

The 35th Annual AGM

At the United Reform Church, Ipswich Street Stowmarket on Wednesday 17 September.

We had what could be a record turn out of 64 members in attendance, the meeting was chaired by **John Dickson**, with **Neil Instrall**, Secretary and **Anne Weedon**, Treasurer also part of the presenting board.

After the apologies read out by **Neil, John (Chair)** confirmed there were no matters arising from the minutes of the 34th AGM and so they were subsequently proposed and duly seconded.

John (chair) reported that it had been a hugely successful year not only

financially but also for membership numbers with the membership swelling to a healthy 255. In addition to the financials and membership **John** reported that 6 additional new groups have started up this year which is fantastic news, adding to the rich array of activities available to the membership.

He went on to outline the wonderful talks we had all enjoyed at the monthly meetings as well as outings arranged by the history group, G&T trips as well as the annual event to Audley End House and Gardens. **John** thanked the organisers as well as all group leaders for their help and support of the u3a.

The Chair's report closed by reporting on the new Facebook site and encouraged the membership to become

involved with posting things of interest and then closing his report with a thank you to those committee members stepping down and the new ones joining us.

(Read the full Chair's Report [HERE](#))

Treasurer's reports and accounts were proposed, seconded and passed unanimously.

The election of the Stowmarket u3a officers along with the committee went through without issue and was voted on, proposed and seconded unanimously.

No other business was raised and so the meeting was closed at 1 55pm.

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	chair@u3astowmarket.org.uk
Vice Chair	Jackie Durrant	vicechair@u3astowmarket.org.uk
Secretary	Neil Instrall	secretary@u3astowmarket.org.uk
Treasurer (+ Beacon Admin)	Ann Weedon	treasurer@u3astowmarket.org.uk
Membership Secretary	Robert Bradshaw	membership@u3astowmarket.org.uk
Groups Coordinator	Barbara Cutting	groupscoord@u3astowmarket.org.uk
Committee Members	Stew Dorward	
	Barbara Gort	
	Gerald Brooks	
	Suzanne Brooks	
	Carole Vincent	
	Lyn Goodsell	

July: “Constable: The Man and His Landscape”

At our July meeting **Kim Smith** took us on a fascinating journey through the life of **John Constable** – not just the famous painter we all know, but the man behind the brush.

Kim’s talk focused less on Constable’s art techniques and more on the person he was — his roots in **East Bergholt**, his

family background, and the challenges he faced along the way. With warmth and humour, she painted a lively picture of Constable’s determination, frustrations, friendships, and the Suffolk countryside that shaped his world.

There were plenty of smiles as Kim shared some surprising and very human stories about Constable’s life — including his struggles for recognition, his rivalries, and even a few unexpected

connections to modern times!

Her friendly, knowledgeable style made everyone feel part of the journey.

A big thank-you to **Kim Smith** for such an engaging and enjoyable afternoon, reminding us that behind every great artist is a real person with dreams, setbacks, and a love for the landscape we all know so well.

August: “The Real Basil Brown – From Rickingham to Sutton Hoo and Back”

We saw a packed hall gather to hear **Sarah Doig**, well-known local historian and author, give a fascinating illustrated talk about **Basil John Wait Brown** – the Suffolk man whose name is forever linked with the discovery of the Anglo-Saxon ship burial at Sutton Hoo in 1939.

Sarah began by tracing Basil’s roots in **Rickingham**, where he was born into a farming family in 1888. Without the benefit of a university education, he pursued archaeology and astronomy through self-study, keeping meticulous notebooks and developing a sharp eye for detail. His story is all the more remarkable because of this – a man who, through passion and

perseverance, rose to become one of Suffolk’s most important contributors to archaeology.

Of course, the highlight of his career was his role in excavating the ship burial at Sutton Hoo. Sarah brought this to life with images, anecdotes, and extracts from Brown’s own records, reminding us that the find has been called **one of the most important archaeological discoveries ever made in Britain**.

But Sarah’s talk also highlighted Basil Brown the man – modest, generous, and keen to share his enthusiasm with others. She described what has sometimes been called the **“Brown School of Archaeology”**, where he inspired local volunteers and young people to develop an interest in the past.

The audience was captivated by Sarah’s ability to weave together Brown’s professional achievements with the human story of his life, and the talk was warmly received.

We are very grateful to Sarah for giving us such an engaging afternoon, and for reminding us how local people, through curiosity and commitment, can make discoveries that change the way history is understood.



