



Talking Shop!

U3A

The Newsletter for Members of Stowmarket U3A

September, 2000



Happy Tenth Anniversary!

Although our U3A was only registered as a Charity on 21st May, 1991, the records show that an inaugural meeting was held in May of 1990. As part of a celebration for our tenth anniversary we shall be mounting an exhibition in the entrance display cabinet at Stowmarket Library from Tuesday 19th to Saturday, 30th September this year.

Chairman's Report 1999-2000

We are approaching the end of our second year of meetings in the United Reformed Church hall, and I feel sure that most people will agree that it was an excellent move from the cramped conditions at the Old School in Childer Road. Yes, there have been a few problems, but I feel that we have now overcome them.

The membership has increased to just over 100, and I hope will continue to grow. The monthly meetings have seen some excellent speakers with a wide range of subjects to suit all tastes.

Apart from the Music Appreciation and Poetry groups which are in abeyance at present - I very much hope that they will be able to recommence in the Autumn - all the other groups appear to be running successfully. I would like to see some new groups up and running, so if you have an interest please think of organising a group - YOU DO NOT NEED TO BE AN EXPERT - Ray and I have learned a tremendous amount since we started our Town and Village History Group.

Now, to record the sad passing away of three of our members, Alec and Sylvia Lowes and Joan Wood.

My thanks are due to so many folks. I will try to include everyone - to the committee, to those who help prepare and tidy the room afterwards for the meetings, to the tea ladies and all who help them, to all the group conveners for all their hard work, the secretary, the membership secretary, the programme secretaries, and to you, the ordinary member for supporting us because without you there would be no Stowmarket U3A. If I have missed anyone out, please accept my apologies and include yourself in the list.

Ann Watsham

Archive Films

We have wandered through England's green and pleasant land and seen the hardships of the children working on the farms in the early 1900's, and have ploughed the fields and got the harvest in during the 1940's AND ALL ON ARCHIVE FILMS!

We have explored the London wartime underground shelters and even heard Suffolk's singing postman. A particular highlight was archive film on the life of the Queen Mum, a 'Happy Birthday' toast, followed by superb tea and cakes (the chocolate cake was a stunner!).

Our sincere thanks to our host, Elizabeth Brown, who always provides most welcome refreshments, and to Pat Leon for continuing to supply much interesting material.

The group meets on the afternoon of the fourth Monday of the month.

There is a waiting list. If you want your name on it please contact Elizabeth on 01449 615441.

Eric Adamson

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Bird Group

The group has had a very varied and interesting programme since our AGM in 1999.

In October we met in West Stow Anglo Saxon Village car park, and walked round Lackford Lake. We saw quite a number of different species on a lovely Autumn day - an excellent pub lunch followed.

The next few meetings were at the home of Alan and Janet in Elmswell, when we saw some excellent videos. Very many thanks to our hosts for providing coffee and biscuits, and also for arranging the Christmas Lunch at The Fox.

The February meeting was a walk in Bradfield Woods, which is a Suffolk Wildlife Trust site.

It was a fine day, but very windy, and because of this we did not see that number of birds.

The March meeting was out of our county into Essex, to the Essex Wildlife Trust site at Fingringhoe near Colchester. The weather was kind and we saw several species of waders. There had been many improvements since Ray and I visited there many years ago before living in Stowmarket.

We met in April at Landguard Fort in Felixstowe, where we were able to see the gentle way in which the birds were caught in soft netting and then measured, weighed and tagged before being released. All the facts were then recorded.

In May we paid a return visit to Minsmere, which once again was most interesting and a good number of species were seen, but not the bittern. Ray and I were lucky enough to see this bird on New Years Day 2000.

In June a visit to Holbrook Creek was enjoyed by everyone. The weather was kind to us, and the walk along the river bank was excellent. I did enjoy seeing the great crested grebe - always so majestic. As always a pub lunch followed the walk, this time at The Compasses, Holbrook.

Very many thanks to Alan and Janet for all the time given in arranging the programme.

Compiled by Ann Watsham in the absence on holiday of -

Alan and Janet Sparrow Conveners

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ICT (Computer) Group

Since the group's inception early in 1999 the group has grown from 3 members to 20 but has currently settled at about 17. The name has also grown from Computer Group to Information and Communications Technology Group to fall in line with other organisations, in particular grant awarding bodies, of which more later.

This increase in members, welcome as it is, has also brought problems. We could no longer

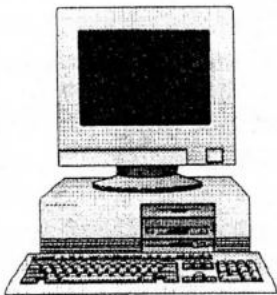
congregate around one member's computer. And some members had no computer anyway!

