

Recent events and Meetings.....

Wreath Making

We held our second Wreath Making Workshop on Tuesday 6th December. This time we offered everyone the choice of making either a Wreath or a Table Decoration.

The most popular was the table decoration, which is another skill now learned! It was a most enjoyable morning which produced some beautiful creations. I'm sure these were very proudly displayed on front doors and dining tables over the festive period.



We had an amazing assortment of greenery supplied by everyone who attended. This meant that every wreath or table decoration was unique.

I would also like to thank Keith and Phil, who kept us well supplied with refreshments throughout the morning and the ladies who provided delicious food. Thanks also go to Anna for her excellent bow making demonstration and Judith for her Stirling work in clearing up and taking away all the rubbish to compost.

Anne Webb



Christmas Lunch at the URC Hall

We had a great time and the meal, supplied by Elite Cakes and Buffets (Andrea Davey), was excellent as usual.

This year there was added excitement from the raffle, kindly organised by **Jackie Goodchild**. This was extremely popular and raised the fantastic sum of £149. Well done and thanks to **Jackie**. Thanks to **Anne Webb** who kindly made the table decorations and to **Anne and Phil** for kindly providing the quiz. The prizes for the winners were donated from surplus raffle prizes.

Thanks also go to all those who helped "set-up" and "take down" the tables, chairs and decorations and transported members to the event.

Lorraine



January 2023 Meeting

Jenny Anthill spoke at our January meeting about "The Bronze Horseman," taking us on a journey through Russia and the development of St. Petersburg, where the statue is located in Senate Square. The Bronze Horseman is a famous work of Russian literature written by Alexander Pushkin, considered the founder of modern Russian literature. Many writers and poets have drawn inspiration from Pushkin's works.

The Bronze Horseman statue depicts Peter the Great, standing at 6ft 7 inches tall, larger than life in every way. His influence on Russian society and culture cannot be overstated. His reforms impacted how the Russian elite talked and dressed, and shaped the development of art, literature, religion, science, and architecture in the country. Peter's major achievements include founding St. Petersburg in 1703 and establishing the Russian navy, his lifelong passion.



Catherine the Great, previously Princess Sophie of Austria, married Peter III of Russia, Peter the Great's grandson. Peter III was an unpopular and erratic ruler. Within a year of his reign, Catherine, much more capable and popular, overthrew her husband and with the support of the army and clergy, became queen. However, being Austrian, she spent her entire reign trying to establish her legitimacy as sovereign in the eyes of the Russian people.

To align herself with the past popularity of Peter the Great, Catherine commissioned Etienne Maurice Falconet to create the Bronze Horseman statue. It was mounted on the 1500-ton Thunder Stone, which took 400 men nine months to move into place. When finished, Catherine had it inscribed in Latin and Russian with the phrase "Catherine the Second to Peter the First," expressing her admiration for her predecessor and her view of her own place in the line of great Russian rulers.

Jenny shared with us a clear and concise history of the development of St. Petersburg and the significance of The Bronze Horseman, drawing on her knowledge from her Slavonic and East European Studies and extended periods visiting Russia. She also mentioned her first novel, "Small Acts of Kindness, a tale of the first Russian revolution," published by Unicorn Publications in November, and how she has just completed the first draft of a sequel.

Keith

February 2023 Meeting

At our February monthly meeting Rick Lewis, a specialist conservation carpenter gave a talk entitled "A Phoenix in the Waveney – the repair of a fire damaged medieval building".

It focused on the story of the renovation of an old listed building, just outside Hoxne, in the village of Oakley, which "burnt down" in 2016. Rick shared his journey in helping to return the building back to its former self having been virtually destroyed.

Our hearts went out to the owners who are still living in a mobile home in the garden, who took the insurance companies advice about the amount of insurance required and were still under insured.

The project was inundated with



difficulties. The starting point being the compromise between keeping the historical features and the need for a modern day house that is fit for purpose. This is very subjective and requires careful negotiations with all parties involved. With lots of elements to consider, not least the budget, the owners requests, the insurance company's demands, listed building compliance, the sourcing of appropriate materials, working with other contractors and the carpentry and

engineering skills required, the job would be extremely daunting for anyone to take on.

However Rick's passion for restoring heritage buildings was clear to see and his skills in carpentry can only be admired. His patience and ability to work with a wide range of conflicting views must also be commended.

