

From the Chair

As I write, I have become conscious of how time flies; it has been over two months since Christmas, and the Committee is now starting to discuss ideas for this year's Christmas lunch. Those who attended the lunch, I think, will agree it provided a good time for socializing over a nice meal. I was a little saddened that only about a quarter of the membership came. If you did not attend, please consider giving it a go this year.

Since Christmas, we have had two talks given at the monthly meetings held at the United Reform Church.

The first speaker, Linda Scoles, described the hurdles one has to jump to gain UK citizenship, with examples of

the questions posed to potential candidates and requested audience participation in endeavouring to answer them. I am not sure we did very well!

I, for one, was struck by how difficult the whole process seemed. She took the unusual step of standing on the projector table to give her talk, which allowed a good view for those at the back, although I am not sure that many of the speakers would wish to do that in the future. She also peppered the earlier part of her talk with some amusing and self-deprecating anecdotes about herself.

The second speaker, Paula Baker, spoke about her and her husband's hedgehog sanctuary on the A140 and showed some delightful slides of our spiky

friends. She gave some advice on how we might help hedgehogs in our gardens, which seemed very pertinent as the population has declined rapidly in recent years. All in all, a very informative talk.

Sadly, for practical reasons, she was unable to bring along any of the 80 hedgehogs they are currently looking after!

The Committee is currently firming up ideas for the summer outing, details of which may be found on page 7 of this newsletter.

Like all of us, I am looking forward to spring.

Take care of yourselves.

Chris Meara

We held a **Christmas Floral Workshop** at the URC one Tuesday morning in mid December, which was attended by **16** people. It was lovely to welcome back some members from 2022, but so nice to see new faces as well.

This time we did something a little different to last year, so that everyone had the chance to make either a table decoration or a floral decoration to hang on a door. Everyone produced a really stunning creation, of which they should be extremely proud. The beautiful greenery on hand meant that everyone was different.

Once again **Keith** and **Phil** kept us supplied with tea, coffee, mince pies and other delicacies. Thank you to both of them and to those who brought along food.

We intend to hold another workshop in

December 2024, when hopefully we will be able to try something a little different again...

Anne Webb



November: ‘The Mid Suffolk Light Railway ‘

A massive thank you to **Neil Instrall** for our November talk.

The scheduled presentation was Witches, Ghosts and Demons of the Fens but the speaker Eleonora Gardner was unfortunately ill on the day of the meeting and Neil, our Secretary, stood in at the last minute.

We really appreciated Neil’s talk which was very well presented and informative. He took us through the history of ‘The Middy’ (The Mid Suffolk Light Railway) which was planned to run from Haughley to Halesworth. The line eventually opened for freight trains in 1904 and after many disruptions and legal wrangles opened for passengers in 1908. The line was never really a commercial success and eventually closed in 1953. The track bed quickly reverted to agricultural land and there is very little evidence that the line existed. However, you can still see and enjoy the steam trains and learn more about ‘The Middy’ at the museum at Wetheringset.

Or, just click the picture.....



December: ‘Our traditional Christmas Lunch’

We had a turnout of 66 members, and the general feedback we received indicates that it was a successful event. We extend our gratitude to the Committee members and other volunteers who assisted in

setting up and clearing away after the event. Special thanks go to **Anne and Phil Webb** for their contributions in providing the Quiz and table decorations.



January: "Journey to Citizenship"

We welcomed once again the engaging and talented Linda Scoles, who graciously shared her **"Journey to Citizenship."**

Linda has a wealth of talks and has visited us several times in the past (first in 2003 with a musical talk on Nostalgia!). Today’s talk being an updated version of that first heard in 2012.

Linda's story unfolded as she recounted her experience of moving to the UK with her husband and the intricate process of becoming a British citizen. We undertook a quiz during the session and attempted to answer some of the questions which she had to successfully answer in order to become a Brit. From that experience I am not too sure that many of us would have passed !!!

Her narrative not only shed light on the personal challenges she faced but also offered valuable insights into the broader immigration and citizenship process.

February: ‘The Suffolk Prickles Hedgehog Charity’

We welcomed **Paula Baker**, the dedicated founder of the Suffolk Prickles Hedgehog Charity.

