

From the Editor

I am very pleased to be taking over the role of Newsletter Editor, and I will certainly endeavour to maintain the high standard set by Peter Dakeyne over many years.

Alongside the usual updates on our Monthly Meetings and Interest Group activities since the last newsletter, there is some news on our new website which should launch shortly.

We also have a reminder that articles from individual members are always welcome to add a new dimension to the newsletters.

This is a landmark month for our u3a, as we start a new chapter in our story with the move to the **Salvation Army Hall in Stowmarket** as our main meeting hall. We very much hope that this new location will bring benefits in many areas, in particular with the additional parking availability on site and improved audio-visual technology.

With this move in mind, we are grateful to Peter Dakeyne for writing a brief history of our time at the United Reform Church, which can be found on page 3.

Gerald Brooks

Summer Outing 2026

Our Summer Outing this year is a combined trip to **Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery, and Wymondham Abbey.**

The trip will take place on Wednesday 17th June, and will be in place of our normal monthly meeting that month.

We will travel by coach from Stowmarket to Norwich, leaving at 9:30am. We will have two hours to look around the Castle, Museum and Art Gallery, followed by an hour for lunch. Lunch options will include the Castle Cafe, bringing a picnic to have in the castle gardens (weather permitting of course!), or one of the many tearooms and cafes in the town.

We will then travel to Wymondham Abbey. Note that due to limited access



to the Abbey by coach, we will be dropped off, and picked up, about 400 yards (5 to 10-minute walk) from the Abbey. At the Abbey we will have a tour by their tour guides, which will be followed by tea/coffee and biscuits.

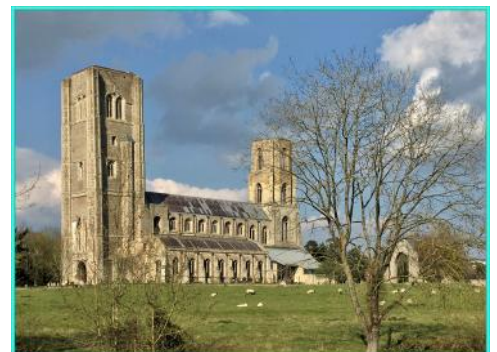
We will travel by coach back to Stowmarket, arriving at 5pm.

It promises to be an interesting and varied day out!

The total cost, including the coach,

entrance to the Castle, and the Abbey tour and refreshments will be between £30 and £40, depending on numbers. To ensure we cover the fixed cost of booking the coach, we will ask members for a non-refundable deposit of £15 when booking their place.

If you haven't already put your name on the list, and would like to go, please let us know by the **end of March** so we can finalise numbers.



Monthly Meetings Coming up (now at the Salvation Army Hall in Stowmarket)....

Mar 18th. "The Wonders of Norway". *Joanne Larner*. Looking at Norway's landscape, culture and way of life.

Apr 15th. "The Fascinating World of Cryptic Crosswords". *Angela Bell*. Lifting the lid on the clues and why so many people find them so addictive!

May 20th. "The Z8869 Story". *Paul Thompson*. A talk about a Wellington bomber that crashed near Great Finborough in 1941.

November: “Minsmere Past and Present”

Our November Monthly Meeting welcomed **David Staff**, who gave a wonderfully engaging and informative talk about **RSPB Minsmere**. Many of our members know Minsmere well, whether for its wildlife, walks, or simply as one of Suffolk’s most treasured landscapes, and David’s presentation offered a fascinating new perspective on its history and development.

David took us through the different phases of Minsmere’s past – from early settlement and medieval use, through

wartime change, to the modern conservation work that has made the reserve internationally recognised. His photographs, stories, and clear explanations highlighted how people, nature, and landscape have shaped one another over time.

Members particularly enjoyed learning how the site has evolved into the extraordinary habitat we know today, and how ongoing conservation continues to protect species that depend on this unique environment.

The afternoon was very well attended, and the atmosphere was warm and

welcoming as always. Our thanks go to David for an excellent and well-received talk.

Click on the picture below to visit the Minsmere website.



December: Our annual Christmas get together and buffet lunch

Our December meeting saw us gather for our now traditional Christmas meeting. The event was attended by almost 80 of our members, together with the Committee who served the buffet food and drinks.

The atmosphere was suitably festive, made all the more so by our Singing Group who led us in some well-known carols. Many thanks to Hilary Foster

and her group for supporting us!

We received very positive feedback, and it seems the event was much enjoyed by everyone.



January: “Young People Today”

At our January Monthly Meeting, we were pleased to welcome **Kirsti Jeeves and Mark** from **Turning Point Ipswich**, who gave a thought-provoking talk titled *Young People Today*.

They offered valuable insight into the pressures facing young people in today’s world, touching on mental

health, social media, education, and the wider challenges of modern life. The highlight of the talk was when Mark and Kirsti displayed different drug names on the wall and the audience became alight with questions and discussion. This is probably the greatest “audience participation” we have experienced during a talk at a monthly meeting for a long time and it was heartening to see so many members actively engaged in

the topic.