The house is not yet complete so unfortunately we were not able to see the results of his labours. but Rick's work on repairing the timber frame has been brought to a successful end.

His part in the project came in under budget, on time and beautifully crafted. What more could you ask for?

Keith



From the Groups' Coordinator

The **G & T group** is taking sign-ups for a 20th April trip to Ickworth House. You should have received an email with all the pertinent information, but again feel free to contact **Val Fazzari** (vafazzari@yahoo.com) or me.

We hope to organize a trip to the **Houses of Parliament** this summer. Stay tuned for details.

At our **new members** coffee morning in February several ideas for new groups were tossed around. Those include Conversational Spanish, Jewellery/Beading, Mindfulness, Formula 1. Please let me know if any of these appeal.

Meanwhile, **Don Mobley** is organizing an **Aviation group** – all things aviation including military, civilian and whatever else he may come up with. If interested please contact Don directly: oneisbingo@gmail.com

The Discussion group is meeting again. Topics run the gamut but politics and religion are off limits. Again, if you have questions or want to join please contact me, Liz Power: elisabethz252@gmail.com.

Bryan Hilton was not able to generate enough interest in resurrecting the old, pre Covid, Lunch Group 2. He is now considering another 'eat out' option. The Club would meet on a weekday evening (to be agreed) and would frequent Members' favourite eateries, priced reasonably. Please contact Bryan on **07711 000050** for more information.

Shorter Strolls are now **'The Cake Walk'** (page 5) with convenors **Anna and Robert Bradshaw**, 01449 745829

For those who enjoy the outdoors **June Nathan** has a project in mind that may interest you, see page 6 for details

Liz Power

07799 761 336

Walk and Talk

On the 1st and 3rd Friday of the month, our 5 mile or so walks continue to be very popular. Please contact

Keith Shelton on 01449 768 744, or

Phil Webb on 01449 614 616....for more information.

Here are just a few of the many pictures taken by **Glenda Taylor** on walks since the last Newsletter.



Lavenham Guildhall



Preston St Mary



Stutton



Stutton



Bury St Edmunds



Bury St Edmunds



Bury St Edmunds

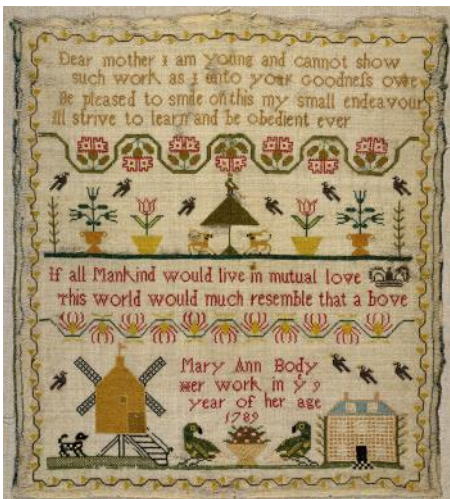
History Group

Where/When: The programme (see web) comprises talks and visits. For a talk we meet at Red Gables, Old Library Room, Stowmarket on the first Wednesday afternoon of each month from 2.10 pm to 3.50pm. For visits we try to keep to the first Wednesday of the month but this may vary depending on the specific nature of the visit (e.g opening times etc)

Cost: Members of the group pay £6 per year to cover room hire, talks and refreshments. For visits there might be a charge depending on the nature of the visit (entrance fee etc.)

The History Group held their first meeting of the year on 4th January, a brief history of Samplers accompanied by photos particularly from [Victoria and Albert](#) Museum collections. The English word Sampler comes from Latin or an old French term both meaning example and before printed designs became available samplers were a way to create personal references of stitches and patterns. They included alphabets, motifs, decorative borders and sometimes the name, age and date when the piece was stitched. Learning to stitch a sampler was a girl's basic education until the early 20th Century.

The earliest sampler still in existence dates from around 200BC and sampler fragments have been found in Egyptian burials grounds dating from the 14th or 15th Century. Stitch and pattern collections have been found in a number of cultures.



Samplers were used as a reference for future use and patterns sewn randomly onto fabric throughout a lifetime. A young girl growing up in a wealthy family would have filled her hours making pretty embroideries. Against this women in the workhouse would have embroidered samplers as a CV to take to prospective employers.