Click the picture to read more details from her contribution piece for **Heritage Suffolk**.

September: (After the AGM)

'How to Become a Roman Emperor'

This talk by **Ralph Jackman** was superb. It was fast paced, informative, educational and humorous.

We all enjoyed how he would go off on a tangent keeping a tread of the subject before returning to the main body of the talk.

He conducted his talk with no prompt cards or script which was, given the subject matter, impressive.

Ralph delivered an engaging and insightful talk on the rise of **Emperor Octavius, who became Augustus—“the Illustrious One”**—and ruled Rome from 27 BC to AD 14. Widely seen as both effective and controversial, Augustus transformed Rome from a semi-democratic Republic into an autocracy.

In witty style, Ralph outlined **“The Ten Steps to Becoming a Roman Emperor,”** drawn from Augustus’ life: have the right name, stand out, choose allies and enemies wisely, show complete self-

belief, inspire others, be ruthless when needed, use propaganda, learn from others’ mistakes, and craft a lasting legacy..

After the talk had ended he had quite a crowd around him, asking questions and buying his books. As a testament to the members' enjoyment of his talk I was asked by many members if he could be rebooked in the future to give his other talk on **'How to Become a Roman Empress'**. This request was passed onto Keith....

JD

October: "Overlanding through the Americas – Part 2"

This meeting brought us a wonderful "armchair" adventure, courtesy of **Glenda Taylor**, one of our own members, who returned to complete her remarkable journey "Overlanding through the Americas – Part 2."

Picking up where she left off last year, Glenda whisked us away on an epic route through Central and North America, illustrated with stunning photographs and lively stories. From zip-lining through the rainforests of Costa Rica and exploring volcanic landscapes in Nicaragua and Mexico, to crossing borders under police escort in El

Salvador, her talk captured both the excitement and unpredictability of long-distance travel.

Members were enthralled by her accounts of visiting Mayan ruins at Tikal, Palenque, and Chichén Itzá, snorkelling with nurse sharks in Belize, and hiking among lava fields near Parícutin Volcano. The adventure continued north through Arizona, Utah, Yellowstone, and the Canadian Rockies, all the way to Alaska – an extraordinary journey covering 207 days and 19,000 miles.

Glenda's mix of insight and stunning photography transported us all far



Monument Valley, Arizona

beyond the URC hall. Her stories reminded us of the joys of exploration, the kindness of strangers, and the thrill of discovering the world one dusty road at a time.

A heartfelt thank-you to Glenda for sharing her wonderful experiences and for inspiring us all to keep our sense of curiosity alive...

Group News

From the Groups' Coordinator

Two new Groups have started since the last Newsletter. Both for **Recorder Players**. One is for Starters and the other for more proficient Players. Both are doing really well, and I look forward to hearing them play. All the other Groups are equally doing

well, with some now having a Waiting List. The **Art & Galleries** has been particularly popular, and Anna has had to put a stop on numbers for the time being, as the Group meets in her home. All **3 Walking Groups** continue to be very popular and have had some beautiful walks in the Suffolk Countryside. All at a difference pace, to

suit all levels of walkers or strollers. As always, a huge **Thank You** to all the **Group Leaders**. Without you, we would have no groups and no u3a! So 'Thank You' on behalf of all the members...

Barbara Cutting

groupscoord@u3astowmarket.org.uk

Recorder groups

The **Recorder Starters** group has made a very positive start and has already met 4 times and has just welcomed its 4th member.

Members are enjoying learning to read music alongside learning to play the recorder - and we have a lot of fun and laughs at the same time!

Sadly the appeal for **Recorder Players** has only produced one person willing to play with me just once a month, so duets will be the order of the day until others come to turn us into a trio or (ideally) a quartet!

If you ever played beyond enforced beginner level and can find a descant, treble, tenor or bass recorder and music

stand hidden in the loft or at the back of a cupboard, please consider digging them out and come along to share in some music-making.

Trisha Cole

Table Tennis

Hot weather and family responsibilities kept our attendance low during the summer, so we hope for better things in the coming cooler months.

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

Spanish Conversation

We meet once a fortnight at the **Willow Tree Wetherspoons** in Stowmarket. We occupy a couple of the quieter tables at the back of the pub, and take advantage of the free refills of our teas and coffees!

We have a bit of a warm up to start with and then explore a particular topic in more detail. Then we usually read our Spanish text story, each reading a few paragraphs and then translating it. We are slowly progressing towards having conversations in Spanish, but it takes time as we are all at different levels. If you have a prior knowledge of the Spanish language, **please consider joining our Group**. You will be most welcome!