Paula's talk centred around the vital role her charity plays in the conservation and rehabilitation of these endearing creatures. Members learned about the challenges hedgehogs face and how Suffolk Prickles Hedgehog Rescue actively contributes to their well-being and conservation, with the ultimate aim of giving them an opportunity to return and to thrive in their natural habitat.

Paula’s presentation wasn't just informative; it was a call to action. We were offered practical tips on how to attract hedgehogs (rather than rats) to our gardens, contributing to the broader effort of hedgehog conservation. From creating hedgehog-friendly environments to understanding their behaviours, we certainly left the meeting with a newfound appreciation for these nocturnal garden visitors.

For those eager to delve deeper into the world of hedgehog conservation, additional information about the Charity can be found online—just click the picture!!



Interested members may discover more about the organization's initiatives, events, and, should they wish, ways to get involved in supporting these charming creatures.



From the Groups' Coordinator

Earlier in February, we had a lively and reasonably well attended meeting of Group Leaders. Tea, coffee and cake may have contributed to the discussions.

It was a 'Thank You to all Group Leaders' for all they do in keeping Stowmarket u3a running. Also an opportunity to meet together and discuss and try and solve any issues any

leader had. All those leaders who attended reported their groups were going well. Although numbers attending the C&T Group had decreased, prompting a change of approach (see Peter's report below).

Another group needing more members is the Scrabble Group. This is run by Zena Dakeyne in Bacton. If you would like to join Zena, her contact details are on the groups, schedule, p8.

Unfortunately, Melanie Westenra-Hartley has had to give up running the Quiz Group, due to ill health. We all wish Melanie a speedy recovery. So, if anybody is willing to take on the Quiz Group, please let me know.

Also, if anybody has an idea for a new group, contact me and we will see if we can get it going.

Barbara Cutting
groupscoord@u3astowmarket.org.uk

Singing Group

The u3a Singing Group has increased in numbers this year, and we're always delighted to welcome new members.

We continue to meet on the first and third Monday of each month but now meet at the slightly earlier time from 1.30 pm until 3.00 pm at the United Reformed Church in Stowmarket.

Usually, **Hilary** accompanies the singing on the piano or accordion. On occasions, **Susan leads** and also arranges get-togethers for the group.

In a desire to interest others in joining us, below are comments from a few of the group members...

Research has shown that singing is so good for our health and since joining the u3a Singing Group I personally found that not only have my stress levels reduced, but my memory has improved too. One of the best things about

singing is that you don't have to be good at it to reap the rewards, just bring lots of enthusiasm! Our leader is warm, kind, patient and always agreeable to suggestions for new songs. During the break, Hilary kindly treats us to a piece of classical music on the piano, the highlight of the session in my opinion. We in u3a Singing Group seem to have connected and because of that we enjoy social gatherings on occasion where we meet for lunch and have a great time!

If you like to sing but don't have the confidence or inclination to join a traditional choir this is the group for you. We sing a wide range of songs from sea shanties to folk songs, musicals and popular songs from the past. The group is friendly, welcoming and uncritical but above all good fun!

I've been in this group since it began, and still look forward to every session. If you don't want to join a choir, but

would like to just exercise your voice for the well being it brings, then join us! It's a joy just to sing, plenty of songs you know, and no pressure to even be in tune. And in that relaxed atmosphere, we have made good friends and have fun, which is another important role that u3a plays. We'd love to see you!

I can only reiterate that it's one of the joys of my life. It's always uplifting, and I enjoy the camaraderie, teasing and joking!

If any of those comments appeal to you - don't hesitate - either just turn up at our next meeting or call **Hilary** on **01359 241773**



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 reading "Present Laughter" by Noel Coward we moved on to read "An Englishman Abroad" by Alan

Bennett, then "The Old Country" also by Alan Bennett. We have now commenced reading "Sweet Bird of Youth" by Tennessee Williams.

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 who is interested in joining the Group should 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

Computing & Technology.

The Computer Group has been running continuously since the late 90's meeting in a variety of places. When I joined in 2007 there were about 30 active members (out of about 150 total u3a membership!). Regular talks and the teaching of computer skills e.g. word processing and spread sheets, were given by individual members to the group.

I took over the leadership in 2010 and we continued in the same vein, meeting successively at Stowupland High School, Bacton Village Hall and ultimately, the Scout Hut in Stowmarket (chasing good Wi-Fi!).