We decided to tackle this by holding our twice monthly meetings on the premises of "F1 Return" - a computer retailer's shop at 33, Ipswich Street, Stowmarket, more or less opposite the United Reformed Church.

We had the use of a room at the rear of the premises which held eight or nine people. Members had the use of four computers using both Windows 95 and Windows 98 operating systems. The proprietor or a member of staff was on the premises and available to assist with problem solving!

Members could install their own software on the machines to experiment with but this had to be uninstalled before leaving the session in order to comply with the software licensing conditions and so as not to overburden the firm's machines!

The room was booked from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. on Mondays September 27; October 11 and 25; November 8 and 22 and December 6 and 20. The cost to the U3A was £15 per session, a total of £105.



Members contributed £1.50 per attendance and we collected a total of £54 which was paid to the Treasurer, numbers attending being 7, 9, 4, 5, 4, 3 and 4 respectively.

There were snags in that you had to find your way around on strange machines upon which children under tuition had left their mark! Also, to demonstrate a programme with which one was familiar took time to install and uninstall. In any case, as can be seen, the numbers dwindled anyway for whatever reason.

So we had a general meeting to discuss the way forward at the Old Library, Red Gables, Stowmarket, on 23rd March, 2000. We discussed hiring Stowmarket Middle School's computer facilities, going for a grant to install

some machines in some suitable premises and of course members have always been invited to contact other members direct and arrange for tuition etc. and this has taken place once or twice. The grant idea was dismissed because of the complexities of getting computer equipment housed in somebody else's building, security, etc.

In April an emergency meeting of the U3A Committee convened after the monthly social meeting, approved our hiring of Stowmarket Middle School at a cost of £10.20 per two hour session. Members contributed £1 per session in an attempt to be self financing

We had 5 meetings at the Middle School and the average attendance was 7 members.

There are fourteen computers available at the school but the situation is not ideal as the machines work off older systems and do not have the variety of software that we would wish for. But it does allow the experienced members to provide some tuition for the novices.

In the meantime information came to hand regarding another possible grant and we have submitted an application for a grant of just under £5,000 to cover the purchase of a lap-top computer together with a projector. The idea is that we could tailor make our training sessions and project a large picture of the screen onto a wall, or screen if necessary. A full sized keyboard and standard mouse could also be plugged in to give people experience ready for purchasing a machine of their own. This training can be carried out at any suitable venue as the equipment would be readily portable.

As a bonus, presentations to any audience can be made by any group of the U3A, and of course, the machine could be used in an administrative capacity as well. So we wait with fingers crossed and bated breath!

I think the aim of the group should be four-fold:

(i) to provide initial sessions to members so they can evaluate what a computer can do for them, how a computer is operated, what they would

have to learn and what the equipment costs would be likely to be.

(ii) to help members to decide upon what sort of equipment to buy.

(iii) to provide some basic tuition.

(iv) to provide a forum for the inter-change of ideas on different programmes, techniques, etc. for the more advanced user.

It was pointed out at the March meeting that if members only want to be able to correspond using e-mail it might be cheaper to instal digital Sky TV and make use of their facilities.

Do let me hear from you if you have an interest in what computers have to offer you.

Brian Killett Convener

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Country Strolls Group

The strolls group continues to "step out" every other Friday afternoon. We enjoy the countryside views and terrain in all seasons.

An average number of 12 to 16 participate, and declare that they would never have known of all the footpaths, bridle-ways, headlands etc. that exist around these parts.

This year we have strolled around Woolpit, Wetherden, Barham, Willisham, Shelland, Haughley, Buxhall, Stowupland and Needham Market. The list goes on.

Once a year we try to have an "all day thing" going further afield and taking a picnic lunch. This year we travelled to West Stow; walked through the woods and round the lake in the morning; had our picnic, then walked a shorter distance in the afternoon. During week of very poor weather we were lucky enough to have picked the only fine day.

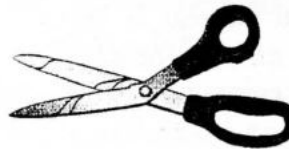
Do join our group if it appeals to you. "Strolls" are 2nd. And 4th. Fridays in the month, usually starting about 1.30 p.m. - distances under 4 miles. We always finish with a well deserved

"cuppa" and biscuits (or cakes!) At a nearby tea-room or hostelry.

Joyce Markwell & Joyce Walden Conveners.

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Crafts progress



Over twenty people have indicated an interest in crafts on their membership application forms over

the years but nothing seemed to have a developed. A further enquiry of these members produced a specific interest in Crochet, Cross-stitch and Découpage and groups for these have been formed. These have met several times already and are undergoing a settling down period. Meetings have taken place on an irregular basis and at a variety of venues!