Nancy Dickson

From the Aviation Group

Skyports Infrastructure Vertiport

The launch of Skyports Infrastructure's vertiport in Bicester, Oxfordshire marks a pivotal moment in the UK's journey toward realizing advanced air mobility (AAM). As one of the nation's first operational hubs for electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft, this facility represents a critical step in developing the infrastructure that will support a new era of sustainable, low-noise, and efficient aviation.

Now fully operational, the Bicester vertiport serves as a testbed for eVTOL ground infrastructure and flight operations. During the opening ceremony, visitors experienced live demonstrations of passenger processing, vertiport automation systems, and situational awareness technologies such as weather monitoring sensors and real-time aircraft tracking. These capabilities showcase the seamless integration of



This facility is more than a technical achievement; it is a collaborative platform designed to evolve alongside the rapidly advancing eVTOL industry. By providing a central hub where manufacturers, regulators, and technology partners can work together, the vertiport enables the testing and refinement of key operational concepts that will shape the future of AAM in the UK and beyond.

A highlight of this collaborative effort is the presence of Vertical Aerospace's VX4 air taxi. Following its successful first flight in UK open airspace, the VX4 has entered operational testing at Bicester,

using the vertiport as a base for demonstration flights and stakeholder engagement. This hands-on approach is

crucial for building public confidence and informing the development of regulatory frameworks.

Strategically located just 1 hour and 40 minutes from central London by road, the Bicester site underscores the potential for vertiports to connect urban

centres with regional and tourist destinations. As part of a wider testing programme, it will act as a key node in the emerging network of UK vertiports, supporting the transition from concept to commercial reality.

By pioneering infrastructure solutions and enabling real-world testing, the Bicester vertiport positions the UK at the forefront of the AAM revolution. It is a tangible step toward cleaner, quieter, and more connected air transport, laying the foundations for a network that will transform how people and goods move across the country.

Don Mobley

Singing Group

We've enjoyed another wonderful year of singing for fun.

As always, this 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 everyone and everyone is welcome! The number of members has gradually increased and has now exceeded twenty, with a few more folk interested in trying us out we're moving from strength to strength.

We mainly sing in unison, but always start with well known rounds by way of a warm up. We sing a really wide selection of songs with over two hundred in our current repertoire. We enjoy pop songs from the 60s and 70s,

songs from musicals, folk songs from around the world, sea shanties, often with accordion accompaniment, gospel songs and we also enjoy hauntingly beautiful 'art songs' such as Linden Lea, one of my favourites.

As well as having piano accompaniments, another member of the group regularly contributes a couple of songs accompanying them with the piano accordion. On any occasion when I'm unavailable, several of the group contribute in various ways to ensure the sessions go ahead. It's a really collaborative arrangement and ensures that the group keeps running regularly.

There really is something for everyone. If you come along and we don't include something you really love, tell us what that is and we'll try to include it the next time.

We've had several new members join us during the last term, which has helped to increase our volume and widen the repertoire that's possible. Several members tell me it's the joy of singing that keeps bringing them back. It's been well documented - in newspapers, on the radio and on TV - that singing increases endorphins - the 'feel good' chemicals in our brains. It's no wonder we always leave feeling more 'upbeat' than when we arrived.

We meet on the first and third Monday of the month - 2.00 p.m till 3.30 pm at the Salvation Army Hall on Violet Hill Road in Stowmarket. There's a large car park and it's easily accessed as there are no steps to negotiate.

If you like the sound of the group and would like to come along and try us out, please call or text **Hilary Foster**.

History Group

July: 'Exploring the Ports of the Orwell and Stour'

We were treated to a fascinating presentation by Robert Bradshaw who took us on a journey through the rich maritime history of the rivers Orwell and Stour — from the age of sail to the modern container era.

Robert began by describing how, for centuries, these rivers have been vital gateways for East Anglia's trade and industry. He traced the evolution of local ports such as Ipswich, Harwich, and Felixstowe, explaining how they developed from bustling harbours into key players in Britain's global shipping network.

A highlight of the talk was the story of the Port of Felixstowe, which started life in the 1870s as a small dock handling coastal steamers and has since grown into the UK's largest container port. Robert outlined how Felixstowe's deep-water location, rail links, and forward-thinking investment helped it become a major international hub.