When Covid hit in early 2020 we switched over immediately to online meetings on alternate months, first with 8x8 then jit.si. Initially, there was a lot of interest with the standard agenda being, 'Review of the last meeting', 'Agony corner' (new questions/

problems) then I would give a presentation on a particular topic. I would then write all this up in a detailed report of the meeting. Over time this became quite onerous and we switched to a general, 'catch up meeting' and chatted about general IT issues and member problems that had arisen since the last meeting, with a brief email follow up.

It has been apparent for a while now, however, that interest in these meetings has declined and over the last year we've rarely had more than 6 attending.

I've had discussions with some of our most longstanding members and we've agreed, reluctantly, that there is little point in carrying on with the on line meetings. We believe that one reason is that information is so easily obtained these days from, say, Google searches, YouTube videos and recently AI from ChatGPT and similar, that the raison d'être for the group no longer exists.

With aging membership and difficulty in travelling, starting face to face meetings again is not feasible.

Having held the reins for 14 years I'm sorry, then, that there will no longer be any C&T virtual meetings. I know that a few of you have been with us for several years and hope you feel that belonging to the C&T Group, in person or online, has helped you on your IT journey.

Importantly, however, we are keeping the WhatsApp C&T helpline going so you can still post questions at any time and be sure that one or more of us will respond. This is for all Stowmarket u3a members — for those who have not yet joined, here is the [invite link](#).

If there is anyone out there who would like to resurrect the group in a fuller form, please let me know and I'll render whatever assistance is necessary.

Peter Dakeyne 01449 781 562

Aviation

The Stowmarket u3u Aviation Group meets on the third Thursday each month at 10.00am at group members' homes. We currently have seven aviation enthusiasts in the group and always welcome more folks to join.

Don is the group leader with an extensive background in aviation to include: US Air Force pilot followed by several years as an airline and corporate pilot. His final phase of employment

was with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in Alaska and Colorado.

Topics of presentation and discussion include all things aviation past, present and future. Members are encouraged to suggest topics and also make a presentation if able. Don will always have something to present as he really likes talking about airplanes.

During the summer months we take field trips to museums and air shows.

If you would like to become a member the local and/or the Regional Aviation group, please contact.....

Don Mobley at oneisbingo@gmail.com or 07398 300952



Table Tennis

Our group is going from strength to strength with currently 28 active 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*

We can still accommodate a few more members. Get all the details from our information sheet on the web site [HERE](#).

Peter Dakeyne 01449 781 562



Walk and Talk, Winter Ramblings

The need for strong footwear has been the order of the day since the country was targeted by storm Babette in October. Notwithstanding, the Group has managed to continue as planned and enjoyed some interesting and picturesque walks.

At the beginning of **November** the walk was led by **Mike and Glenda** taking us on the high ground around **Hadleigh**, returning across the river Brett, where the fire brigade was pumping out a house. Before going to the Kings Head for lunch, we explored the Deanery and other very interesting buildings in the town.

Later in the month **Kathryn and Bernard**

organised a visit to **Redgrave** from where we went on a circular walk to the outskirts of **Hinderclay** and back. The weather was beautiful and the day finished with a good lunch at the Cross Keys.

In **December Janet and Barbara** took us around **Needham Market**, again a beautiful day with bright blue skies.

Our annual party hosted by **Anne and Phil** was preceded by a short walk around **Mendlesham** before enjoying the delicious bring and share food.

There was only one walk in **January** organised by **Roger and Linda** starting from the Sorrel Horse at **Barham**, skirting through open country and woodlands to **Coddenham** church then back through Shrublands Park.

In **February Heather and Barry** took us on a circular walk around **Stowmarket**, where we learnt about the pauper's graves near the old workhouse, the site of the old cattle market, the river Gipping when it was a canal and the old town boundary. Finishing with lunch at the Mill.

Finally we went to **Barningham**. Following heavy rain, the walk was sticky to say the least but it was interesting, taking in the **USAAF** war memorial for the 388th bomb group and the beautiful church of St Andrew, All followed by an excellent lunch at the Royal George.

Phil and Keith

Click [HERE](#) to see our latest video of walks, **2023 and into 2024...**

Photography.

We continue to meet on line every month. Recent topics explored are 'Places of Worship', 'Time', 'Christmas' and in February, 'Food and Drink'.