Members interested please see contact list at the end of this newsletter.

Brian Killett Group Coordinator

The Creative Writing Group

The group has now been going for nearly two years. Members have come and gone and we have now consolidated ourselves into a hard core of four.

As I write Ted has joined us and has dipped his toe into to the water. Hopefully he will stay with us to give the group a little more variety.

Despite, what can at times be hard work, we have all managed to keep meeting regularly twice a month producing writings which we have all enjoyed sharing.

The highlights of our year were the readings at the Christmas Party and the production of our booklet "Writings from No 18". This has proved to be popular so we are hoping to bring out a further edition at the beginning of 2001 if we can manage it. We have plenty of material to choose from.

New members would be very welcome. Anyone who is interested in joining us should contact me for details.

Pat Smith Convener

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3D Découpage Group

When the committee was promoting its activities and looking for people wishing to join and support ancillary groups I put my name down as being interested in 'Crafts' and in particular to advance my knowledge of '3D Découpage'! Imagine my surprise, therefore, when asked to take a class! Yet I did agree on the clear understanding that I was no expert, merely keen.

Thus it transpired that a class of three to learn and myself as 'teacher' was formed and we have met 5 times since the end of February in my home, even though our space is tiny and therefore extremely limited. I believe that the results have been satisfactory, in as much as we have been learning how to look at our 'bits and pieces' in order to create a reasonable picture, how to create and put together these bits to make greeting cards for various purposes (e.g. Christmas or Birthday).

When I see the pride of accomplishment and the great reluctance to part with their creations I can only assume that the efforts have been successful.

Liz Weir Convener

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Entertainment Group

Our group have met on the last Monday of each month for another year. Together we have enjoyed a very varied program.

We have travelled on the "William Tell" train through the mountains and besides the lakes in Switzerland, with music. We have been back stage at the "Moscow State Circus".

One evening we were entertained by "Andrea Bocelli at his home in Tuscany. The old "Hackney Empire" was another visit, with the old style variety which took us back in memory to the days of those old theatres.

In May we followed the life of "Noel Coward", meeting many of the stars of that period.

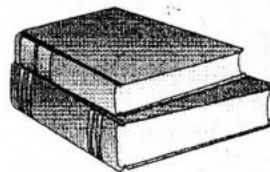
Our next meeting will take us to the "London Coliseum" to study the building and then see a show in the style of the programs held there.

All these evenings seem to bring back so many memories of people and places we all have all met and seen.

Joan Varley Convener

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French Revision Group



We started our Beginners French Group in November, 1998, it doesn't seem possible we have met each month for almost two years!

We used a redundant course kindly lent to us by the head of the French section of the Stowmarket High School. This course was used for seven months but was not really suitable as it was designed for children, and the child pronunciation and the music used was not enjoyed.

We changed courses in June 1999 using an excellent book published by the BBC entitled "Repondez s'il vous plait." This has been much enjoyed, everyone waits eagerly for the next instalment of the detective story running through the book.

We all take it in turns to read, and we listen and repeat the instalment on the tape. The name of the group is now French Revision, and the number of members has been very regular, we now have nine members.

I feel I ought to say we also have a good laugh at times, indeed, we all seem to get great pleasure from our meetings.

Mavis Healey Convener

Parlez Vous Francais?

I was taught French at school and was sure that I had forgotten all I ever learned. Then I decided to join the "French for Beginners" group which meets once a month in Mavis's delightful cottage. I discovered that so much of what I thought long forgotten was, in fact, still there, at the back of my mind and I was amazed at how much I could recall.

Each meeting is not only a most enjoyable social occasion, but also very edifying as it takes us a small step nearer to our goal of being able to speak (and understand) the French language.

Who knows, maybe one day we will feel confident enough, as a group, to cross 'la manche' and put our fluency into practice.

Hilda Williams Group Member

Town & Country History Group I



Aim of our group :-

To hopefully get to know Suffolk a little better. Also to enjoy a meal together. I still don't know which "Aim" comes first, and yet I think I do !!

We visit a location within the county on the first Wednesday of the month, however we don't venture out in the winter time. Instead

we meet, by the kind invitation of Elizabeth at her home, for which I thank her very much !!

A brief reminder of our past year's wanderings :-

OCTOBER '99 :

Laxfield: A charming village off the beaten track, with a good Inn, some interesting houses, a Guildhall Museum, - kindly opened especially for us. Laxfield was also the end of the line of the old Mid-Suffolk Railway, where the platform was still visible!

NOVEMBER '99 :

Janet and Alan Sparrow kindly organised a tour of Woolpit. Its streets, church and museum.