Bringing the story right up to date, he discussed recent changes — including the departure of the Danish shipping giant Maersk, shifting global trade patterns, and the increasing role of overseas investors, which operates Felixstowe today. Members were particularly interested in how these developments reflect broader trends in world trade and technology, from automation and larger container ships to environmental challenges facing modern ports.

The talk combined local pride with global perspective, reminding us how the Orwell and Stour have connected Suffolk to the wider world for centuries.

Our thanks go to **Robert** for a well-researched and engaging talk that brought our maritime heritage vividly to life.

August: 'Hadleigh, Past and present'

This month we were out and about once again — this time to the charming market town of Hadleigh for a guided walk exploring its rich and varied past. The visit, ably organised by **Heather Salmon**, proved to be a delightful mix of fresh air, history, and good company.

Many members enjoyed a relaxed lunch at **The George Pub** before setting off, and the sunshine held out long enough for two well-timed guided groups to stroll the route at an unhurried pace. **Our Blue Badge guides**, led us through Hadleigh's winding streets and historic landmarks, weaving together stories that brought the town's heritage vividly to life. We learned how Hadleigh's roots stretch back over a thousand years, with connections to a Viking king, a fearless long-distance aviator, and even an artist-ploughman whose creative spirit still lingers in the town's fields and galleries.



With over 250 listed buildings, every turn revealed something new — from timber-framed merchants' houses to traces of medieval industry and Georgian elegance. We gained a real sense of how Hadleigh has evolved from a medieval wool town into the lively community it is today.

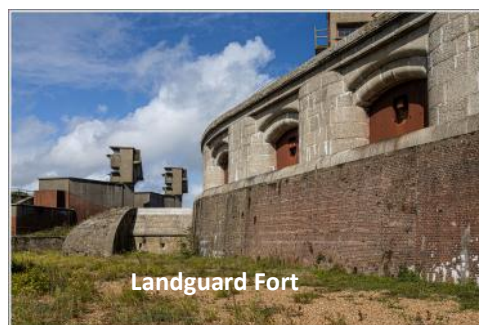
Conversation afterwards reflected how much everyone had enjoyed the afternoon — a perfect blend of social outing and local discovery.

Our thanks go to **Heather** for her excellent organisation.

September: Visit to Landguard Fort, Felixstowe

Organised by **Glenda Taylor** we had a wonderful visit to **Landguard Fort**. Despite a damp start, the rain obligingly stopped just as we arrived — and what followed was a thoroughly enjoyable and informative day.

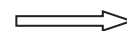
We split into two groups, each led by an **excellent guide** who brought the fort's long and eventful story vividly to life. Built to guard the entrance to **Harwich Harbour**, Landguard Fort is famous as the site of the last opposed seaborne invasion of England, when **Dutch forces were repelled here in 1667** by the newly formed **Royal Marines**.



Our tour took us through its maze of tunnels, ramparts, and casemates, revealing how the site evolved from a **Tudor gun battery** to a key coastal defence through the **Napoleonic Wars**, **both World Wars**, and even the **Cold War**, when parts of the fort were converted into a command post. The guides' stories — complete with cannon, barracks, and ingenious defensive features — helped us imagine what life might have been like for the soldiers stationed there.



After refreshments in the 1940s tea room, many of us continued next door to the **Felixstowe Museum**, which gave a broader view of the area's history — from its early religious beginnings at **St**



Felix Priory to its later transformation into a bustling Victorian seaside resort and, eventually, the gateway to today's **Port of Felixstowe**.

A big thank-you goes to **Glenda** for organising such an excellent outing and ensuring everything ran smoothly. It was a day filled with discovery, good company, and plenty of conversation — a fine reminder of how much local history there is right on our doorstep.

October: “Lady Eve Balfour: Farming, Soil & Vision”

Our meeting was led by **Anna Bradshaw**, who gave a truly fascinating talk about **Lady Eve Balfour** — a remarkable Suffolk woman whose ideas helped shape the modern organic farming movement.

Born in **1898**, **Eve** was one of the first women in Britain to study agriculture, going on to buy **New Bells Farm in Haughley Green** with her sister Mary when she was just 21. That farm would

later become the heart of something extraordinary.

The highlight of the talk was the story of the **Haughley Experiment**, which Eve launched in 1939. She wanted to show how the health of the soil, plants, animals, and people are all connected — a radical idea at the time. Her farm became a kind of open-air laboratory, where she compared traditional and organic farming methods side by side.



