

From the Editor

Interest Group information

You will see that we have dispensed with the chart of interest groups that has previously been included with each newsletter. This is because any changes to these interest groups cannot be corrected until the next newsletter. The most accurate record of all our interest groups, including links to contact Group Leaders, will now be the website. This will be regularly kept up to date. You can access the Interest Groups page at: <https://www.u3astowmarket.org.uk/groups>.

Member articles

We are delighted to include some articles from our members in this edition of the newsletter.

Irene Bloom recounts the time when she had an unusual visitor take up residence in her sofa (page 10)

Barbara Cutting tells us how she enjoys the North Norfolk Coast, courtesy of her Rail and Bus Passes (page 10)

Peter Leeding recalls his fascinating journey over 54 years as a Martial Artist (page 11)

Don Mobley describes the 34th Bomb Group exhibition at the Middy Railway, supported by some of our members (page 11)

Hopefully these articles will inspire more of our members to put forward articles for the next (and subsequent) newsletters. Let's make this a regular newsletter feature!

Gerald Brooks

Summer Outing 2026



Our annual **Summer Outing** this year saw 46 of our members board the coach to visit the **Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery**, and **Wymondham Abbey**.

The new-look Castle Museum and Art Gallery provided plenty to see and

enjoy, ranging from a display of tea pots through the ages, through to many historic artefacts, local Norwich School artists' paintings, and of course the castle keep, with its panoramic view of the city from the roof.

We then moved on to the beautiful

Wymondham Abbey, where we were given a fascinating guided tour which covered the history of the Abbey and pointed out many historic features.

Returning to Stowmarket, the overall feedback was that we had a very enjoyable and interesting day.



March: A wonderful beginning at our new venue

Our March Monthly Meeting marked an important milestone for Stowmarket u3a as we gathered for the first time at our new home, the Salvation Army Hall in Violet Hill Road. Members arrived in good numbers to begin this exciting new chapter for our organisation.

The Salvation Army provided a warm welcome and an excellent setting for the afternoon. It was lovely to see members enjoying the opportunity to meet, chat and catch up over

refreshments before the meeting began – a reminder that the social side of u3a is every bit as important as the talks themselves.

Our speaker was **Joanne Larnar**, who gave a fascinating presentation entitled *“The Wonder of Norway”*. Joanne introduced us to some of the remarkable landscapes that make Norway such a distinctive country. Her talk provided a fascinating glimpse into Norway’s scenery, culture, and heritage, and was both informative and entertaining.

Our sincere thanks go to Joanne for helping make our first meeting at the Salvation Army such an enjoyable and memorable occasion. We look forward to many more interesting talks and friendly gatherings in the months ahead.

**April: “The Fascinating World of Cryptic Crosswords”**

Our April Monthly Meeting attracted another excellent turnout at the Salvation Army Hall. Members enjoyed the chance to meet friends and share refreshments before the afternoon’s talk.

Our speaker, **Angela Bell**, presented *“The Fascinating World of the Cryptic Crossword”*. She explained that cryptic crosswords will celebrate their

centenary next year and traced the history of word puzzles from ancient times to the modern day. Members learned how the first cryptic crossword was developed in the United States, before arriving in Britain during the 1930s.

Angela also highlighted some of the talented individuals who elevated clue writing into a fine art, and described the important role cryptic crosswords played in recruiting codebreakers for

Bletchley Park during the Second World War.

The talk sparked interest in how cryptic clues are constructed and solved, raising questions about the techniques used by setters and experienced solvers alike. These fascinating aspects were unfortunately beyond the scope of the presentation, but could easily provide material for a future talk. Our thanks go to Angela for an informative, thought-provoking and entertaining afternoon.

May: “The Z8869 Story”

Our May Monthly Meeting featured a fascinating and moving presentation by **Paul Thompson**, Civilian Instructor with **1331 (Stowmarket) Squadron RAF Air Cadets**. His talk, *“The Z8869 Story”*, recounted the fate of a 99 Squadron Wellington bomber that crashed near Great Finborough on 29 September 1941, claiming the lives of all six crew members.

Members soon discovered that this was much more than the story of an aircraft accident. Over eighty years later, Stowmarket Air Cadets researching local

Commonwealth War Graves uncovered references to the largely forgotten crash. Guided by Paul, the cadets investigated further, eventually locating the crash site and raising funds to establish a permanent memorial to the crew.

