



## July 2025 Newsletter

### Chairman's Report

#### 1. New Members joining in June 2025

- Lindsay Bainbridge
- John Beecham
- John Freeman
- Sintra Ann Watts
- Lynn Wells
- Scott Wilcox
- Gill Yaron

We are so pleased to have such an increase in new Members, and all are very welcome.

#### 2. Dates of Thursday Talks in July 2025.

July 3<sup>rd</sup> – A talk by Nigel Denchfield called 'Digging up Father's Spitfire'. This is a story of the finding of a lost RAF Plane in France, and the digging up of it by his son'.

This should be a very interesting and unusual subject for us and we look forward very much to hearing Nigel's talk.

July 17<sup>th</sup> – A talk by Tom Way called 'Exciting Wildlife from Around the World'. Again a talk that I know will be of great interest to our Members.

Roger Thompson [roger.c.thompson1940@gmail.com](mailto:roger.c.thompson1940@gmail.com)

### 3. A Message from the Treasurer

Hello everybody!

You have all recently received a notification from me, most of you via email, but a very few of you now by 'snail mail'! I hope it made sense. As we approach the end of the u3a Financial Year I can hardly believe it is also coming up to the end of my second year in the role of Treasurer for the Harpenden u3a. Where do the years go? I must say I have enjoyed getting stuck in and helping to keep the finances in order.

The gist of my recent email was to remind everybody that, at last year's Annual General Meeting, it was unanimously decided to change our Membership Year to commence 1st November. The rationale behind the decision is that any changes made to the Membership Fee have to be agreed at the AGM so it made sense to move the Membership Year to after the AGM Meeting which is traditionally held on the third Thursday of October.

There is a standard renewal period of 60 days after the beginning of the Membership Year, so all membership renewals should be made before 31st December.

The preferred payment method is by a simple Bank Transfer transaction, the details of which will be on the Membership Notification when our Membership Secretary sends it out after the AGM. Bank Transfers do make the job easier for the u3a officers.

I have been aware that some members, or some members' representatives have paid by Standing Order in the past. If you or your representative do pay by Standing Order please ensure that the current one is immediately cancelled as the account will shortly be 'closed' for the end of the Financial Year.

If you are going away on holiday this summer I hope you have a lovely time.

Very best wishes  
Gillian  
Treasurer

## Group Reports

### Creative Writing Group

Each month, we write a piece that is based on a particular 'topic.'

The topics are wide ranging, for example: First impressions, Interview, Perhaps, Rewind history, Work Colleague, etc. etc.

What makes our meetings interesting and entertaining is not just how we interpret each topic, it is how we each have a different style of writing about the same topic. Preparing a piece of creative writing is always rewarding.

**Brian Ball.**

### Explore London Group

#### Inns of Court. 21st June 2025

14 members met Colin Oakes at City Thameslink station for the tour. He told us that the lawyers originally occupied St Paul's Cathedral to sell their services but then settled between Westminster and the City along Fleet Street and High Holborn. We visited Inner and Middle Temple where shaded squares and gardens are hidden away from the traffic.

Inner Temple was bombed during the war and the Hall and Library had to be rebuilt subsequently. Temple church was closed but we could hear organ playing. The church is partly Romanesque and partly Gothic in style, dating back the Knights Templar's of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. (Dan Brown enthusiasts flock here). The emblem is a winged horse on all buildings and even drainpipes.



Middle Temple is more intact and the Hall was the site of the first performance of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. Lawyers have to attend several dinners in the year to qualify. The emblem is a Pascal lamb. The fountain is mentioned in Martin Chuzzlewit by Charles Dickens.

On to Chancery Lane and passed the Law Society and Lincoln's Inn Fields. Filming for an advert was taking place there. John Soane's museum faces the Fields and there are other interesting buildings to see. Lunch was arranged at the Peverel Oak pub in High Holborn, named after the tree that hid Charles II when he was fleeing arrest. It was surprising good for a Wetherspoons and the beer was a very reasonable in price.

After lunch we walked down High Holborn passed Staple's Inn and Barnard's Inn. Staples Inn looks medieval but was extensively restored after bombing during the war. We called off briefly to see Gray's Inn which has an outer and inner square. Francis Bacon has a statue there as he was a lawyer and bencher there. The Hall is original and hosted the first performance of Comedy of Errors. The emblem is a griffin.

We passed Ely Place, which is strangely governed by Cambridge authorities and the location of St Etheldreda's Church. The Sir John Oldcastle pub beyond remembers, by name, someone who was executed for reading the bible in English. Falstaff was based on him in Shakespeare.

Farringdon station was in meltdown as one of the trains had broken down at Loughborough Junction but we managed to get an all stopping train back to Harpenden. A lovely but very hot day trip.

**Pauline Waddilove**

## **German Conversation Group**

We now have regular members of our group and we continue to meet on the last Tuesday of the month at my house in Peters Green. In April, however, I was away so the group met in the Rothamsted Cafe. The comings and goings of people buying their coffee was a little distracting for those who attended which is the last thing one needs when grappling with German grammar! For further information, please contact Sharon Torres.

RIP. The group was very sad to hear of the passing of Peter Buck who was one of the founding members of our group. Unfortunately new members never had the chance to meet Peter, however those that did will remember his very good command of German and, in particular, his story about being mistaken for a spy when visiting East Germany for work!

## History Group

The next History Group meeting will be held on July 8<sup>th</sup>, when Geoff Cunnington will be making a presentation on the subject 'From Peterborough to Pavilions and Palaces – A day at the British Empire Exhibition, 1924'.

As usual, the meeting will be held in the Randall room, in the Harpenden Trust Hall beginning at 2.30, although the room will be open from 2.00. As usual a contribution of £1 will be required from all attendees.