Eve Balfour 1925 on Ferguson tractor

Eve went on to co-found the [Soil Association](#) (follow link) in **1946**, becoming its first president. The organisation still promotes the same principles today — working with nature

rather than against it, and protecting the soil that sustains us all.

Members particularly enjoyed hearing how this world-changing work happened right here in Suffolk, on fields many of us know well. Anna's talk painted a vivid picture of **Eve's determination and lifelong belief that caring for the earth means caring for ourselves**.

In her later years, Eve continued writing, lecturing, and campaigning. Just before her death in 1990, she was honoured with the **Royal Agricultural Society's National Agricultural Award** for her outstanding contribution to British farming — a well-deserved recognition for a lifetime of vision and commitment.

A warm thank-you to Anna for a beautifully researched and engaging talk that reminded us how one person's local passion can grow into an idea that changes the world.

Keith and Lorraine Shelton

Photography

We recently welcomed 2 new members to bring our numbers up to strength.

Since the last newsletter we've covered - 'Statues', 'Holidays', 'Vessels large and small' and in October, 'Age(d)'.

Here is a selection of our 'Age(d)' pictures.

Peter Dakeyne





Stand and Stare Walking Group

July. Badley

Starting from **Roots and Shoots** we had a gentle stroll along **Badley Walk** through a wooded area and onto an open meadow to **St. Mary's Church**, Badley, stopping along the way to identify trees and birds. Normally the church is closed during the week. However, we were able to contact a key holder to gain access to this beautiful church where time has stood still. Back at Roots and Shoots we took advantage of refreshments at their café.

August. Needham Market

We walked up the Causeway from Needham Market to **St Mary's**

Barking church. Until 1901 it was the church of both Barking and Needham Market, and the dead of Needham Market came here to be buried, conveyed the mile up the hill on a bier along the **Causeway** (corruption of 'corpseway'). It was last used by funeral processions in 1914. Inside the church we were able to see a bier and several other interesting features.

September. Due to holidays, we were unable to arrange a reccie and a walk for this month.

October. Bradfield Woods.

Our last visit was in April when it was full of spring flowers and wild garlic! This time, the wood was full of autumn colour and fungi! Also, we saw

violets out in flower– the seasons are definitely out of sync! At the end of the walk, we took advantage of a lovely sunny autumn day by sitting at a picnic bench to enjoy flasks of coffee and any snacks members had brought along.

Thank you to everyone who have 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** or **Glenda Taylor**



Walk and Talk Group

Summer and Autumn 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. Since July, we've explored a wonderful variety of routes — from riverside paths and rolling hills to peaceful villages and historic landmarks — always with time for conversation and, of course, a well-earned pub lunch!

18 July: led by **Roger Crouch** saw sixteen members making full use of their bus passes for a five-mile linear walk along the **River Gipping towpath** from **Needham to Combs Ford**. On a very hot day, the shaded riverside trees and cooling breeze were much appreciated. The walk ended with a convivial lunch at The Magpie.



Anne Webb led both of our August walks.

01 Aug: led by **Anne Webb** the group set off on a circular route from **Coddenham to Hemingstone**, taking in the beautiful **Jacobean Hemmingstone Hall** and the quaint “Hut” — **Hemmingstone Village Hall**, once a WWI hut from Rendlesham Forest. The walk was undulating with fine views, and although the weather turned wet after the refreshment stop, spirits

remained high, ending with lunch at **The Rampant Horse in Needham Market**.

15 Aug: again led by **Anne**, our walkers gathered in **Mendlesham** for a warm-weather ramble through **Tan Office** and **Mendlesham Green**. Hedgerow blackberries provided tasty incentives along the way before everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch at the **White Horse in Stoke Ash**.

01 Sep: led by Gerald and Suzanne Brooks, the walk began at **Needham Lake** on a lovely late-summer's morning. The route meandered across open countryside to the tiny hamlet of **Darmsden**, where walkers paused at **St Andrew's Church** for a rest before heading on to **Pip's Ford** and a pleasant riverside path back to Needham Lake. Lunch at **The Swan**, Needham Market, rounded off a delightful outing.