Combining wartime history, detective work, and personal remembrance, the presentation held the audience’s attention throughout. Particularly inspiring was the way the project brought generations together, with young cadets helping to preserve an important local story.

The talk also highlighted Suffolk’s important wartime role and the dedication of the Air Cadets. Our sincere thanks go to Paul for an informative, thoughtful, and memorable afternoon.



News and Dates for you Diary

News on Membership Subscriptions....

The Committee are pleased to announce that the individual annual membership for the year beginning **1st October 2026** will be reduced to **£15**.

The half year membership (for those joining after April 2027) will remain at **£10**.

The annual membership for Associate Members (those whose primary membership is with another u3a) will remain at **£15**.

A second Monthly Meeting....

We will be introducing a second monthly meeting in September. The idea behind this is to provide the opportunity for a more informal, social get-together each month. There are several ideas of things that we could include in these meetings, and we will canvass members views on these as we move forward.

Three dates have been booked so far – **Wednesday 30th September, Wednesday 28th October, and Wednesday 25th November**. All these meetings will be at Red Gables, Ipswich Road, Stowmarket, starting at 10:00.

Further communications will follow, by email and on the News page on the Website.

Monthly Meetings coming up (see our [website](#) for more meetings)....

July 15th. "Adventure, Activism and the Climate Crisis". *Edward Gildea.*

Aug 19th. "AI Everywhere". *Ian Hawker.* Discover the wide-ranging application of AI in our society today and what developments might take place in the future.

Sept 16th. AGM, followed by **"The Man who Tested Parachutes"**. *Andrew Colley.* All about the 34-year-old schoolteacher with a taste for adventure when he joined a pioneering group of mavericks at RAF Ringway in Manchester.

36th Annual General Meeting

NOTICE

Notice is given that the Thirty Sixth Annual General Meeting of Stowmarket u3a will be held in the Salvation Army Hall, 3 Violet Hill Road, Stowmarket on Wednesday 16 September 2026 at 1330.

AGENDA

- 1 Welcome & Introduction
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Approval of the Minutes of the Thirty Fifth Annual General Meeting
- 4 Chair's report on behalf of the Committee
- 5 Treasurers report and Financial Statement 2025-2026
- 6 Appointment of a suitable qualified examiner of the Financial Statement for the 2025-2026 year
- 7 Election of Officers of Stowmarket u3a (until the conclusion of the 37th AGM.)
 - Chair
 - Vice Chair
 - Honorary Secretary
 - Honorary Treasurer
- 8 Election of Committee Members
- 9 Any other business
- By order of the committee



Spotted on the u3a Online Learning page

Here are two u3a Online Learning events that might be of interest to you:

Friday 31st July at 10am

"Staying Safe Online"

This online Zoom talk will present key elements of online security, and also discuss some of the very latest threats that are particularly aimed at the u3a generation. There will be a Q&A session afterwards.

Tuesday 11th August at 2pm

"Digital Hobbies for the Third Age"

Whether you are interested in gardening, art, music, history, astronomy, or something else, find new ways to use technology to engage with your passions or discover new interests. We will look at some tools and fun apps for exploring your interests, with a preference for things that are free.

For more details and to book a place, go to:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/educational-events>



From the Groups Coordinator

There have been a few additions to the Groups list over the last few months.

The **Pilates Group** has been particularly successful. Thanks to Suzanne, who was a Pilates Instructor. This group is currently able to take a few more members.

We also have a new **Cribbage Group**. A member told me she enjoyed playing Cribbage and wondered if any other u3a member would like to join her in a group. Having sent out a message to all our members, about 6 others were interested in playing, so a Group was

formed. It is still quite small, but the members are keen and enjoy playing regularly. Using The Mix in Stowmarket, they can make use of the excellent Café for their tea and coffee.

This shows that if you have an idea for a group, or enjoy doing a particular activity, it is certainly worth mentioning and maybe a new group can be formed for other members to enjoy.

The **Acoustic Guitar Group** is thriving and has recently started another Group as so many wished to join.

Also doing well is the **Sunday Lunch Group**, which has also now started an additional group. Meeting once a

month, on a Sunday, members enjoy Sunday Lunch at various local establishments. This is particularly appreciated by members on their own, who would not normally cook a Sunday Roast!