Members found the session informative and reflective, and we’re grateful to Kirsti and Mark for sharing their experience and perspectives with us. It was wonderful to welcome new members to our U3A, and also to greet visitors who joined us to experience our group and enjoy the talk.

February: “A Life Lived at Full Throttle”

At our February monthly meeting we welcomed **Paul Smiddy**, who

spoke about **The Honourable Mrs Victor Bruce**.

Mrs Victor Bruce (Mildred) was a pioneering British adventurer of the

1920s and 1930s, known for her record-breaking achievements in motoring, aviation and speedboat racing — an extraordinary career in fields that were,



at the time, overwhelmingly dominated by men.

Paul guided us through the life of a woman whose determination and appetite for challenge were truly remarkable. It was a fascinating and engaging afternoon, and our sincere thanks go to Paul for sharing his



research and insights with us.

Click on the picture for a longer article on Mildred, or find Paul's book [here](#).

This meeting also marked our final monthly gathering at the URC before its forthcoming closure.

Stowmarket u3a and the URC: 1998-2026

'STAR' (Stowmarket U3A) was founded in **1990**. In early 1990, various grants totalling £2,500 helped establish the group. The inaugural meeting took place on 24 April 1990, attended by over 70 people, marking the birth of 'STAR' – U3A for Stowmarket and District. The first regular monthly meeting followed on **23 May 1990**. Initial membership around **30**.

From its beginnings, meetings were held at the **Stowmarket Youth and Resource Centre** on Childer Road, but by mid-**1998** with the membership around **100**, STAR moved to the **URC Church Hall**. Cost/hour at that time, £8.40 winter, £6.00 summer.

Before the move there was some dissent among committee members about the necessity of the move, prompting letters to members seeking their views.

By November **1998**, the new hall was described as an improvement, although complaints were raised about poor sound quality! By November **1999**, some members had left due to transport difficulties in reaching the URC, leading to efforts to arrange transport. Hall hire costs in 2000 rose to £30 per hour in winter and £22 in summer.

Audio issues persisted over the years. In January 2001, the need for a lapel microphone was identified (the church had no use for one). A trial arranged through a local supplier was disrupted by interference from Asda Stores, and the speaker declined to use the equipment! A proposal to purchase a complete system for £229 was later frustrated when the supplier ceased trading. Further discussion of loop systems and PA compatibility occurred in 2012, and a PA system was subsequently provided for our use.

In **2011**, great concern was raised about a proposed redevelopment plan for Ipswich Street which included the demolition of the URC. [This article from the BBC](#) explains the problem at the time. On our part, there was a frantic search for alternative venues. In the event, in **2013** the plan was ultimately rejected as unviable, again [explained by the BBC](#).

An incident at the **2013** Christmas lunch may be remembered by many. There was no hot water for the caterers and the small storage room used by them was suddenly occupied by people preparing for another event. A committee member spoke to the vicar, who was in the already chaotic car-park. He was assured that someone from Stowmarket U3A had agreed that our function would leave the premises at 2pm – an impossible time in the circumstances. The 'discussion' with the Vicar was rather 'frosty' and a formal complaint was considered. There's no evidence to say that it was made...

The AGM evolved over time. In **2012** and to make it more attractive to members, it was combined with a Groups' Day at the Community Centre, resulting in record attendance (76 at the AGM, nearly 90 over lunch, with 13 new members joining). This format was repeated, including at the 25th anniversary celebration held at the Cedars. In **2018**, a proposal was made to change the name from 'STAR' to 'Stowmarket U3A'. Also in this year, as a trial, monthly meetings were alternated between the **URC** and 'The Mix' in Stowmarket.

In **2020** our membership reached **268** but the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected activities and a series of Zoom meetings filled the gap whilst we couldn't meet at the URC (see them here [1](#), [2](#), [3,4,5](#)). The **30th AGM** in December **2020** was held via Zoom, with 80 postal and electronic votes ensuring a quorum. The postponed **30th anniversary celebration** eventually took place at the **URC on 20 October 2021**, with 65 members attending, marking a welcome return to face-to-face meetings and celebrating over three decades of community activity. You can see a video of the [event on YouTube](#).

One final thought; many thanks should be given to the various Programme Organisers over the years who provide us with educational and often very amusing talks each month at the URC.

Peter Dakeyne



From the Groups Coordinator

We currently have 30 active Interest Groups, so there really is something for everybody! The newly created Recorder Groups are flourishing and the Singing Group did an excellent performance at our Christmas Event.

If you hadn't noticed, the Crochet & Yarn Group is now the Yarners Group. This covers a wide range of skills and yarns to hopefully entice more people to have a go.

You may not be sure if a Group is really for you – but you can always talk to the

Group Leader and maybe go along to one of the meetings to see if it is for you. If not – try something else!

However – have you ever thought that there wasn't a group for your particular interest? If so, maybe we could start one? Help would be on hand to start a new group, including maybe a chat with another member who has just started a new group themselves. If you would like to start a new group, or have an idea, please contact myself or any other committee member.

Help is always on hand for Group

Leaders. We recently held a meeting for all Group Leaders, where we heard how IT can help Group Leaders by using the u3a database – Beacon. Also, how to keep their Group's finances safe by using the recognized u3a systems.