19 Sep: **Heather and Barry Salmon** led a pleasant 4½-mile circular walk from **The Swan at Westerfield**, taking in **Tuddenham** and skirting the edge of Witnesham before returning to the pub for lunch. The route followed well-defined footpaths across open fields to Tuddenham, then along a quiet lane before joining a delightful bridleway running beside the **Fynn Valley Golf Course**. From there, a short stretch of road and a rise of steps led the group onto a footpath towards Cockfield Hall. The final section followed the lane back to **Westerfield**, where everyone enjoyed a relaxing lunch at **The Swan**

03 Oct: **John and Nancy Dickson**, led the walk and took participants on a circular route from **Stoke-by-Nayland to Polstead**. Despite the damp weather, nine walkers enjoyed exploring this charming Constable Country landscape. Highlights included **Polstead Church** — noted for its medieval spire and striking war memorial — and panoramic views ideal for photographs. The group returned to **The Crown** in **Stoke-by-Nayland** for a hearty meal....



17 Oct: **Roger Crouch** again led a riverside route — this time from **Claydon Picnic Site** back to **Needham Market** along the River Gipping towpath. Twenty members joined the five-mile autumnal walk, witnessing



impressive restoration work by the River Gipping Trust and the newly completed **Pipps Ford footbridge**. The morning ended with lunch at **The Swan**.

New members are always welcome!

Keith Shelton

Play Reading – Virtual

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

Following reading “**The Constant Wife**” by **W. Somerset Maugham**, we have just completed reading “**Mrs Warren’s Profession**” by **George Bernard Shaw**. We will commence reading “**The Daughter of Time**” by **Josephine Tey** at our November meeting.

I anticipate that the Play Reading Group will continue as a **Virtual Group** for the foreseeable future. If anyone is interested in joining the Virtual Group, please contact me.

Anyone interested in joining the Group once we return to live meetings, please contact me and I will keep you informed when the situation changes.

Maureen Wingham-Eaton

Gardens & Things...

Was a bit of a mixed bag this summer. A visit to **Bletchley Park** should have been the highlight, and final outing of the season but had to be cancelled due to too many people backing out at the last minute. Very disappointing for those who were keen to go.



We did have an interesting walking tour of Ipswich starting at the Town Hall and meandering through to the waterfront. The tour guide led us past a statue of Cardinal Wolsey, who hails from Ipswich, and his cat. Ipswich has numerous historic buildings with interesting features.



We also saw many hare statues, all part of the **Hop to It!** sculpture art trail.

The **G&T** group has no fixed membership. Anyone can sign up for one of the outings and any time.

Liz Power and Val Fazzari

Sunday Lunch Club

The group has grown in membership so much so that we now have a waiting list. Which could mean that someone can start up another group!

We decided to try other venues other than pubs as it was becoming a bit repetitive. During the summer we went to the **Meze Grill** in **Stowmarket**. The food was very tasty, portions huge and the staff most welcoming. And we recently went to **Chequers** in **Great Blakenham** for Indian food, also very good and a nice change. We sat outside in the sunshine and had a lovely meal at the **Crown** in **Bildeston**.

Feel free to contact us if you'd like to start another group or want to join the waiting list.

Val Fazzari and Liz Power

Discussion Group

Our Discussion group convened for the summer months. The new meeting venue will be **Red Gables**, **second Tuesday of the month from 10.00-12.00**.

All topics, with the exception of religion and politics, are open for lively discussion. Feel free to come along for a taster or get in touch. We won't scare you away!

Liz Power

Computing & Technology.

As mentioned before, after more than 25 years of normal meetings then after Covid on-line meetings, we now communicate solely via a **Q&A** on **WhatsApp** where members can raise any problems as they occur.

This group is also open to *any u3a member* who wishes to join. Just follow [HERE](#) to get the invite link (please do not pass this link to anyone outside the u3a).

In the mean time, you may be interested in a free u3a on-line **Learning Event...**

Friday, November 21 · 10 - 11:30am
“**Your Personal AI Assistant has Arrived**”

For information and booking, click [HERE](#)

Peter Dakeyne

Cake Walk

Pictures from a walk around Shotley Vineyard in July....



Message from the editor...

I've been looking after the Newsletter in its present full colour form since **2014** and been webmaster since inception in **2008**. I first became involved in the u3a Newsletter around **2009** when **Philip Weir** introduced me to the nuts and bolts of preparing a newsletter. Philip had been editor since **2002** and I'm indebted to him for the knowledge and experience I gained.

Earlier this year I felt it necessary to do some legacy planning so I put out an appeal for someone to join me to learn the ropes and I'm pleased to say that **Gerald Brooks** took up the challenge and has shadowed me for the last few editions.

At the time, I had no clear intention of giving up the Newsletter but I've now decided that, perhaps, I should pass over to Gerald sooner rather than later. He has agreed, then,

to become editor for the **Spring, March 2026** edition.

