the Salvation Army, took them, including the golden serpent, to Janice's daughter, Annette, in Bristol. The young mother of three, knew the family legend and was aware of the value of her inheritance which was to be passed on to her eldest child.

She and her family still thrive in Bristol to this day. Whatever life throws at them, Annette knows that the little snake will carry her through, floating on the clouds of her dreams until the time comes for her to pass the treasure to the next generation.

## New name for Black Boy



As you probably know, the Black Boy pub in Sudbury has acquired a new name. Greene King asked for suggestions and, via the Sudbury Society, I nominated Elizabeth de Burgh (1295-1360), Lady Elizabeth of Clare. She became one of three short-listed names, the other two being the Coach and Horses and the Market Inn.

So, who was Elizabeth de Burgh and what has she got to do with Sudbury?

**Lady Elizabeth de Burgh** was a young widow who inherited land in this area including Sudbury. She was one of the wealthiest women in England - and an early town planner - yes, really! She designed a 'new' Sudbury and 'moved' the town centre and market nearer to St Peter's church. She invested much money in Sudbury and sold plots for 'development' so that it became a spacious shopping centre - or the 14th century equivalent.

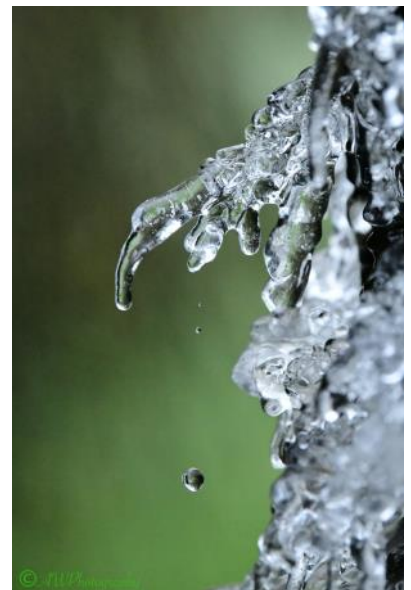
The pub is a focal point on Market Hill, exactly where Elizabeth de Burgh planned her 'new' Sudbury which, if she were to come back, she would recognise immediately as the Market Hill she knew 700 years ago. She also gave much money to Clare College, Cambridge.



There are few pubs named after women other than Queen Victoria and it is doubtful that there is a pub of that name anywhere so the Lady Elizabeth would be unique nationally as well as unique to Sudbury and its history. A biography of her has recently been updated. It is called *For her good estate* and is by Frances A. Underhill. The biography's cover is based on a 19th century portrait of her which, in turn, was based on an 18th century engraving or drawing – 400 years after she was around – so no one knows what she really looked like as there were no real 'likeness' portraits in the 14th century.

Pretty impressive credentials, aren't they?

### *Anne Grimshaw*





**Sudbury U3A 21/22 Membership Renewal Form for existing members.**

**Please return with cheque ('Sudbury U3A') for £5 per person to:-**

Mr J Freeborn (Membership Secretary), 4 Old Court Houses, Long Melford, Sudbury,  
Suffolk, CO10 9DY

**OR by Bank Transfer £5 per person to our account:-**

30-98-31, 00477485, quoting your name and membership number.

Name(s) in full: ..... Mem. No(s) .....

Address: .....  
.....  
.....

Postcode: ..... Tel. No. ....

E-mail address: .....

Emergency Contact details: Name.....

..... Tel. No .....

March 2021