So, there is something for everyone in our u3a. However, groups don't run by themselves and always need a leader to co-ordinate and ensure the Group runs smoothly. A big Thank You to all Group Leaders.

Barbara Cutting

groupscoord@u3astowmarket.org.uk

Current Interest Groups (details at: www.stowmarketu3a.org.uk/groups)

Acoustic Guitar 1 & 2	Cribbage	Patchwork	Singing
Art & Galleries	Discussion Group	Photography	Spanish Conversation
Aviation	French Conversation 1 & 2	Pilates	Stand & Stare
Book Club	Gardens & Things	Play Reading	Sunday Lunch Club 1 & 2
Bridge	Geology	Poetry Reading	Table Tennis
Canasta 1 & 2	History	Recorder (Starter & Player)	Walk & Talk
Cake Walk	Italian Conversation	Scrabble	Yarners

Pilates

Many thanks for the great interest and turn out for our new Pilates class. We have been learning quite a few basic Mat Pilates moves, which everyone seems to be enjoying and managing very well. We will increase the amount of moves learnt over the coming weeks. The enthusiasm to learn has been extremely gratifying, and I have been delighted by the kind words about the teaching.

Now the numbers for the group have levelled out, we are able to accommodate a few more members if

anyone is interested in joining us.

Suzanne Brooks

Table Tennis

Changes to our administration

Unfortunately, due to my deteriorating health conditions, it's unlikely that I will be able to play again.

My initial reaction was that I should give up altogether but as I've played table tennis on and off for the last 70 years or so, and started this group in 2019, that's a bitter pill to take.

So, as agreed with the members, I will continue to act as Convenor (non playing) and deal with all the administration.

I'll call in from time to time for a chat as I don't want to lose the camaraderie that table tennis brings!

We are always looking for new members. Experience, or the lack of, doesn't matter. Don't forget the physical and mental benefits of playing Table Tennis.

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

Peter Dakeyne

Aviation Group

Members of Stowmarket U3A are warmly invited to join a special online meeting of the Flight Inspirations Aviation Group on **Tuesday 4 August 2026**, featuring an extraordinary guest speaker, **Flt Lt Colin Bell**.

Now aged 105, Colin is one of the last surviving RAF Pathfinder Mosquito pilots of the Second World War. During the war he flew 50 operational missions over Germany with the elite Pathfinder

Force, 13 of them over Berlin at a time when Berlin was a boiling cauldron of anti-aircraft defenses.

This is a **rare opportunity** to hear first-hand testimony from someone who played a vital role in one of history's most significant conflicts. Colin's personal recollections bring the realities of wartime flying vividly to life and provide a unique insight into the courage, skill, and dedication of those who served.

It is a genuine privilege to hear Colin speak, and audiences consistently describe his presentations as both inspiring and deeply moving. Anyone with an interest in history, aviation or remarkable personal stories will not want to miss this exceptional event.

If you would like to attend this event, please email Don Mobley at oneisbingo@gmail.com for a link to the online meeting.

Don Mobley

Gardens & Things

The Gardens & Things group has had some interesting outings this year.

We visited **Bawdsey Radar Museum** located near Felixstowe, in April. After a short introduction provided by one of the volunteers, we made our way around the museum. [Bawdsey](#) became the first fully operational radar station in the world. Radar stations proved invaluable as the war progressed, in particular during the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940, when the RAF were heavily outnumbered and early detection was crucial to their success in the air.



In May we went to **Fullers Mill** on the banks of the River Lark. The [gardens](#) here were created over a period of 50 years. It is a very peaceful and tranquil setting with a stream and small river and fabulous flowering plants, shrubs and trees. The cafe provided us with some refreshments. All in all a very enjoyable visit.



The July visit will be to the **Yum Yum Fudge** factory in Woolpit, where we will be given a tour and some tastings. It will be a very different outing!

Sandringham is scheduled for August, with Galloway, and the last outing of the

year in September, will be to **Flatford Mill** (you can see more about Flatford [here](#)).

Val and I are relinquishing our roles as group leaders of G&T after the September outing, so we are looking for someone to take the reins.

If you would be interested in taking over please get in touch with either of us.

Val Fazzari

Liz Power

Sunday Lunch Club

The Sunday Lunch group continues to meet every month. We always have a good laugh, good conversation and, for the most part, a good meal. We seek out new locations but also like to revisit favourite venues.