Having spent most of his career in **IT**, he is well qualified for this new role.

The editor can always be contacted on newseditor@u3astowmarket.org.uk. To ease the transition and avoid confusion, **I'll make the transfer to Gerald effective as 01/01/2026.**

Regarding the web site, I'll continue with that for the time being. It's effectively the same as when I introduced it in **2008** and after all this time, sorely need updating!

I've really enjoyed editing the Newsletter (good brain exercise!) and would like to thank all the various Committee members over the years for their encouragement along the way.

Peter Dakeyne,

I am sure you all know Peter Dakeyne, who over very many years has run our u3a website and produced the newsletter we all enjoy. Peter has now decided to pass the newsletter baton over to Gerald Brooks from the Spring 2026 edition.

Peter has over the years contributed so much to the u3a from being on the committee, working tirelessly within u3a projects, running activities and of course his professional stewardship of the website and newsletter.

I would just like to pass to Peter, on behalf of the Stowmarket u3a committee and I'm sure the wider u3a membership, our heartfelt thanks for all of his efforts over the years. I am sure knowing Peter though, he will be there to offer advice from his many years of experience should any of us need it in the future.

John Dickson



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

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

If you are reading the print version and would to know more, please go to our web site 'Newsletter' tab at

<https://u3astowmarket.org.uk/>

[newsletters/](#) where you will find this digital issue (plus many more) and where all the links are live.



Coming up....2026

Jan 21st. "Young People Today". The 'Turning Point's Families Team-Foundation'. *Kirsty Jeeves and Mark*

Feb 18th. "The Life of the Hon Mrs Victor Bruce". The first person to fly solo from the UK to Japan....and much more

Paul Smiddy

Mar 18th. "The Wonder of Norway" *Joanne Larner*

I'd like to let all members know that we have acquired a copy of 'Canva Pro'. This powerful programme usually costs **£100/year per user**, but as a charity it's absolutely free for up to 50 people.

I would stress, there are no strings. You can use it privately or on u3a business if you like. **Your choice!**

There's far too much in it to detail here, but thanks to **Bourne End u3a** and if you are interested I've acquired a copy of their teaching programme [HERE](#) (ignore the instruction of how to join, that's done!) and a copy of their Canva Group [Newsletter](#)

Please let me know and I'll send you an invitation to join our the membership list (just five of us at the moment!)

Obituary — In Memory of Phil Webb

We are very sad to share that our dear friend and fellow u3a member, **Phil Webb**, passed away on **29 October**, following a short illness.

Many of us knew Phil best as the Group Leader of the **Walk and Talk (longer walk)** group. He co-ordinated it brilliantly, giving so many of us the chance to enjoy good exercise, great company, and the beauty of the Suffolk countryside — often rounded off with a well-earned pub lunch. Walking and chatting with Phil was always a pleasure. His eyes would light up whenever a classic car passed by, especially a **Morris Minor**. He delighted in sharing stories of motoring adventures — and the occasional necessary repair — involving those beloved cars of his and his father's.

Phil and Anne joined Stowmarket u3a around 2008/09. During that time, Phil served on the Committee, taking on roles including **Secretary** and **Vice-Chair**, and he was one of the friendly faces who would arrive early to help set up our monthly meetings. Many will also fondly remember Phil providing the refreshments at Anne's Christmas wreath-making workshops — always ready with a smile, a cup of coffee, and a mince pie.

Phil was an enthusiastic member of several groups, including the **History Group**, **G&T Group**, the **Cake Walk** and **Aviation Group**. Within the History Group he once gave a fascinating talk about a wartime explosion close to where he grew up. He was only a baby when it happened, but the memory lived



on in the cracks left behind in the kitchen tiles!

Beyond the u3a, Phil was committed to his local community. He was a Parish Councillor in **Wyverstone**, and after moving to **Mendlesham** more than seven years ago, he played an active role in village life there too. He was involved in the Annual Fayre (making signs as well as being on car park duty) and the community celebrations around the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the Coronation. Phil was key to

sourcing and even varnishing the Community Bench we bought from the money raised, which now proudly sits in the heart of the village. Many will know him for his work in **re-establishing the Mendlesham Airfield Association**, of which he was Chair and developing the exhibition at the **Mid-Suffolk Light Railway Museum**, telling the story of the airfield and the American servicemen of the **34th Bomb Group**. He also supported fundraising for the **RNLI** — and who could resist buying one of his handmade pallet-Christmas Trees or a wooden reindeer?