As usual, I should like to thank all the Group Leaders for keeping the Groups running so efficiently. Without you there would be no Stowmarket U3a – so thank you on behalf of all the members.

Barbara Cutting

groupscoord@u3astowmarket.org.uk

Table Tennis

Since our pre Christmas 'Bring a plate' session on 15th December we've had good attendances ranging from 11-16 each time.

We had an extra ½ hour to enjoy the food that everyone had brought. We even managed to get a picture...see below (thanks to Roy Fidler for seamlessly merging 2 into 1).

Thanks also to Keith for standing in for me whilst I've been (I hope temporarily) indisposed.

We can always accommodate more members. Don't forget the physical and mental benefits of playing Table Tennis

Get all the details from our information sheet on the web site [HERE](#).



Peter Dakeyne 01449 781 562

Italian Conversation

We are a group of intermediate speakers of Italian.

Membership remains static at around 4 , so we'd very much welcome anyone thinking of joining. Please do come along for an 'exploratory' (alternate Wednesday afternoons in Stowmarket).

We are a friendly group, each of whom brings their own love of Italy, and their interest in a wide range of topics from language, to governance, food, fashion, and the Italian general way of life.

Pam Lore

Acoustic Guitar

The group is about sharing an enthusiasm for music and playing the acoustic guitar covering many different genres - pop, folk, blues, traditional etc. It is also about relaxation and enjoyment, so there is no pressure on anyone, but there is the likelihood that skill levels will improve as we pick up tips from each other. All standards are welcome from novice to advanced. In our first year, we have covered 40 songs ranging from 'English Country Garden' to 'Comfortably Numb'.

This group is now probably at capacity,

but I am happy to take on new members in a second group, which would meet on the second Tuesday each month.

Steve Sharp

Spanish Conversation

The Spanish Conversation Group continues to be a fun and friendly place to practise Spanish in. In December we had our Christmas get-together at a Spanish restaurant in Bury St Edmunds, where we had a lovely meal.



Due to various family commitments that some members have, we have moved the day we meet from alternate Tuesdays to alternate Thursdays, so if you are thinking of joining us and can make it on a Thursday morning, please get in touch with me!

Nancy Dickson **07856 584 176**

Aviation Group

This is an article from our Aviation interest group.

Garmin's Autoland system reached a major milestone on 20 December 2025 when it safely flew and landed a Beechcraft King Air B200 during a real-world emergency. The flight departed Aspen, Colorado, climbing through 23,000 feet when it suffered a rapid, uncommanded loss of cabin pressurisation. Although the two pilots were not incapacitated, the event automatically triggered Garmin's Emergency Descent Mode and Autoland system when cabin altitude exceeded safe limits.

Autoland is primarily designed for situations in which pilots become incapacitated. However, this incident

demonstrated its broader capability to manage a complex, high-risk emergency from start to finish, significantly reducing pilot workload at a critical moment.

Operating in instrument meteorological conditions over mountainous terrain with active icing, and facing uncertainty about the cause of the failure, the pilots chose to allow Autoland to remain engaged. The system assumed full control, navigating to a suitable airport, communicating with air traffic control via automated radio calls, and executing



a precise landing at Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport near Denver. Standard protocol radio messages announcing pilot incapacitation were automated and did not reflect the crew's condition. The pilots remained alert throughout but were not required to intervene.

Garmin confirmed this was the first fully autonomous, non-test emergency use of Autoland among more than 1,700 equipped aircraft. Certified across several turboprops and business jets, the system's performance highlights its potential to save lives when pilots are overwhelmed, impaired, or incapacitated. What could have become a serious accident instead ended in a routine, injury-free landing.

Don Mobley

Singing Group

The Spring term started with several new members. We're delighted to have them, and hope they will continue with us and perhaps others will be persuaded to come along too.

As always, the group is all about singing for pleasure and there's absolutely no requirement to be a 'good' singer. You don't need to be able to read music and new songs are learnt gradually over a number of weeks. It's aimed at anyone who enjoys a good sing song and everyone is welcome!

The songs chosen each week are from a very broad range of genres. We sing pop songs from various eras, songs from musicals, folk songs from around the world, sea shanties, gospel songs and also enjoy so-called 'art songs' with beautiful piano accompaniments. There really is something for everyone. If you come along and we don't include something you enjoy, tell me what that is and I'll try to include it the future.

Several members tell me it's the joy of singing that keeps bringing them back. It's been well documented that singing

increases endorphins - the 'feel good' chemicals in our brains, so it's no wonder we always leave feeling more 'upbeat' than when we arrived.

We are a really friendly group, who meet on the first and third Monday of the month - 2.00 pm till 3.30 pm at the Salvation Army Hall in Stowmarket on Violet Hill Road.

If you like the sound of the group and would like to come along please call or text **Hilary Foster** on **07842 189 794**

Yarners

This was previously the "Crochet and Yarn" group, but we changed our name to "Yarners" to reflect the fact that we cover Crochet, Knitting and Tapestry, and any other craft executed simply with yarn.