With improvements in education came

an increase in literacy. From the 18th Century England was suffering from a lack of moral and religious direction and stitching took on a new purpose through the influence of John and Charles Wesley by displaying religious writings and depictions such as scenes of Adam and Eve. This type of work was also important in the embroidery traditions of European settlers in America whose strong sense of religious purpose helped to sustain them in their new life.

Another way of applying young girls' stitching skills was to combine needlework with geography by drawing a map outline and filling in the detail generally of the local area. As many hours of work went into the production of such a sampler the details would not be easily forgotten. At the same time an interest in wild and exotic beasts began to feature as travellers brought back stories from Africa and the Middle East and women translated the beasts from the tales into their stitching

The past few decades has seen a revival in embroidery and historic samplers continue to provide inspiration and instruction.

A lively question and answer session followed the presentation.

Jackie Durrant

On 1st February we were "entertained" by a talk about the last five outbreaks of plague in the United Kingdom. All took place around the River Orwell between 1906 and 1918. 22 people caught the disease of whom 16 rapidly died. We heard some pretty grizzly details of how the various forms of the disease affect the body and also a tragic account from one 18 year old girl who, in a space of four weeks, saw her mother, two sisters and a brother die.

There were two sources of plague. The first was probably the result of a high, local rat population which spread the disease to other mammals and, on two occasions, resulted in almost inevitable outbreaks of bubonic plague in Shotley Gate and Lower Trimley.



The second, this time pneumonic plague, started off in Yunnan, a remote province in China, where, from 1890 onwards, copper and aluminium ores were mined to be shipped to the United States and Chile.

Plague became endemic in the ports of Portland OR, Los Angeles CA, and Valparaiso. At the same time, Britain was importing great quantities of wheat from these same ports. Thus plague made two hops across both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. A lot of this grain arrived in Cranfields, Ipswich, where it was milled but the ships were too big to get into the wet dock so anchored off Pinn Mill and Woolverston where lighters ferried the grain into the dock.

After many weeks at sea, sailors naturally went ashore while their ships were anchored, not only for rest and recreation but also possibly for smuggling. So the plague made its final short hop from ship to land to do its work there.

But we also discovered that we should not worry; the advent of antibiotics means that the disease is now easily treated if caught early.

Robert Bradshaw

The Cake Walk

Twenty-six members of 'The Cake Walk' group met at the Old Newton social club for a three mile walk around the countryside of Mid Suffolk. On a cold morning with plenty of sunshine, we walked around and across fields, through country lanes, taking in the splendid site of St Mary's church. Following the walk, members enjoyed tea and coffee at the social club.

John Seaman



Computing and Technology.

Since the last Newsletter, we've had two meetings, December and February. With 8 or 9 in attendance at each we had much fun and chatter in amongst our more technical discussions.

December: In a very full meeting (notes, [HERE](#)) and amongst other things we discussed - spam email messages, fake QR codes on parking meters, and the importance of keeping Windows 10/11 up to date.

February: This month our wide range of topics included, 'Should I ditch Windows 7?', 'Where do I start getting a new computer?', 'Phone tethering',

'Google One Membership' do I need it?' (No!), 'How to link cells across sheets in Excel and finally, **ChatGPT**.

If you've not heard about this yet, you will soon! Launched late last year, it is an artificial intelligence programme (AI) which can be used for all sorts of things, answer queries in plain language, write an essay on any subject you like and even get into a discussion with you if there is something you would like to debate.

I've prepared a PDF from the Tom's Guide web site [summarising a real conversation](#) with ChatGPT. For the moment, at least, it's free, and well worth exploring its possibilities. To use

ChatGPT you need to set up an account, so head to chat.openai.com and select 'Sign up' to create a new one. Follow the prompts to verify and you're ready to go!

Our new WhatsApp group, where we can post problems without waiting for the next meeting, is quite successful. In the last Newsletter I mentioned that any Stowmarket U3A member can join. If this is of interest to you, please follow this [Invite Link](#) to join (please do not share this with anyone outside of Stowmarket U3A).

Peter Dakeyne

Play Reading – Virtual

The Virtual Play Reading Group has continued to meet twice a month on 2nd and 4th Monday, 11.00am – 12.00 noon.