Phil was a generous, genuinely likeable and kind man who made many friends here. His thoughtful presence, gentle humour, and enthusiasm for life enriched our u3a greatly, and he will be truly missed.

Our thoughts and heartfelt sympathies are with **Anne**, their son **Christopher** and his family in Canada, and all who knew and loved Phil.

He made our community stronger — and we are grateful.

Stowmarket u3a

Christmas Get Together, 10th December 2025

Following the success of last year's Christmas event, we will be repeating the same format this year!

You are welcome to join us for a Christmas Get Together on 10th December 2025, between 1pm 3pm (doors open 12.30pm)

Your Committee will serve you tea and Festive Cakes — so no need to even leave your seat! If you have any particular dietary requirement, you are welcome to bring your own Seasonal Cake to have with your tea.

We will also supply soft drinks, although you are welcome to bring your own drinks if you wish — remembering to bring a glass!

We will set the room with tables of 8, so you can either sit with your friends, or maybe use the opportunity to make new friends and sit with somebody you haven't met before

There will be a Quiz and a Free Raffle.

There will be no charge for this event, but you will need a ticket. At the time of publication, all tickets have been allocated but you can still register on the 'wait list' in case of any cancellations. We look forward to seeing you there...

Editor/Webmaster

Peter Dakeyne

newseditor@u3astowmarket.org.uk

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www.u3astowmarket.org.uk

Learning Events

Did you know that u3a members can join a wide range of online talks, workshops and courses for free with their membership!?

Most of these opportunities are presented by members themselves; sharing their knowledge or skills with others across the movement. There is also a wide range of talks on offer from well-known speakers and organisations, plus in-person events at venues like the Royal Institution.

All of these events can be booked below via Eventbrite. At the time of booking, please ensure that you can attend and if you later find that you're unable to, please cancel your place through Eventbrite to avoid others missing out unnecessarily.

The full list of courses for November and into December can be found by following this [LINK](#). Just click on any of the pictures for information and reserve a spot via Eventbrite.

While you are there, look out for **Don Mobley's** talk on **December 2nd**. "Flight Inspirations: The Battle of the Beams". Here's the [LINK](#) to find out more and book the event.

Also, of interest to our Geology Group, a presentation on "The Geology of Britain in the Mesozoic, the Era of Middle Life" — a [Lesson in Geology](#) on **December 13th**.

If you are considering offering a talk or workshop please get in touch at events@u3a.org.uk - the u3a would love to hear from you.

Don't forget u3a also runs many [projects, initiatives and competitions](#) available for all members to get involved in too.

From the editor. If you decide to take part in one or more of these events, it would be most interesting for everyone to hear about the experience—which can be published in the next (March) newsletter. Please let me know newseditor@u3astowmarket.org.uk

Interest Groups On Line

Interest Groups Online offers a variety of peer led, online learning opportunities for its subscribers.

As part of the u3a movement, members generously

volunteer their time and share their knowledge, skills and experience with the members in their groups. Some groups are more interactive than others, with an expectation that all members take it in turns to present their knowledge. If in doubt, give it a go. The more groups you try, the more likely you'll find the one you love.

To join a group you must already be a paid up member of Interest Groups Online. **It costs £12 to join for the year (or £6.00 after 1st October)**, which runs from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.

Follow this [LINK](#) to find out more

"Third Age Matters" Screen Reader Editions

Just a reminder that you can access all editions of the 'Third Age Matters' magazine on line. *Unlike the printed versions this is at no cost to Stowmarket u3a nor yourself!*

You can browse all recent editions (no pictures, though) and find any particular topic that interests you from the menu at the beginning.

Find it all [HERE](#).

The u3a Friends Newsletter

Have you signed up yet? The u3a publish a monthly Newsletter in which you may be interested. Follow this [LINK](#) where you can sign up to receive a copy by email each month, or just read the archive for 2024 so far.

u3a 'Friends Extra Offers'

You can save a lot with this recent innovation, anything from 4% to 11% on a wide range of goods and services - food, travel, and fashion. Just follow this [LINK](#) to find out more...

u3a Radio Podcast...

Is definitely worth a look at, YouTube channel [HERE](#). Created by a team of u3a members with radio experience, the podcast (which has been running for 3 years) comes out on the 17th of each month. It showcases the amazing things happening across the u3a movement. Fascinating stuff!

u3a
learn, laugh, live



Extra pictures from the Walk & Talk Group