We support each other to develop our skills and also learn new skills.

Although we are currently running at our maximum of 12 members, anyone interested in joining us can put their name on our waiting list.



For more information contact:

Elaine Bailey on **01449 677206**

Gardens & Things

The first two outings this year will be:

Thursday 16th April—[Bawdsey Radar Museum](#), near Felixstowe.

Thursday 21st May—[Fullers Mill](#).

Please contact Liz or Val if you are interested in either of these trips.

Val Fazzari 07720 391 443

Liz Power 07799 761 336

History Group

November: “An Intriguing Question!”

The History Group’s November 2025 meeting proved to be another well-attended and thought-provoking afternoon. Members were treated to a fascinating talk by **Neil Instrall**, who explored the intriguing question:

“What links Nurse Edith Cavell, Captain Charles Fryatt, and the Unknown Warrior?”

Neil guided us through three powerful First World War stories, each rooted in courage, sacrifice, and the complex realities of wartime decision-making. Although very different lives, all three individuals were drawn together by the circumstances of war and by the way their deaths resonated deeply with the British public.

The talk highlighted not only the personal stories of Edith Cavell and Charles Fryatt, but also the symbolic significance of the Unknown Warrior, whose burial provided a focal point for national remembrance. Members were particularly struck by the shared journeys home after the war and the role played by a single vehicle — the so-called **Cavell Van** — in transporting all three to London for their memorial services.



As with many of our meetings, the talk prompted thoughtful discussion and reflection, reminding us how history often connects people and events in unexpected ways.

Free refreshments, good company, and lively conversation rounded off another

enjoyable and memorable History Group afternoon.

December: Christmas Social

The History Group’s Christmas social in December 2025 was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon, with around 40 members coming together to celebrate the end of another successful year.



We began by looking back over the year’s programme of talks and visits. A PowerPoint review brought back plenty of happy memories, showing members clearly enjoying the wide range of activities we’d shared throughout the year. We also took a look ahead at the proposed programme for the coming year and used the opportunity to thank everyone who had contributed to the History Group, whether as speakers, organisers, helpers, or enthusiastic supporters. The continued support of members is very much appreciated.

A well-earned break followed, with festive food and drink providing a chance to chat, catch up, and enjoy the seasonal atmosphere.

The afternoon ended on a high note with a lively historical quiz, which prompted plenty of humour, friendly competition, and good-natured debate — a perfect way to round off our Christmas gathering.

January: “A Radical you’ve probably never heard of”

At our January meeting, Keith Shelton helped us uncover the surprising story of **Thomas Spence** — a man whose ideas were once considered so dangerous that his name was banned.

Born into poverty in eighteenth-century Newcastle, Spence knew hardship first-hand. He lived in a world where a tiny minority owned almost all the land, and where enclosure pushed ordinary people closer to hunger and dependence. A local victory against enclosure at Newcastle Town Moor helped convince him that unfair systems could be challenged.

Spence believed education was the key to freedom. He even invented a phonetic spelling system to help poor children learn to read more easily, convinced that reading led to thinking — and thinking led to questioning injustice.



When he publicly argued that private land ownership was the root cause of poverty, he was

expelled from polite society. Undeterred, he turned to creativity, using witty **political tokens** and



striking images to spread his ideas quietly and cleverly.

Spence died poor and obscure in 1814, but his ideas lived on — unsettling the authorities long after his death. The talk reminded us that history is often shaped not just by kings and governments, but by ordinary people with uncomfortable ideas.



February: A Visit to The Hold in Ipswich

On 4th February, the History Group enjoyed their first visit of the year with a fascinating trip to **The Hold in Ipswich**. Located on the Waterfront, The Hold is home to Suffolk's archives and, since opening in 2020, has become an



impressive and welcoming modern space for visitors and researchers alike. We were treated to a behind-the-scenes tour lasting just over an hour. This included a visit to the reference library,



with its wealth of computers, books, pamphlets and maps, and a helpful introduction to how the archives can be searched and used. We were then taken into the archive storage areas themselves, where unique original source material is carefully preserved in

temperature-controlled conditions.

The visit proved both interesting and inspiring, and several members left keen to return to explore their own research interests in more depth.

If you'd like to find out more, follow this link to [The Hold](#).

And, of course, no outing would be complete without coffee and lunch. The Hold's café provided a very pleasant stop, and the nearby Waterfront offered plenty of tempting options. Even more unbelievable for February, the sun shone and we were able to sit outside coat-free — for a moment, we could almost have been on the Costa del Sol!

Keith and Lorraine Shelton

Photography

We continue to meet online every month where each member submits 6 pictures to be 'critically appraised' with much humour and chat!

Since the last newsletter we've covered - 'Summer', 'Forms in Nature', 'Knots/ Nots', 'Mundane', and in March, 'Winter'.

Here is a selection of our 'Summer' pictures.

Peter Dakeyne 01449 781 562



Play Reading (Virtual)

The group continues to meet twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Monday, from 11.00 – 12.00 noon.

Following reading “*Daughter of Time*” by Josephine Tey, we read “*Days in the*

Trees” by Marguerite Duras, “*Nothing But The Truth*” by David Muncaster, and have just commenced reading “*The Cat and the Canary*” by John Willard adapted by David Muncaster.