We had lunch at the Swan in Westerfield. The Railway Inn, just down the road is always worth another visit. In June we went to the Fountain Pub in Tuddenham for the first time, which had good food and a nice ambiance.

Both Sunday Lunch groups are pretty much full now, but a new group can always be created if anyone is keen to start one!

Val Fazzari

Liz Power

History Group

March: A Journey through Suffolk's remarkable history

Our March meeting saw Jackie Durrant take members on a journey through 700,000 years of Suffolk's history.

Beginning with the remarkable archaeological discoveries at Pakefield, among the earliest evidence of human activity in Northern Europe, Jackie traced the county's development through the centuries. Members learned how agriculture, pottery and the wool trade helped shape Suffolk's economy, while Roman gold and silver hoards demonstrated its long-standing prosperity.

The talk explored Suffolk's changing fortunes through the Anglo-Saxon, Viking and Norman periods, including the rise of Bury St Edmunds Abbey as one of medieval England's most influential religious institutions.



(Click on the picture above for more on Suffolk's history).

Moving into modern times, Jackie highlighted Suffolk's important contribution to national defence, from weapons testing at Orford Ness and pioneering radar work at Bawdsey, to the many RAF and American air bases established during the Second World War.

The presentation also examined post-war industrialisation, population changes, and ongoing archaeological discoveries. Despite these developments, agriculture remains

central to Suffolk's identity.

Concluding with a look at the county today, with housing, roads, and commercial development continuing to expand, Jackie posed an interesting question: how long will Suffolk continue to be regarded as a truly rural county? Our thanks go to Jackie for an informative and enjoyable afternoon.

April: Woolpit Museum and Village

Our April meeting took members to the historic village of Woolpit for an afternoon of local history, exploration, and good company.

The visit was organised by Barbara Cutting, who arranged special out-of-hours access to the village museum. Because the museum is housed in a small building, members were divided into groups, allowing everyone to enjoy the museum, a village trail, and a visit to the impressive parish church of St Mary. Woolpit has a rich and varied history, and members enjoyed discovering more about its past while exploring key buildings and landmarks. The museum offered a fascinating insight into village life over the centuries, while the trail encouraged closer attention to the history still visible in the streets and buildings today.



(Click [here](#) to read some more interesting information on Woolpit).

The visit also provided plenty of opportunity for discussion and shared discoveries, as members compared notes on the exhibits, the church, and the many historical features across the

village.



Our thanks go to Barbara for organising a well-planned and thoroughly enjoyable afternoon, with the combination of museum, church and village walk proving an excellent way to explore local history.

May: Stowmarket Workhouse and Pauper's Graves

Our May meeting featured a fascinating talk by Glenda Taylor on the history of the Stow Union Workhouse and the Paupers' Graves at Onehouse.

Drawing on surviving records, inmate writings and punishment books, Glenda explored the realities of life within the workhouse system. Members learned about the strict rules, harsh punishments and difficult conditions endured by many inmates, together with the emotional impact of family separation and the loss of personal dignity that often accompanied admission to the workhouse.

Particularly revealing were examples from the Stow Union Workhouse punishment records, which highlighted the range of offences and penalties imposed on men, women, and children. These records provide a rare and often sobering glimpse into everyday life within the institution.

The second part of the talk focused on the Paupers' Graves at Onehouse, where many former inmates were buried, often marked only by numbered crosses.



Glenda also described efforts to preserve and commemorate the site.



The talk provided a powerful reminder that local history is about people as much as places. Our thanks go to Glenda for a thoughtful, well-researched and memorable presentation.

June: Discovering Historic Harwich

In June, we travelled to Harwich for a guided walking tour of one of England's most historic ports. Members arrived by car and train, while a planned ferry journey for some was unfortunately cancelled due to strong winds.

With more than 200 listed buildings packed into a small area, Harwich offered a wealth of history to explore. Before the tour began, members received a memorable welcome from the Town Crier, who greeted the group in traditional regalia with a ceremonial proclamation.



Starting at Ha'penny Pier, the guided walk explored Harwich's rich maritime, military, and commercial heritage. Highlights included the Electric Palace Cinema, one of Britain's oldest purpose-built cinemas, the Treadwheel Crane,



the Guildhall, and the High Lighthouse. Members also visited memorials commemorating the Kindertransport and the devastating floods of 1953.