Following the Restoration play "The Double Dealer" by William Congreve, we read "I am a Camera" by John van Druten, followed by "Educating Rita" by William Russell. At the first meeting in March we will commence 'The Woman in Black' the play by Stephen Mallatratt from the book by Susan Hill.

I anticipate that the Play Reading Group will continue as a Virtual Group for the foreseeable future.

If anyone wishes to join the Virtual

Group or is 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

Tel: 01449 771200 – email: Maureen.wingham@mwmedia.uk.com

Table Tennis

Our group is going from strength to strength with currently 26 members. We play every other week at the St Peter's Church Hall in Stowmarket.

Qualification to join—be a Stowmarket U3A member! You will be made very welcome *irrespective of past experience*

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

Peter Dakeyne 01449 781 562

Sunday Lunch Club

With 20 or so members, this group is thriving. As most venues are limited to the numbers they can take, I email everyone and accept the first 12 responses.

If you would like more details, please contact me.....

Melanie Westenra-Hartley on
01449 767 757

Woodpecker Hill Wood, Great Finborough

Just before COVID I was contemplating the idea of tidying the local wood. Originally, it was donated by a resident who lived in a bungalow in Pear Tree Close, Great Finborough. His garden was huge so part of the land was donated in trust to the Village. The ground was originally cleared with funds from the National Lottery about 20 plus years ago but as most things it was left to fend for itself after people left or passed.

The wood itself had loads of ash dieback. You could literally push the

trunks over. Also brambles were growing in and around the hawthorn trees so no light was penetrating the floor.

I asked the council if I could start clearing the area so the hard work then began. I asked for volunteers and luckily during the covid problem they were able to use their hour's exercise helping in the wood.

Last year, 'Woodpecker Hill Wood Volunteers' were shortlisted as a finalist in the Environmental category for BBC Radio Suffolk's inaugural Make a Difference Awards (M.A.D.)

This venture is now three years old and

still going strong but we could still use more volunteers! Now I've joined the U3A it occurs to me that we could, perhaps, start a new group for those who are looking for an open air activity whilst helping the community. It could perhaps be for a fixed term, say 3 months, or if successful could become a regular group activity.

It's fun, good for your health and companionship. What do you think? Are you interested? If so, please drop me line at whwv2020@gmail.com and if there is enough interest we can take it from there.....

June Nathan.

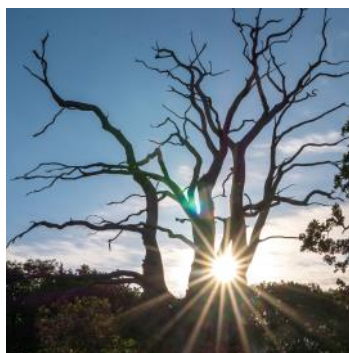


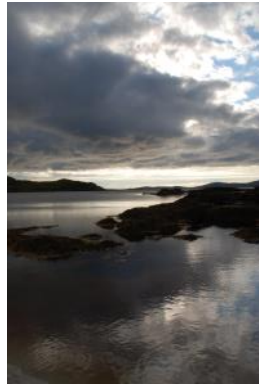
Photography.

We continue to meet on line every month. Recent topics explored are 'Power', 'Everyday a New Way', 'Glimpsed' and 'Light(s)'. Our March topic is 'Angles'. Here are a few of our Light(s) pictures.

Make sure to visit our [website](#) gallery where examples of all our pictures since we started the group in 2013 are displayed.

Peter Dakeyne





Member Talks

Since we have been Programme Co-ordinators, a number of members have told us that they would be interested in giving a talk to members.

They have told us about an interest they have, a wish to share something relating to an expertise they have, a talk that they have done previously for another group or maybe because they have "something to say". Group leaders might wish to give some kind of "signature talk" to both share information about their group and to give a talk about an associated topic that the group might cover.

So we thought that we would organise an afternoon (or even a day) of "Members' Talks" The idea is that there will be a short programme of talks by members and members can sign up to listen to as many or as few as they wish.

At the moment there are no rules. So, a talk might be of any length (ranging from 15 minutes to 45 minutes?). It might be about any topic that the audience might find of interest. It might or might not involve audience participation? It might or might not need a screen or projector? It might or might not include any objects, artefacts, tools or gadgets.

So, if you would like to offer a talk about

Morris Minors, Morris Dancing or William Morris..... or tell us about the perfect recipe for Yorkshire Pudding, your holiday in the Yorkshire Dales or how to look after a Yorkshire Terrier, we would like to hear from you.