I anticipate that the Play Reading Group will continue as a virtual group for the

foreseeable future. If anyone is interested in joining either the virtual group, or once we return to live meetings, please contact me.

Maureen Wingham-Eaton Tel: 01449-771200

Stand and Stare Walking Group

December. Stowmarket

We joined the Walk & Talk and the Cake Walkers for our Christmas Walk. A short historical walk around **Stowmarket** of 2.5 miles, taking in a small stretch along the River Gipping, around the town centre, and a short visit to the Christmas Tree display in the Parish Church. This was followed with a seasonal meal at the Football Club.

January. Needham Market

As January weather is often unpredictable, we thought we would keep the walk simple and do a town trail along the **High Street in Needham Market**, which is rich in

history. Included was the church of St. John the Baptist with its beautiful 15th century hammerbeam roof and carved angels, the Ancient House, the Quaker Burial ground, the Almshouse, the Cattle tunnel and much more. We finished our walk with refreshments at the Community Centre.

February. Bury St Edmunds

Again, due to the unpredictability of the weather we had another town trail, this time in **Bury St Edmunds**, another Suffolk town full of history. Our visit included the Abbey Gardens, where we saw the Harold Bonnett Sensory Garden, the memorial to the 94th Bombardment Group who gave their lives in WW2, and the memorial bench made from a wing of a USAAF Flying

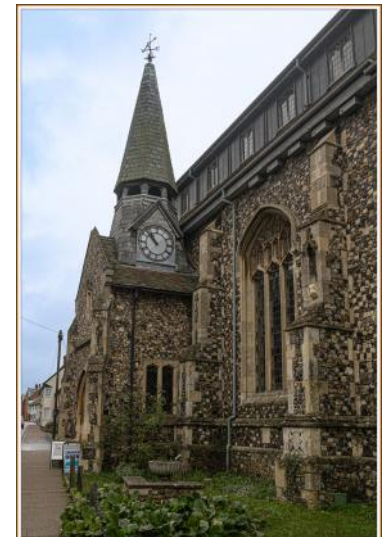
Fortress bomber aircraft. We also took in the old Corn Exchange, the former Fire Station, the smallest pub in Britain being the Nutshell and other places of interest. A light lunch at the Harriet Tearooms ended a very enjoyable morning.

We would like to thank everyone who has supported and joined this new walking group. We hope to see you on future walks. If you would like to join the Stand and Stare walking group, they are friendly relaxed walks with time to stop for photos, or just to stand and admire the surroundings.

For more information, please contact either:

Barbara Cutting on 07721 188 053 or **Glenda Taylor** on 07549 167 313

Photos from Needham Market and Bury St Edmunds



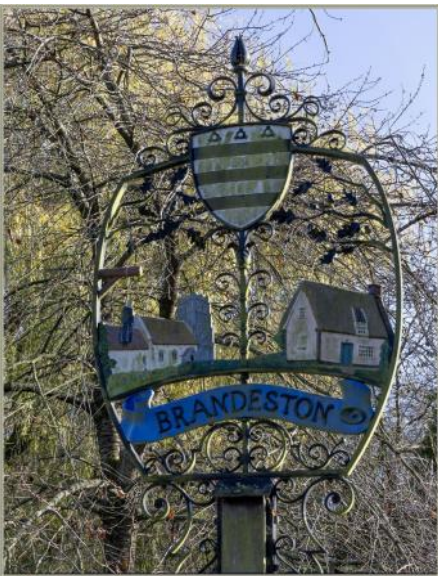
Walk and Talk Group

Autumn and Winter Highlights

We continue to stride out on the first and third Fridays of each month, enjoying good company, fresh air, and the beautiful Suffolk countryside. As ever, we have explored a wonderful variety of routes, and the weather has generally been kind to us through the winter months. We have of course kept up the tradition of a well-earned pub lunch at the end of each walk!

07 November: Led by Keith and Lorraine Shelton, who took us on a circular walk from **Middlewood Green** to **Forward Green** and back. We finished with a lovely lunch at the **White Horse at Stoke Ash**.

21 November: John and Nancy Dickson led this walk. We started at **Cretingham** on a cold crisp morning, and headed out to **Brandeston** where we took our halfway break. The walk was a mixture



of quiet lanes, open countryside and pleasant wooded areas. **St Peters church in Creting** provided an interesting visit, before we returned to the **Cretingham Bell** for a well-earned lunch.

06 December: Our pre-Christmas walk saw all 3 walking groups (Walk and Talk, Stand and Stare and Cake Walk) come



together for a walk around **Stowmarket**. The group of 48 walkers split into 3 groups for a fascinating tour around some of Stowmarket's historic buildings and locations. We concluded with a lunch at **Stowmarket Football Club**. Many thanks to Roger, Linda, Barry and Heather for organising this.

02 January: Our post festive season walk saw us meeting in **Stanton** for a walk led by Roger and Linda. It was a beautiful crisp morning as we headed off on a 5 mile circular walk. The highlight was the "**The Grundle**", a rollercoaster section that was very different to the usual flat terrain of our walks. We rounded off our walk with lunch at the **Cock Inn in Stanton**.