As always, the visit combined historical discovery with the opportunity to enjoy good company. Following the tour, members shared lunch and continued exploring the town at their own pace.

Our thanks go to Lorraine Shelton for organising an enjoyable and informative visit.

If you are interested in learning more about Harwich, follow this [link](#).

Keith and Lorraine Shelton

Walk and Talk Group

Our Spring Adventures

We continue to stride out on the first and third Fridays of each month, enjoying good company, fresh air, and the beautiful Suffolk countryside. Over the last few months we have welcomed some new members to the group. As ever, we are indebted to our members who share the task of planning and leading a walk, and this session we also had some new walk leaders—a particular thanks to them for

taking up the challenge!

Our walks are typically around 4 to 5 miles, and of course we maintain the essential tradition of a well-earned pub lunch at the end of each walk!

This session we have enjoyed these walks:

Occold and Beddingfield: Gislingham (2 walks); Wyverstone and Earls Green: Thwaite and Mendlesham: Great Finborough: Thornham Walks and Thornham Magna: Needham Market to Barking: Around Stowupland.

Some highlights include:

Seeing the rebirth of nature throughout Spring, with the beautiful wild flowers and the new born lambs and calves.

Hearing the amazing story of the famous [weapons haul in Wyverstone](#)

from Anne.

John Dickson doing his lumberjack thing to clear a blocked path on our Gislingham walk (it wasn't there on the reccie!).

Just beating the last heatwave (albeit it was still pretty hot!) on our Barking walk.





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

Gerald Brooks and Keith Shelton

Cribbage

A reminder that the new Cribbage Group meets the 1st Thursday each month from 2-3:30 pm at The Mix in Stowmarket, and is open to any new members. Cribbage is a classic card game for two to four players, and is a fun and sociable activity with of course a bit of friendly competition. Why not

come along to the next meeting to give it a try!

Discussion Group

The Discussion Group reconvenes after its Summer break, on Tuesday 8th September at The Mix in Stowmarket.

They will then meet on the 2nd Tuesday each month from 10-12pm, to discuss a range of issues in a friendly and open environment, where thoughts and ideas can be shared on a variety of subjects. Topics for each discussion are suggested by group members. New members are very welcome!

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 - 'Winter', 'Industrial', 'Low Level' and in June, '6 of the Best..'

Here is a selection of our '6 of the Best' pictures.



For those of you reading online, follow the [Archive link](#) on the [Newsletter page](#) on the website to see the archive of our pictures back to 2013 when we started (the Archive also includes Newsletters back to 1990 and Outings and events back to 2008).

Peter Dakeyne



Play Reading (Virtual)

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

Following reading “*The Cat and the Canary*” by John Willard adapted by David Muncaster, we have read “*The*

Man Who Had All the Luck” by Arthur Miller, “*The Promise*” by Aleksei Arbusov and have just commenced “*The Man in the Glass Booth*” by Robert Shaw. Next, we plan to read “*A Scent of Flowers*” by James Saunders.

In June, we were delighted to welcome

a new member to the group.

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.

Maureen Wingham-Eaton

Stand and Stare Walking Group

March - Woodbridge Coastal Path

Before reaching the riverside, we spotted several unusual sights, including a skeleton that regularly changes position with quirky messages, and even some naughty policemen! Along the river, there were plenty of boats to see, including the Deben Bar Café on HMS Vale, where we stopped for coffee and cake on deck while watching the birds.

The walk ended at [The Long Shed](#), where volunteers are reconstructing the world-famous seventh century Sutton Hoo burial ship. Some members stayed to view the longship reconstruction, as

well as visiting ‘The King’s River Tapestry Project’ in the upstairs gallery.

April - Freston Woods

This took us through Freston Woods from the Suffolk Food Hall and back. We were treated to carpets of bluebells and white wild garlic flowers. Reaching St Peter's Church, Freston, we stopped outside for a small break before heading back through the woods to the Suffolk Food Hall, where we enjoyed coffee and cake in the sunshine.

May - Gallowfield Woods

We met at Gallowfield Woods, an area of 20 acres of woodland and open space. It has an Arboretum

where we saw a mixture of varied species of trees, with boards displaying pictures and information on them. There were also bird and owl boxes in the trees and open grassland. We found the ‘Yew Room’ with a picnic table and bench where we stopped for a drink and snack. A bit of fun was had along the way at a den where one of our members tried it for size!