All members are welcome to attend this talk.

Roger Thompson [roger.c.thompson1940@gmail.com](mailto:roger.c.thompson1940@gmail.com)

## Italian Conversation Group

This is a new group that meets on the second Monday every month at 3.00 pm at my house in Peters Green.

At our June get together, we listened to some famous Italian songs (Volare, Nessun Dorma...) and translated the lyrics. Members then shared with the group (in Italiano, naturalmente) a holiday experience – some good, others not so!

Tea and biscuits were especially welcome as we were sitting outside during a surprisingly warm afternoon; one could almost have been in Sorrento!

For further information, please contact **Sharon Torres**.

## Latin Group

The Latin group has now completed the Minimus 2 course. From September we will use De Romanis, Scriptores, as our course book, focusing on well-known Roman writers. Plenty of discussion too!

## Music Appreciation Group

Members of the Music Appreciation Group are planning to hold meetings on the first Friday of each month. The meetings will be held in members' homes. The first meeting will be held on 4<sup>th</sup> July when each member of the group will each take two pieces of recorded music (of any genre) to present and discuss.

It will be interesting to see how the group develops after this. Future meetings may focus on a specific theme each month, taking in a wide range of classical, traditional, jazz and popular music.

If you want any more information please contact the group leader **Phil Beavis**.

## **Poetry Reading Group 2**

As detailed in last month's newsletter, the existing Poetry Group has been very successful, It meets once a month to read and discuss a selection of poems or a specific writer. The group is full and not accepting new members, so we are planning to start a second group. If you are interested in poetry or would like to be interested in poetry, please email Brian Ball, Group coordinator **Brian Ball** for further information

## **Reading For Pleasure Group 1**

Our latest read was "The Paris Apartment" by Lucy Foley. The story is seen through the eyes of Jess, who has come in search of her half-brother Ben, who seems to have disappeared whilst staying in a Parisian apartment which belongs to a friend of his. We discover the whole apartment block is owned by the foul-tempered but very wealthy father of Ben's friend, and the whole family live there. We gradually learn where the father's wealth comes from, and there are depressing echoes of the Profumo scandal and the more recent Epstein scandal in the U.S.A.

On the plus side, it has a satisfactory and unexpected ending, which most of us were pleased to reach!

## **Reading For Pleasure Group 2**

The selection for June was a novel – The Rosie Project by Graeme Simsion an Australian. It was published in 2014: Six million copies have been sold and it has been published in forty-two languages.

One member wrote the following, "It is not a book that I would have chosen to read but I enjoyed it and would recommend it. I found it an easy read. I rate it 8½ out of 10."

Most members enjoyed it and laughed reading it.

Group members are all invited to rate each book giving a score up to a maximum of ten. The July book will be non-fiction, written by a Canadian professor at a Chinese University. We have a wide selection of books!

**Steve Gledhill**

## Reading For Pleasure Group 3

We meet monthly (usually the second Tuesday of the month in the morning) in members' houses. The last book choice was 'A Gentleman in Moscow' by Amor Towles. The book is beautifully written and tells the story of an unrepentant aristocrat in post revolution Russia and his "house" arrest by the Bolsheviks where he is confined to living in a luxurious hotel for the next 30 years. It is a journey though the historical events in Russia happening at that time and the encounters with the many people he meets at the hotel.

Anyone interested in joining the book group should contact **Jane Leek** for further details.

## Science and Technology Group

The Science and Technology group meeting in June was titled "How rockets work – or is Elon Musk a genius?" The speaker was Paul Spinks who has undertaken many projects for the European Space Agency prior to his retirement. It was a fascinating and informative talk accompanied by some excellent graphics in a PowerPoint presentation.



**Speaker Paul Spink during his presentation on rockets**

**The audience that attended the Science and Technology group meeting on 'Rockets'**



The June 2025 Newsletter gave details of the forthcoming Science and Technology group visit to the de Havilland Museum in London Colney on Wednesday morning 16<sup>th</sup> July. To date we have 18 in the party, we are nearly up to the maximum but if you would like to join in then contact Steve Gledhill as soon as possible.

You can refer back to page 7 of the June 2025 Newsletter for full details or access the online version at [Newsletter-June-25-Web-Version.pdf](#)

Our next meeting after that will be at the Plough and Harrow on 20<sup>th</sup> August. The speaker will be our MP, Victoria Collins, who is the Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Science, Innovation & Technology.

Our last meeting was a change from the normal – we visited the museum at Rothamsted Research locally.

Meetings are normally held on the third Wednesday of the month at the Plough and Harrow in Southdown. Meetings start at 10:30am. Entrance to the meeting room is via the rear door from the garden. Attendees are invited to stay for lunch from 12 noon.

No need to book (except for the de Havilland Aircraft Museum visit) – just turn up.

Any queries to **Steve Gledhill**

## Walking Group

This month we have enjoyed two very different walks. Traditional British weather returned for the first, a bracing circuit from Dunstable Downs to the Whipsnade Tree Cathedral.

The sun was out again a fortnight later for a memorable morning at Heartwood Forest where Brian Legg, who recently gave such a fine presentation in the Abbeydale Hall, met us for a conducted tour of the Arboretum. He held us enthralled as he described the provenance and idiosyncrasies of many of the native British trees collected there, and the multitude of ways they have been used in the past.



Did you know that Winston Churchill took a keen interest in the cultivation of certain types of willow because willow baskets made the ideal containers for parachute drops? The morning finished with a walk round the perimeter of the Forest, and a chance to enjoy the glorious displays of yellow and white wildflowers on the slopes below Well Wood.