16 January: Katheryn and Bernard Doughty organised this walk, starting at **Hartest** (a new location for many of us). This took us 5 miles around a beautiful area of Suffolk countryside. Some slippery stiles presented a challenge, but all were scaled safely and an enjoyable walk was had by all. A delicious lunch at **The Crown** in Hartest rounded off our day.

06 February: This saw us meeting at the **Shepherd and Dog in Onehouse** for a walk led by Barry and Heather Salmon. A hardy group of walkers came prepared for the inclement weather as we set off for a 5 mile circular around field edges to **Finborough Church**. Crossing **Stowmarket golf course** a couple of times and passing **Onehouse Church**, we successfully navigated some very slippery muddy conditions and

made it back to the pub for lunch and a chat.



20 February: Keith and Lorraine Shelton gave us a circular walk from **Wortham**. Particularly interesting was **Wortham Church**, which boasts the largest circular church tower in the country (at 10m in diameter).



The threatened rain kindly held off for us, until we got to the **White Horse at Stoke Ash** (a favourite lunch spot for the group!).

Looking Ahead

New members are always welcome — whether for the exercise, the scenery, or simply the chat along the way.

Gerald Brooks and Keith Shelton

Cake Walk

In the last six months we have enjoyed a wide variety of walks, some revisiting previous locations (although travelling in the opposite direction which makes it seem like a new walk), and some new.

The weather has been mainly good although during a walk in the glorious countryside near **Drinkstone** we all got a soaking. The “cobweb” walk in January – so called because it blows away the excesses of Christmas and New Year – from **Landguard Point** had to be changed at the last moment due to a very high tide and a strong NW wind causing waves to break over the intended route.

At **Shelland** we dropped in to a small church interestingly dedicated to “King Charles the Martyr” - look it up [here](#) – and at **Harleston** church we saw five small iron tombstones of five siblings, all of whom died of diphtheria within a six week period in 1891. Just imagine!



The plan develops month by month, but during the summer we will be walking in the grounds of **Helmingham Hall** and also a vineyard based walk.

The Cake Walk lives up to its name and we have been well looked after in some super cafes with good coffee and moreish cakes. Why not come and join us!

Robert Bradshaw

Art and Galleries

This is a relatively new group for Stowmarket u3a, and it seems to be a resounding success. We have some

very rewarding and enriching visits to galleries followed by good discussions in the follow-up meetings.

We went first to [Christchurch Mansion](#) in Ipswich. Glorious sunshine and an interesting visit. I think members of the group particularly liked the **Wolsey Gallery** and the artwork on display.

Our next visit was to **The Sainsbury Gallery in Norwich**, for an exhibition entitled “*When Will be Stop Killing Each Other*”. Enlightening - but many of us felt the title had led us to believe there would be more. However, members of the group spent many minutes exploring photographs of the last meal chosen by USA unfortunates on death row before being led to the electric chair for execution the following day.



At our discussion group meetings, Anna has agreed to give very short talks about some of the principles of making art. We covered the subject of **Tonal Value** in the first talk. The **Essential Elements of Composition** is planned for our March meeting.

Our following visit was to **Tate Britain** for the **Constable/Turner** exhibition. Seven members made the convoluted journey to Pimlico, and by all accounts the visit was much enjoyed. We have our discussion meeting for this in early March. Some of the group will also be ‘catching up’ by going to the film which is on at the Regal, Stowmarket.

Our gallery visit in April is to **Euston Hall** for an escorted tour.

As an extra - some members of the group will be attending the Literary Event at the Debenham Lion for a discussion with the author Susan

Owens, following the publication of her book “Constable’s Year”.

Anna Bradshaw

Sunday Lunch Club

The Sunday Lunch group continues to be very popular, so much so that we now have a waiting list. Which could mean that someone can start up another group!

Recent venues include the **Cretingham Bell**, one of our favourites, **The Mill** in Stowmarket and upcoming, **The Norton Dog**. We always make sure there are menu choices available for vegetarians as well as gluten free options.

Feel free to contact us with questions or if you’d like to start another group.

Val Fazzari 07720 391 443

Liz Power 07799 761 336

Computing & Technology.

I’m sorry to announce that this group is now closed. I’ve been giving it some thought and I think it’s now time to pull the plug on this forum which we started some four years ago. I put the question to the existing membership who all agreed that it is the best thing to do in the circumstances.

There’s been little or no activity for some time now, nor have any of the wider membership taken advantage of the many invites I’ve posted in this newsletter. One of the reasons may be that it is so easy to get information these days through AI searches, Chat GPT for example, that people don’t have the need for our kind of forum...?

Since the giddy days of the late 90s/ early 2000s when some 30% of the u3a membership belonged to the ‘Computer Group’ (which spawned several sub-Groups), it’s been through many iterations so, one could say, after 26 years it’s run its natural course!

Peter Dakeyne

01449 781 562

A New Website for Stowmarket u3a

Our current website has served us extremely well for the last 17 years, and we are so grateful to Peter Dakeyne for creating and maintaining this valuable resource for us.