We would like to thank everyone who has supported and joined this new walking group - we hope to see you on future walks.

For more information, please contact either:

Barbara Cutting or Glenda Taylor

Photos from these three walks, courtesy of Glenda



Member Article

"The Hedgehog who came to visit" by Irene Bloom

This is the true story of a hedgehog that came to live in a sofa. Unfortunately, my sofa!

One Thursday morning when I came downstairs, I saw what looked like hedgehog poo on the kitchen floor. Freckles' (my cat) munchies are all over the place, the newspaper I feed him on is all soggy and the cereal bowl I put down with leftover milk in is overturned. Hmmmm! In the adjacent conservatory is a little more poo. Definitely hedgehog poo. Hmmmm, he must have got in via two cat-flaps. Hope he went out again.



Friday morning, water and food were everywhere. Oh dear I thought, or something like that, he didn't go out again. I notice a meaty smell developing but can't trace the source. When I'm on the sofa having my lunch, I can hear odd little noises underneath me, but as soon as I move, they stop. The smell is getting stronger.

I should explain that my sofa reclines electronically, is very heavy and hard for me to move. Freckles hides inside it when scared by thunder. Oh no I thought, the little so and so is inside the couch, how on earth can I get him out?

Lightbulb moment, referencing Hansel and Gretel - as it starts to get dark, I open the patio door, put a little ramp in place to assist exit, and lay a trail of hedgehog food from the couch to the door and down the ramp, with a whole bowl of hedgehog food at the bottom. I sit on the other sofa in the near dark, watching the tv on mute with subtitles so he's not put off by the noise and wait. I hear scuffling, scratching and the unmistakable sound of more pooing.

I hear the crunch of a hedgehog eating. I see a little nose, a head, part of his body edging slowly round the corner of the sofa, eating his way towards the door. Then I see Freckles outside, wondering what the heck is going on. He comes charging in and the hedgehog promptly reverses! Aaaaarrggghhh!

I give up and go to bed leaving the patio door open. I can't sleep - I think will he go out, or will more come in? Yikes!

I get up at 12.30, looks like he might have gone. I bang the couch with a broom, no other noise. I shut the door. I huff and I puff, and I manage to move the couch out and gag at the sight and smell. I pick up the poo, use my trusty 1001 carpet shampoo, spray with disinfectant and have a shower at 1 in the morning.

I get up Saturday morning - yay, no noise, no smell. I wonder though, if he got in once, will he do it again???

Member Article

"Travels with my Rail Card & Bus Pass" by Barbara Cutting

Free travel on buses? One third off all rail journeys? Why use the car?

One of the finest ways to make use of these services is on a short trip to North Norfolk! Catch the 8.52 from Stowmarket to Norwich (30 minutes), then the 9.38 from Norwich to Sheringham (45 minutes) Total cost £16.45 return with a Senior Rail Card. While in Sheringham, make use of your Bus Pass on the Coast Hopper bus. This is a brilliant service running all along the North Norfolk Coast.



This is ideal if you want to walk part of North Norfolk Coastal Path, or just visit some of the places on the way, like Cromer, Blakeney or Cley-next-the-Sea. On one particular day I travelled from Cromer to Wells-next-the Sea, then walked back along the Coastal Path to Stiffkey, had tea and cake at the Deli and caught the bus back to Cromer.

Even if you don't want to walk, the journey along the Coast Road is quite an adventure- there is a view of the sea most of the way. You may see the steam trains running from Sheringham to Holt passing close to the road (afraid you can't use your Rail Card on this route!). It's quite a challenge for the driver to negotiate between parked cars and bends through Cley, but if you want a treat for a picnic, hop off the bus in Cley and visit the deli (the bus stop is conveniently right outside!).

The journeys may take a bit longer than using the car – but what's the hurry??

Member Article

"A lifetime in Martial Arts" by Peter Leeding (a young Peter is bottom right in the photo on the right).

My journey as a Martial Artist began 54 years ago at the tender age of 16, after watching a programme called 'Longstreet' about a blind detective being assaulted. A Chinese martial artist taught him how to defend himself, and this programme, starring James Franciscus and the lesser known martial artist Bruce Lee, caught my interest. As a result, I sought out and joined a local Karate club in the Japanese style of Wado Ryu ("the Way of Peace").



