

June 2025 Newsletter

Chairman's Report

1. New Members

I am pleased to welcome two new members in this Newsletter. They are Brenda Manton and Penny Kisarud. I am delighted that they have both joined our u3a.

At the present date, Harpenden u3a has 291 members, resulting in a considerable increase in this year's membership.

2. Suheil Shahryar

In last month's Newsletter, there was a richly deserved tribute to our former Webmaster, Chris Marshall, who had passed away, and had responsibility for the Beacon Service.

The u3a had to be active in appointing a new Beacon Administrator and, attached below is an article by Suheil Shahryar, the new appointee.

Suheil has drafted this short piece for the newsletter;

'I joined the u3a Harpenden in 2022, six months after my retirement. I had a 45 year career in technology that took me travelling around the world. Since then I have started cooking, reading, giving talks and helping local groups like the United Nations Association and the Rotary Club. So when I received an email on a balmy Saturday this month, asking for interest to administer the u3a Beacon site, I volunteered without knowing exactly what would be involved.

Two weeks later, as your Beacon Administrator, I am keen to help others, to broaden the appeal of our u3a. Of all the groups and clubs that I have come across in Harpenden, the u3a has the broadest appeal for me, with a wide ranging nature of self- help groups.

I have lived in Harpenden for over 30 years. My wife, Shona, a retired teacher, is currently running the Latin Group for the u3a.'

Suheil Shahryar

3. Need for new Programme Secretary

Jan Warr writes below, that as she has now completed over four years in this role, it is the right time to hand over to someone else:

'Unfortunately I had no response the last time I made a request for a new Programme Secretary.

The new Programme Secretary will not be thrown in at the deep end as I will offer as much assistance as I possibly can.

All the speakers are booked for 2025 and I have already booked four speakers for 2026.

It is a good idea to work at least six months in advance so as to give yourself plenty of time. A lot of popular speakers get booked up a year ahead.

If you are interested in this very worthwhile post, which also involves membership of the u3a committee, you can contact me directly.'

Janet (Warr).

4. Dates of Thursday Talks

On June 5th, we are very pleased that Simon Smith will be giving a talk on the Almshouse Trust. This talk will include the History of the Charity and an outline of some Almshouses in Hertfordshire. He will be accompanied by the Chairman of the Berkhamsted Almshouses.

On June 19th, for this talk we are delighted and privileged to have as our Speaker Annie Brewster, the High Sheriff of Hertfordshire. The talk will be about her life as the High Sheriff, and the u3a is very pleased to welcome her as she gives a talk on this important subject.

Both talks will be given at the Abbeyfield Hall starting at 2.15. The Hall is above the Cooperative Premises in Southdown, and there is parking in the Coop car park.

Roger Thompson roger.c.thompson1940@gmail.com

Group Reports

Bus Pass Group

On Wednesday 14th May six members of the Bus Pass Group enjoyed a visit to Hemel Hempstead. Starting the visit with a walk through the Water Gardens which contained spring flowers and even a number of rose bushes in flower. We then proceeded to the Old Town and back through Gadebridge Park. Unfortunately, the Charter Gardens were closed for replanting. Also the 12th century Parish Church of St. Mary's with its 14th century tower and spire (one of the tallest in Europe) was closed for refurbishment.

Graham

History Group

The next Group meeting will take place on the 10th June at the Randal Room of the Harpenden Trust Hall. The meeting will commence at 2.30pm, although the room will be available for members from 2.00. Please avoid attendance prior to that time. The talk will be given by Roger Thompson with the presentation topic being 'The decision as to who was the 'Greatest person in British History'.

All members are welcome. As usual there will be a £1 contribution towards the cost of the room hire.

Roger Thompson roger.c.thompson1940@gmail.com

Music Appreciation Group

As detailed in last month's newsletter, we are planning to start a Music Appreciation group.

If you enjoy music, If you have a particular taste in music, If you want to share your taste with others or discover something new or different, this is the group you need to join.

For more information contact **Brian Ball** Group coordinator

Needlecraft Group



The Needlecraft group are still meeting regularly and stitching away busily.

Here is a photograph of another completed item. These things take quite a time to finish so it may be a while until our next item is finished.

Anne Stephens

Pickle Ball Group

Playing Pickle Ball isn't just about keeping fit. It is a social game.

We already have a list of members interested in starting a Pickle Ball group but we need more members to join to enable us to make the necessary arrangements. If you are at all interested don't lose the opportunity to learn how to play Pickle Ball, contact **Brian Ball** Group Coordinator

Poetry Reading Group 2

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 and he will add you to the list of potential new members.

Reading For Pleasure Group 1

We continue to meet in members' houses.

At our last meeting we discussed "Yellow Face" by Rebecca F. Kuang.

The book is set in the U.S.A. and concerns an aspiring writer June, who steals the basic structure of a novel written by a successful colleague of Chinese heritage, who has suddenly died. She publishes an amended version as her own. It becomes a best seller!