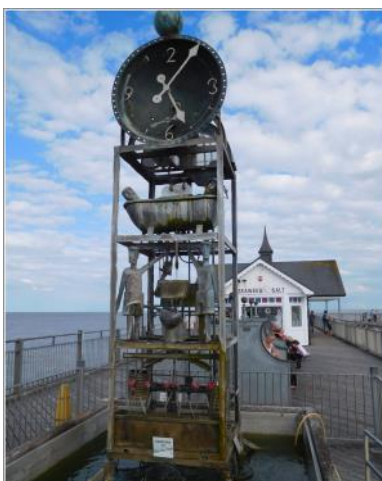
Here are some of our **'Time'** pictures.

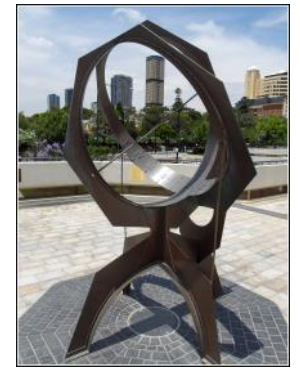
Make sure to visit our [website](#) gallery where examples of all our pictures since we started the group in 2013 are displayed.

I'm sorry, due to time restraints, we can't take on more members at the moment. If you would like to go on our waiting list for a vacancy, please let me know...

Peter Dakeyne

01449 781 562





History Group: Journeying Through Time Together

Our History Group has proven to be a vibrant community, consistently drawing an average attendance of over 30 members in each of our monthly sessions.

December 2023: A Festive Affair and a Glimpse into the Future

Our December meeting was a delightful blend of history and holiday cheer.

Lorraine, as enthusiastic as ever, not only gave us a thorough review of our 2023 sessions but also unveiled and guided us through the intriguing 2024 programme that awaits us.

Adding a touch of friendly competition, Keith led a History Quiz, adding a bit more fun to the session. The festive season was celebrated with members bringing delicious goodies. It was a great way to conclude the year, blending learning with the joy of the season.



January 2024: Jackie Durrant Unravels "Blackwork"

The new year commenced with **Jackie Durrant** as our January speaker. Following her talk on "Samplers" the previous year, Jackie shared her passion for Blackwork. Her presentation delved into the historical and cultural context of this embroidery technique, providing our group with a deeper understanding of its significance and impact on fashion and craftsmanship during the Renaissance.



Blackwork, emerging during the 15th century, gained popularity in Europe, especially in England. Worn by the affluent classes, it adorned clothing, reflecting social status and appreciation for intricate craftsmanship. Beyond attire, Blackwork embellished religious vestments, ceremonial garments, and household items, adding elegance to everyday surroundings.

February 2024: Stewart Dorward sheds light on Orford Ness

Stewart continued our journey through history. Stewart's well-researched presentation illuminated the wartime contributions of **Orford Ness**.



This secretive military testing site played a pivotal role in the development of radar technology and even contributed to atomic weapons research post-war. Orford Ness, once shrouded in secrecy, is now a Nature Reserve managed by the National Trust, with parts of the site accessible to the public. Stewart's talk provided valuable insights into a significant chapter of our nation's history.

Future Meetings: A Blend of Talks and Visits

Looking ahead, our group remains a mix of talks and visits. **Talks begin at 2.10pm on the first Wednesday of each month at Red Gables, Stowmarket.** Future sessions will include the changing use of the Suffolk Landscape, a historical trail through Mendlesham, and a talk and visit to the Walpole Chapel.

Lorraine and Keith Shelton

G&T

Spring will soon be here and we are looking forward to some more outings with Gardens & Things Group starting in April. Some possible destinations include Bressingham Gardens & Steam Museum in Diss, Bletchley Park, a walking tour of Bury St Edmunds, the recycling centre Great Blakenham (if we can get it booked), Sandringham, Sizewell, Blickling Estate Norfolk.

There will be sign up sheets at the monthly meetings with cost approximations for entrance fees and transportation costs, when applicable.

The Sunday Lunch Club has been running throughout the winter although we did have to cancel February's outing due to some illnesses. We are trying to go a bit further afield in an attempt to try different places. As

such we had a very pleasant lunch in January at the recently reopened **Lion in Debenham**. The pub has been restored, keeping its original features. The oldest section of the pub dates back to the 1400's. The food is locally sourced and tasty, service attentive, thus recommended.