I trained 3 days a week, 2 hours a night at the Dojo (club) and sparred with my fists and feet against 3 to 4 opponents every night. After a few twisted teeth, fractured ribs, dislocated fingers and broken toes, I was hooked! I had tournaments in Crystal Palace and Lambeth Baths and many more inter club fights. We had a profound respect for our opponents, knowing they had the power to injure you.

Then, in the early 70s Kung fu mania hit the UK because of the television series and Bruce Lee films. I changed from Karate to Feng Sau Kung fu ("the Hand of the Wind"), which was more self-defence based than Karate. The fitness was also more physical than Karate and involved more aerobic work and body conditioning which appealed to me. I trained at the club (kwoon) 6 days a week, sparring with up to 10 opponents a night, eventually achieving my black belt.

In the 70s I taught a group of Teddy Boys at a school in Chelmsford, Essex. They would turn up in their drapes, crepe-soled shoes and 'Bushy Bon' hairdos, then change into their Kung fu outfits and morph into Kwai Chang Cain! They were a great bunch, working very hard and achieving their gradings.

We also had a chapter of Hell's Angels from Billericay, who once they changed from their leather jackets and jeans were different from their persona. Some stayed long enough to take their gradings but most left as they didn't enjoy being hit during sparring!

During my lifetime, I have trained in over 35 different fighting arts, including: Judo, Aikido, Black Tiger Kung fu, Wing Chun, 7 star Preying Mantis Kung fu, Mongolian Kung fu, Taekwondo and Tai Chi Chuan. Training in these various arts gave me the confidence to join Essex Police, where I found it useful in protecting the public, my colleagues and myself when arresting offenders on the street. I also taught police officers privately for 30 years.

I've hardly had a break from martial arts in the last 54 years and still love and enjoy the training, as there is always something new to learn. One thing I've found is the friendship and great respect that this brotherhood of martial artists have for each other, and I'm glad I've followed this path - a path that will never end.

Since moving to Suffolk, I've joined a Japanese Ju Jitsu club starting at White belt again; and while I'm still young and enthusiastic, will continue to train until I can no longer do head high kicks and my body says it's 'time to stop'.

Member Article

"A local exhibition supported by some of our members" by Don Mobley

Now in its third season at the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway Museum, the 34th Bomb Group exhibition returns expanded, refreshed, and more compelling than ever. It reminds visitors that world-shaping events unfolded here in rural Suffolk, leaving a legacy that still resonates today. The memorial to the 34th BG at Mendlesham Church is shown here.

Under the motto "Valor to Victory," the men of the 34th Bomb Group flew some of the Second World War's most dangerous daylight bombing missions, facing flak, enemy fighters, and the constant risk of never returning. Their bravery, sacrifice, and service helped shape the course of the war and protect freedoms valued today.



The exhibition goes beyond military history to explore the human cost of conflict and the wider wartime story. It highlights the essential role of the local community, and the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway whose transport of personnel, equipment, and munitions supported operations at RAF Mendlesham. Preserved wagons, including one used for bomb transport, provide a direct link to this often overlooked contribution.



Continued.....

Equally important are the wartime friendships between American airmen and Suffolk residents, relationships built on hospitality, resilience, and mutual respect.

For 2026, the exhibition has been significantly enhanced. The Old Ticket Office presents a newly interpreted account of the 34th BG's relationship with the "Middy," while the Red End Carriage features continuous AV presentations, and the story of the collision between Anne and Hell's Belle and the tragic loss on 7 June 1944 during Night of the Intruder.

New displays include the Model Railway Carriage, tracing the Group's history alongside the British home front, and the Bomb Carriage, an authentic wartime wagon displayed with mock M-43 500 lb bombs.

By preserving the legacy of the 34th Bomb Group and those who supported them, the exhibition ensures the story of Valor to Victory endures for future generations.

Stowmarket u3a Committee Members 2025/2026



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Jackie Durrant Anne Weedon Barbara Cutting Barbara Gort Suzanne Brooks Lyn Goodsell

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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.

Digital versions of the last 3 Newsletter will also be available on the new website at: u3astowmarket.org.uk/newsletters

Archive Newsletters and reports on previous outings are available at: <https://u3astowmarket-archive.netlify.app/>

Click the picture on the right to see an abbreviated online version of the Summer 2026 edition of the national u3amatters magazine....



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