However, technology moves forward and like many things websites benefit from a makeover. We are therefore in the process of creating a new website, and are anticipating that this will be ready to launch by the end of March. The “u3astowmarket.org.uk’ address will remain the same, so the transition should be seamless.

We will be adding more graphics and information on our activities, and the ease of maintenance of modern website software will enable us to quickly add new information and changes to keep it right up to date.

We'll let all members know when the new website is up.

More Member Articles Please!

Although the newsletter is centred around news from our Monthly Meetings and Interest Groups, we always welcome articles from our members on anything that they think other members will find interesting.

This could range from hobbies, to interests, stories from the past, memories and experiences. Maybe you have an unusual hobby, or have just been on a memorable holiday that you think other members would like to read about?

Articles from members will give these newsletters another interesting dimension, so why not have a go at doing something for the next newsletter!

Send your ideas to: newseditor@u3astowmarket.org.uk.

Gerald Brooks



Click the picture on the left to see an abbreviated version of the Autumn edition of u3amatters magazine....

Friends Extra—The u3a Benefits Hub

The u3a Friends Extra Hub is packed with fantastic savings and opportunities. If you are not already a member, you can join by signing up to u3a Friends Extra. Just subscribe to the u3a Friends newsletter at u3a.org.uk/u3a-friends. You will then receive a welcome email with a link to the website where you can set up an account and get access to a wide range of discounts.

A Request from our Regional u3a Team

East of England u3a are inviting all u3a members in the region to take part in a national u3a survey that explores what u3a means to them, and how being part of u3a has impacted their lives.

This survey is open to all our members, so please take a moment to fill it out. It is a great opportunity for members to share their experiences and support their u3a to thrive into the future. The feedback will be used to grow membership, demonstrate the impact of u3a and raise our profile.

This is an online survey, which can be accessed at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/u3a-me>

To thank members for their time, they will be entered in a John Lewis £100 prize draw. The survey closes on 31 March.

Thank you for your support.

u3a
learn, laugh, live

There are many links in this Newsletter which provide more information on the topics discussed.

If you are reading the print version and would like to know more, please use the digital PDF version of this Newsletter that was emailed to you, where all the links will work.

Recent digital versions of the Newsletter will also be available on the new website at u3astowmarket.org.uk, in a few weeks time.

Editor/Webmaster: Gerald Brooks (0754-007-1912). newseditor@u3astowmarket.org.uk

Next Issue: July 2026 Last Date for Copy: 30/06/2026

ACOUSTIC GUITAR Steve Sharp 07780 371 429	Monthly: 4 th Tuesday 10.00am – 12.00 noon	## MUSIC – various Ian Hooper 01449 770 179	2/Month: 2 nd , 4 th Tuesdays 10.00am – 12.30pm
ART & GALLERIES Anna Bradshaw 07714 092 706	Monthly: 2 nd Wednesday 2.30pm	PATCHWORK Jean Roche 01449 675 984	Monthly: 4 th Wednesday 2.00pm
AVIATION Don Mobley 07398 300 952	Monthly: 3 rd Thursday 2.00pm	PHOTOGRAPHY (Video Conference) Peter Dakeyne 01449 781 562	Monthly: 3 rd Tuesday 3.00pm – 5.00pm
BOOK CLUB Sylvia Downs 01449 612 661	Monthly: 4 th Thursday 2.00pm	PLAY READING (Video Conference) Maureen Wingham-Eaton 01449 771 200	2/Month: 2 nd & 4 th Mondays 11.00am – 12 noon
BRIDGE INTERMEDIATE/IMPROVERS John Hunter 0783 2063 550	Weekly: Friday 2.00pm - 5.00pm	POETRY READING Hilary Plummer 07506 761 199	Monthly: 4 th Thursday 2.00pm
CAKE WALK (Short walk) Robert Bradshaw 01449 745 829	Monthly: First Friday	Recorder – Starter Trisha Cole 07977 210 067	2/Month: 2 nd & 4 th Tuesdays 2.30pm – 4.00pm
CANASTA (1) Hazel Burl 01449 615 581	Weekly: Wednesday. 10.00am – 12.00 noon	Recorder – Player Trisha Cole 07977 210 067	Monthly: 3 rd Tuesday 2.00pm – 3.30pm
CANASTA (2) Carol Gibson 07918 743 154	Weekly: Tuesday 2.00pm – 5.00pm	SCRABBLE (Bacton) Zena Dakeyne 07542 945 725	2/Month: 2 nd & 4 th Wednesday 2.00pm
DISCUSSION Linda Attwood 07866 617 062	Monthly: 2 nd Tuesday 10.00am – 12 noon	SINGING Hilary Foster 07842 189 794	2/Month: 1 st & 3 rd Mondays 2.00pm – 3.30pm
FRENCH CONVERSATION (1) Helen Mead 07827 814 819	Alternate Tuesdays 10.00am -12 noon	SPANISH CONVERSATION Nancy Dickson 07856 584 176	Alternate Thursdays 10am – 12.00pm
FRENCH CONVERSATION (2) Helen Mead 07827 814 819	Alternate Wednesdays 11.00am – 1.00pm	STAND & STARE (Leisurely walks) Glenda Taylor 07549 167 313 Barbara Cutting 07721 188 053	Monthly: 4 th Friday 10:00am (variable)
GARDENS & THINGS Liz Power 07799 761 336 Val Fazzari 07720 391 443	Monthly: 3 rd Thursday 9.30am (variable)	TABLE TENNIS Peter Dakeyne 01449 781 562	Alternate Mondays 2.00pm – 3.30pm
GEOLOGY Linda Reynolds 07880 516 926 Roger Crouch 07925 262 742	Monthly: 3 rd Tuesday 2.00pm	WALK and TALK (Longer walks) Gerald Brooks 07540 071 912 Keith Shelton 01449 768 744	2/Month: 1 st & 3 rd Fridays 10.00am (variable)
HISTORY Keith & Lorraine Shelton 01449 768 744	Monthly: 1 st Wednesday 2.00pm – 4.00pm	## WALKING TENNIS Robin Loxley 07896 543 642	Weekly: Monday 1.30 pm
ITALIAN CONVERSATION Pam Lore 07784 540 419	Alternate Wednesdays 2.00pm – 4.00pm	YARNERS Elaine Bailey 01449 677 206	Monthly: 3 rd Thursday 10.30am - 12.30pm
LUNCH CLUB (Sunday) Liz Power 07799 761 336 Val Fazzari 07720 391 443	Monthly: 3 rd Sunday By arrangement	## For information only. Whilst open to u3a members, others can join so these are not authorised u3a groups and	carry no u3a benefits