Our Christmas outing was at the **Chestnut Horse in Great Finborough**.

We enjoyed the meal and one another's company and fortunately the pub continues to operate despite previous threats of closure.

November's lunch was at the **King's Arms in Haughley**.

Again, a nice setting in an old fashioned pub with plenty of good food.

We hope to

visit the **Hare in Long Melford for our lunch in March**. If you'd like to see what it's like come along for a trial run. *Rides are always available for those requiring transportation.*

For both groups, please fee free to contact us at.....

Val vafazzari@yahoo.com

Liz elizabethz252@gmail.com

Coming up....

Apr 17th. "Bury St Edmunds, have you noticed?" Martyn Taylor

May 15th. "Blood Sweat and Fears". Mary Newton

Jun 12th. "Beccles and Oulton Broad" see below

Jul 17th. "What is a Crumphorn?" Sarah Doig with Hexadoria

Annual Outing

Following a majority vote in a recent poll of members, we have now arranged a summer trip to **Beccles** and a boat trip on **Oulton Broad**. Details as follows:-

Date:

Wednesday 12th June (It was not possible to secure Wednesday 19th, our normal meeting day - which is now cancelled.)

Depart Stowmarket:

9.30am - departure point yet to be confirmed

Arrival Beccles:

Before 11.00am and spending 2 hours there - time for a walk around and coffee, packed or light lunch if required.

Arrival Oulton Broad: About 1.30pm to collect and distribute tickets for a 2 hour boat trip, departing 2.00pm

"An interesting journey along the Norfolk/Suffolk border following Sir Samuel Morton Peto's historic railway line through the Waveney Valley to the 100 year old railway swing bridge at Somerleyton..."

Depart Oulton Broad: Sometime after 4.00pm, arrival Stowmarket before 6.00pm

Tickets on sale at the March, April and May meetings or until sold out (max number 53) .

Cost: £30.00 pp (includes driver gratuity and snack on board)

Steve Barber

Obituary

We're sorry to announce the death of **Barry Reynolds** last December. Barry was the **founder Chairman of Stowmarket u3a**, inaugural meeting 24/04/1990 and first AGM 18/09/1991 (you can read a transcript of the meeting [HERE](#)).

Barry remained an active member of our u3a until his resignation in 2016. Unfortunately he wasn't able to attend our (delayed) 30th celebrations in 2021 where he would, of course, have been guest of honour. For a few years he was also a Director of the Suffolk Light Railway, Brockford Staion, Wetheringsett.

Our condolences go to his wife Pearl and wider family.

ACTIVITY & INTEREST GROUPS – March 2024. If you have an idea for a new group and would like some assistance in setting it up, please contact Barbra Cutting, Groups Coordinator on 01449 615 346, or email groupscoord@u3astowmarket.org.uk