We've already had a few responses but can accommodate more! If the idea of giving a talk to your fellow members enthralls you or you are just curious about the possibility then please let us let us have your thoughts.....

You will not be committed in any way but we would like to get a feel as to whether planning such an event later on in the year is feasible.

Lorraine and Keith Shelton

Coming up....

April 19th. 'Wildlife in your Garden'. Talk by award winning photographer.. Roger Hance

May 17th. "Death in Disguise". Join a jury, fun with audience participation..... Gary Powell

June 21st. "Seeing Science – objects from the Whipple Museum, Cambridge" Alison Giles

July 19th. Annual Event Details TBA

Blackbourne u3a Trav2 Group

This group is organising a spectacular holiday to **Andalusia in November 2023**. This 7 day/ 6 night trip, half board, with guided visits to some of the areas most prestigious sites including the Alhambra in Granada, is only **£1,155**.

This trip is open to all u3a members. Call for more details from the Trav2 Convenor, **Gill Burgess** on 07759603119.

Did you know, the **Third Age Trust** provides a lot of (mostly free) on-line learning events? Including regular and one off Zoom sessions. There is something to appeal to everyone.

For example, over the next two months there are courses and talks for 'Cryptic Crosswords for Beginners', 'The Dawn of Quantum Biology', 'The Story of the Lyons Tea Shops', 'A Day in the Life of Your Spinal Cord' and a talk on 'Cotton & Linen: Environmental impact of Textile production'.

Check them all out [HERE](#)



Obituary

Jerry Wright sadly passed away in December. Jerry had been an active member of the Walking groups, Table Tennis and the History group and frequently attended our monthly meetings.

Jerry was a lovely man who was always willing to help others and share his knowledge of anything to do with TV's which was his trade for many years. He will be greatly missed and our condolences go out to his family.



Animated conversation at the new members' coffee morning on 8th February. This meeting was a great success with 23 members and 11 of the committee attending. Some brought friends of whom four joined up there and then. Welcome!

ACTIVITY & INTEREST GROUPS – March 2023. If you have an idea for a new group and would like some assistance in setting it up, please contact Liz Power, Groups Coordinator on 07799 761 336, or email groupscoord@u3astowmarket.org.uk

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BOOK CLUB		GARDENS & THINGS		POETRY	
Sylvia Downs	01449 612 661	Liz Power	07799 761 336	Jenifer Adams	01449 615 581
		Val Fazzari	07720 391 443		
BRIDGE INTERMEDIATE/IMPROVERS		GEOLOGY		QUIZ	
Carol Gibson	07918 743 154	Linda Reynolds	07880 516 926	Melanie Westenra-Hartley	01449 767 757
CANASTA (1)		HISTORY		SCRABBLE PLAYING	
Hazel Burl	01449 615 581	Lorraine/Keith Shelton	01449 768 744	Contact Liz Power	07799 761 336
CANASTA (2)		LUNCH CLUB (Sunday)		SINGING	
Carol Gibson	07918 743 154	Melanie Westenra-Hartley	01449 767 757	Hilary Foster	01359 241 773
COMPUTING & TECHNOLOGY (Virtual)		MUSIC - CLASSICAL		TABLE TENNIS	
Peter Dakeyne	01449 781 562	Ian Hooper	01449 770 179	Peter Dakeyne	01449 781 562
DISCUSSION		PATCHWORK		THE CAKE WALK (Shorter Strolls)	
Liz Power	07799 761 336	Jean Roche	01449 675 984	Anna & Robert Bradshaw	01449 745 829
FRENCH CONVERSATION (1)		PHOTOGRAPHY (Virtual)		WALK and TALK	
Helen Mead	01449 677 846	Peter Dakeyne	01449 781 562	Phil Webb	01449 614 616
				Keith Shelton	01449 768 744
FRENCH CONVERSATION (2)		PLAY READING (Virtual)			
Neville Cox	01473 657 374	Maureen Wingham-Eaton	01449 771 200		

Please contact the Group Leader/Convenor for dates and times of meetings

Stowmarket u3a Committee Members 2022/2023



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Jacki Goodchild Evelyn Russell Keith Shelton Linda Reynolds Anne Webb Mike Taylor

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