Stowmarket u3a Committee Members 2025/2026



John Dickson Neil Instrall Robert Bradshaw Stew Dorward Gerald Brooks Carole Vincent
Jackie Durrant Anne Weedon Barbara Cutting Barbara Gort Suzanne Brooks Lyn Goodsell

Chair	John Dickson	07976 541 021	chair@u3astowmarket.org.uk
Vice Chair	Jackie Durrant	01449 672 690	vicechair@u3astowmarket.org.uk
Secretary	Neil Instrall	01359 352 104	secretary@u3astowmarket.org.uk
Treasurer (+ Beacon Admin)	Ann Weedon	01449 771 947	treasurer@u3astowmarket.org.uk
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	Barbara Gort	01473 834 027	
	Gerald Brooks	07540 071 912	
	Suzanne Brooks	07761 358 986	
	Carole Vincent	07941 149 870	
	Lyn Goodsell	07717 254 317	

Artificial Intelligence—What should we know

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is often described as the technology shaping our future — but in reality, it is already part of everyday life. AI refers to computer systems that can perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as recognising speech, analysing images, translating languages, or generating text.

Most of us use AI without noticing. When your phone unlocks using facial recognition, when online shopping sites suggest products, when your email filters out spam, or when a satnav finds the quickest route, AI is working in the background.

AI Use is now widespread:

- Healthcare – helping doctors analyse scans and detect diseases earlier.
- Banking and finance – spotting unusual transactions and reducing fraud.
- Transport – powering driver-assistance systems and developing autonomous vehicles.
- Customer service – chatbots answering routine enquiries.
- Creative work – generating images, music, and written material.

For lifelong learners, AI tools can summarise articles, explain difficult topics in simpler language, and assist with planning talks or researching new interests.

The Benefits

AI can process large amounts of information far more quickly than a human. It can improve accuracy in areas such as medical diagnosis and make services more efficient. It can also increase accessibility through voice assistants and text-to-speech systems, which may help those with visual or mobility difficulties. In short, AI can be a useful assistant.

The Risks

However, AI is not infallible. It can produce incorrect information confidently and convincingly. It does not truly “understand” — it predicts likely answers based on patterns in data.

There are also concerns about privacy, as AI systems often depend on personal data. Questions arise about how that data is collected, stored, and used. More broadly, AI may change the nature of some jobs, and it can be misused to create misinformation, including realistic fake images or videos.

A Balanced View

AI is best seen as a powerful tool rather than a substitute for human judgement. Like previous technological advances, it offers both opportunities and challenges. By approaching it with curiosity and a critical eye, we can benefit from its advantages while remaining aware of its limitations. The key is not to fear AI — but to understand it well enough to use it wisely.

A helpful tip: always treat AI’s answers as a starting point. Check important facts from reliable sources and never share sensitive personal information.

National u3a is very keen to provide information about AI to u3a members, and to that end there is a u3a Communities Interest Group for AI. This can be found here: <https://u3acommunities.org/interest-groups/computing/ai-for-everyone/>, where there is some interesting material and presentations.

There is also an introductory video on the basics of AI, presented by Alan Freeland (u3a Subject Network Lead for AI), at: <https://padlet.com/u3alearning/u3a-ai-resources-for-u3a-groups-5dhdnjgfd2bencvl/wish/Xb8YalX0KAjeayn1>

Finally, some advance notice that at our August Monthly Meeting we will have a talk entitled **“AI Everywhere”** by Ian Hawker.