AVIATION Don Mobley 07398 300 952	Monthly: 3 rd Thursday 2.00pm	HISTORY Keith & Lorraine Shelton 01449 768 744	Monthly: 1 st Wednesday 2.00pm – 4.00pm
BOOK CLUB Sylvia Downs 01449 612 661	Monthly: Last Monday 2.00pm - 4.00pm	ITALIAN CONVERSATION Dennis Morley 07976 925 016	Alternate Wednesdays 2.00pm
BRIDGE INTERMEDIATE/IMPROVERS Carol Gibson 07918 743 154	Weekly: Friday 2.00pm – 5.00pm	LUNCH CLUB (Sunday) Liz Power 07799 761 336 Val Fazzari 07720 391 443	Monthly: 3 rd Sunday By arrangement
CAKE WALK (Short walk) Robert & Anna Bradshaw 01449 735 829	Monthly: Last Friday	MUSIC – various (not official u3a group) Ian Hooper 01449 770 179	2/Month: 2 nd , 4 th Tuesdays 10.00am – 12.30pm
CANASTA (1) Hazel Burl 01449 615 581	Weekly: Wednesday. 10.00am – 12.00 noon	PATCHWORK Jean Roche 01449 675 984	Monthly: 4 th Wednesday 2.00pm
CANASTA (2) Carol Gibson 07918 743 154	Weekly: Tuesday 2.00pm – 5.00pm	PHOTOGRAPHY (Video Conference) Peter Dakeyne 01449 781 562	Monthly: 3 rd Tuesday 2.00pm
COMPUTING & TECHNOLOGY Peter Dakeyne 01449 781 562	WhatsApp Q&A Group only	PLAY READING (Video Conference) Maureen Wingham-Eaton 01449 771 200	2/Month: 2 nd , 4 th Mondays 11.00am – 12 noon
DISCUSSION Liz Power 07799 761 336	Monthly: 2 nd Tuesday 10.00am	POETRY Jenifer Adams 01449 615 581	Monthly: 4 th Thursday 2.00pm
FRENCH CONVERSATION (1) Helen Mead 07827 814 819	2/Month: 2 nd , 4 th Tuesdays 10.00am	SCRABBLE (Bacton) Zena Dakeyne 01449 258 865	2/Month: 2 nd , 4 th Wednesday 2.00pm
FRENCH CONVERSATION (2) Dennis Morley 07976 925 016	Alternate Tuesdays 2.00pm	SINGING Hilary Foster 07842 189 794	2/Month: 1 st , 3 rd Mondays 1.30pm – 3.00pm
GARDENS & THINGS Liz Power 07799 761 336 Val Fazzari 07720 391 443	Monthly: 3 rd Thursday 9.30am (variable)	TABLE TENNIS Peter Dakeyne 01449 781 562	Alternate Mondays 2.00pm – 3.30pm
GEOLOGY Linda Reynolds 07880 516 926 Roger Crouch 07925 262 742	Monthly: 3 rd Tuesday 2.00pm	WALK and TALK (Longer walks) Phil Webb 01449 614 616 Keith Shelton 01449 768 744	2/Month: 1 st , 3 rd Fridays 9.30am (variable)

Stowmarket u3a Committee Members 2023/2024



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Jackie Durrant Anne Weedon Keith Shelton Stew Dorward Glenda Taylor

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Next Issue July 2024 **Last date for copy** 30 June 2024

www.u3astowmarket.org.uk

Supplement

Please note, these are not Stowmarket u3a activities but we believe they may be of interest to our members.....

The Gatehouse Charity are again offering free **Mindfulness** courses to u3a members in Suffolk. Our own members have participated in these courses a couple of times previously and spoken very highly of them.

Are you over 65 or a caregiver? Join our specially designed online mindfulness course, led by a clinical psychologist, and experience transformative benefits from the comfort of your home.

Mindfulness has been found to:

- Reduce Stress & Improve Mood
- Boost Memory & Attention: Particularly helpful for those in early stages of dementia or with mild cognitive impairment.
- Be effective in reducing the discomfort of chronic pain.
- Help prevent burnout.

Convenient & Engaging: 1-hour weekly sessions via Zoom over 6 weeks, complete with a coffee break and optional extended practice.

Course Dates:

Various start dates in **May/June 2024**

Places are free but limited to 15 per course, therefore early booking is recommended to guarantee your spot.

For more details and to book, please contact Raechel Schoder at email raechel@mindfullife.uk with any queries.



Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, IP14 1LH

Wednesdays , 10.15 – 11.45am

A new group aimed specifically at those over 50 who are living with dementia, depression or facing isolation or loneliness.

A session combining a gentle exercise session of Boccia, curling or table tennis along with social time for sporting discussion, reminiscence and sharing of memories.

- Guest speakers and input from local sports clubs
- Free tea or coffee provided
- A chance to improve mental and physical wellbeing
- Accessible, disability friendly location

Advanced booking recommended on 01449 674980 or simply turn up on the day. Carers attend for free, no booking required.



Sporting Memories

Attend
for free*

Invite from Blackbourne u3a — Theatre Trip

**Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express
at the Theatre Royal, Norwich
Wed 18th September, matinee performance at 2.30pm**

Tickets are £42 each, to include coach fare, parking and driver's tip.

'Murder on the Orient Express is one of Agatha Christie's greatest literary achievements, with a final twist that is amongst her very best'.

Please confirm that you would like to reserve a place, before making payment, to Margaret.knock@sky.com.

Payment is by bank transfer and bank details are **Barclays Bank**, sort code **20-16-12**, Account number **80755931**, Account name is **Blackbourne u3a**. **This is not the main bank account.**

Could you please use your name + 'Stowmarket' as the reference when making the payment.

Tickets are on hold for one month so please respond as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.