DECEMBER is Christmas party time! I wish to take this opportunity to thank all the group members who so willingly help to make this occasion so special. In particular Elizabeth (Brown) who not only welcomes us to her home, but also tests our knowledge with brain teasers!!!

We don't venture out in **JANUARY & FEBRUARY** but still meet as a group in a members house, to chat and watch videos of "Suffolk".

MARCH 2000 :

We visited the Christchurch Mansion in Ipswich, which had a special exhibition of paintings and black and white sketches from the 16th to 18th century.

APRIL '00 :

I had the chance to reminisce. Returning to my birthplace of Blythburgh. Sad to see that the "Post Office and General Stores", the last of the five shops in the village that existed in my youth, had now closed.

MAY '00:

We did a tour of some of Suffolk's hidden villages. Including Huntingfield Church to

marvel at the painted ceiling, brief stop at Walpole's Congregational Church, a converted farm house, and the second oldest in England. To Holton to witness the role of an old World War II American airfield. Lunch in one of Suffolk's oldest smuggling Inns. To Wangford where the church is built on remains of an old Abbey. On to Wrentham, Suffolk's oldest "purpose built" Congregational chapel, and finally to see the coastal erosion at Covehithe.

JUNE '00 :

A visit Kersey, one of Suffolk's most photographed villages, and Lindsay, kindly arranged by the "Two Joyce's".

JULY '00 :

Nowton Park for coffee, then (by car) we tried to unravel the mystery of where King Edmund - later Saint Edmund - had been murdered in 870 AD. In the Bradfield St Clare countryside. On to Lawshall to visit the "Golden Wood" a very worth while venture, kindly arranged by Wendy Morgan. Then after lunch a visit to Hawstead Church where we tried to date the items of the church by the type of architecture.

AUGUST '00 :

A visit to Sudbury.

Besides the people I have already mentioned, I would like to take this opportunity of publicly thanking the help and co-operation I get from our local library. I'd also wish to thank my wife for her assistance on our "pre-run" visits. She is also the "Eats & Loo" Lady.

And lastly I wish to thank all my loyal following. As I've said before, Suffolk is not a bad part the UK. to live, and having spent most of my life around the county it's good to share it with others, such as yourselves.

THANK YOU.

Pat Leon

Convener

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Town and Village History Group II

Since our last AGM we have enjoyed a number of interesting and successful history walks that have included town and village.

Villages we have visited have included Rickingham both Inferior and Superior, Laxfield, Onehouse, Harleston and Shelland. In April our venue was Culford Hall which has been Culford School since 1935. An excellent lunch was provided by the catering staff and eaten in the staff dining room.

Last Autumn we enjoyed a second walk round Stowmarket - this took the form of a pub crawl - no we did not have even one drink, we visited the sites of former pubs - earlier this century there were a great number of pubs or drinking houses in the town.

In May a very interesting day was spent in Thetford which has a great deal of history to offer the visitor. A second visit to the town is planned for August.

We had one indoor meeting when we saw a video of Suffolk villages and towns, many thanks to Pat Leon for lending us the video.

We were disappointed that no one came forward to arrange a history walk in July when we were away. We are hoping that some one or more people will arrange the September walk.

Ann and Ray Watsham

Leaders

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Your committee has noticed that the attendance falls off at the September meeting, perhaps because members are not interested in Annual General Meeting business.

This year we are sending out the report in advance, together with details of the AGM Agenda and balance sheet.

We should, therefore, be able to get the necessary official business over efficiently and quickly and spend the remainder of the afternoon in social fashion.

We do hope to see you there!

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A Reminder of Group Contacts

Archive Film	Last Monday	Elizabeth Brown	01449 615441
Bird	2nd. Wednesday	Alan and Janet Sparrow	01359 241968
Computer	Various by arrangement	Brian Killett	01449 676139
Country Strolls	2 nd . & 4 th . Friday afternoons	Joyce Markwell	01449 613702
Creative Writing	2 nd . & 4 th . Wednesday mornings	William (Pat) Smith	01449 675568
Crochet	Various by arrangement	Enid Monseair	01449 678058
Cross Stitch	Various by arrangement	Muriel Killett	01449 676139
Découpage	Various by arrangement	Liz Weir	01449 676528
Entertainment	4 th . Monday	Joan Varley	01449 612767
French Revision	4 th . Friday	Mavis Healey	01449 711515
Music Appreciation	TO	BE	NOTIFIED
Poetry	TO	BE	NOTIFIED
Town & Village History I	1 st . Wednesday	Pat(rick) Leon	01449 615409
Town & Village History II	3 rd . Monday	Ann and Ray Watsham	01449 672706