Repercussions from this echo throughout the rest of the book and we were all surprised to find how much racism Chinese people experience in the U.S.A.

Reading For Pleasure Group 2

The titles listed below show the wide range of books that have been selected by the Reading Group membership recently. It might prompt you to try reading any of them yourself. Sadly we still cannot admit any new members as we need to keep the group to a manageable level.

The discussions on *The Grapes of Wrath* were very interesting. It is still a powerful book 86 years after it was published, it gives a great insight into America at the time.

- May – *The Grapes of Wrath* – John Steinbeck
- June – *The Rosie Project* – Graeme Simsion
- July – *The Dean of Shandong: Confessions of a Minor Bureaucrat at a Chinese University* – Daniel A. Bell
- August – *Orbital* – Samantha Harvey
- September – *The Gift of Rain* – Tan Twan Eng
- October 9th – *Persuasion* – Jane Austen

Steve Gledhill

Science and Technology Group

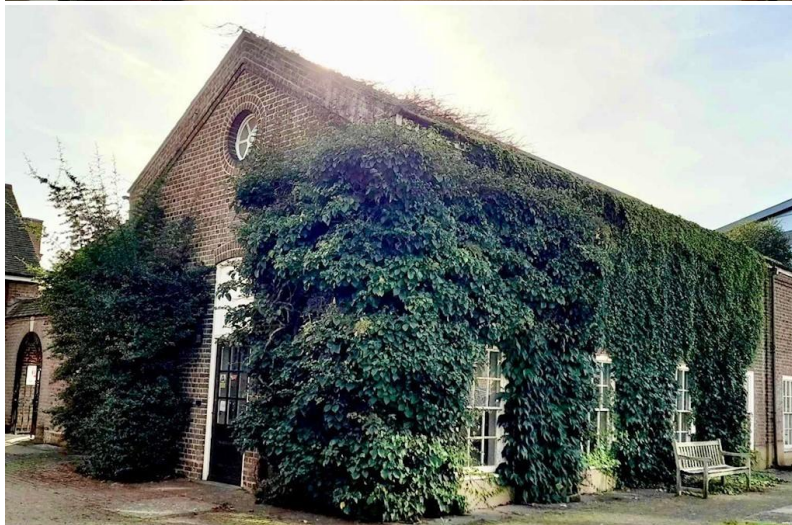
The group continues to thrive – from small beginnings two years ago we have steadily expanded membership to around 30. We welcome new members to this friendly and informal group.

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



Photo shows that a good number of group members attended. Volunteers who run the museum gave an expert history of Rothamsted and then explained the items on display.

A very successful exercise!



The museum is housed in the 'Old Sample House', the location of the Rothamsted Sample Archive collection (RSA) used from the 1880s to the 1940s.

Meetings that have been booked through to September are shown:

- 18th June – Rocketry – is Elon Musk a genius? Paul Spink (group member)
- 16th July – Guided tour of The de Havilland Aircraft Museum, London Colney.
- 20th August – Victoria Collins MP, Liberal Democrat Spokesperson (Science, Innovation & Technology).
- 10th September – Construction of HS2 (High Speed 2 railway) across the Chilterns. Keith Hofmeister (local u3a member).

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 detailed below) – just turn up.

Any queries to Steve Gledhill

Details of Visit to the de Havilland Aircraft Museum at London Colney on Wednesday 16th July are as follows:

The Science and Technology Group plan to visit the de Havilland Aircraft Museum at London Colney on Wednesday 16th July. As we will be going as a group we will be provided with a special guided tour conducted by one of the museum curators – the general public do not get such a tour. You can find out more about the museum by clicking this link www.dehavillandmuseum.co.uk On Sat Nav you can view the location at AL2 1BU.

The museum was the first aviation museum in Britain, when it opened to the public in 1959. It has steadily grown over the years acquiring more aircraft including the Mosquito twin-engined bomber. A notable exhibit is the Comet, the world's first commercial jet airliner. Visitors will be able to go into some of the aircraft – entering the cockpits and cabins – and also see restoration work being carried out.

This group tour costs £20.00 per head, which includes entrance charge, welcome refreshments, and the guided tour of 1.5 to 2 hours duration. The museum opens at 10:30am to allow 30 minutes for the welcome refreshments. The tour starts at around 11:00 am.

Depending on demand we can order a snack lunch of sandwiches, sausage rolls and cakes with tea or coffee. This will be arranged nearer the time for those who have booked to attend.

Although organised for the Science and Technology Group other members of Harpenden u3a are welcome if numbers permit. It is recommended that non-members of the Science and Technology Group apply without delay in case reservations are made rapidly.

If you would like to join please let Group Leader Steve Gledhill know – see contact details below. Send the names(s) of those wishing to attend along with email address and phone number – preferably mobile. You will be sent full details nearer the time.

Steve Gledhill

Walking Group

We are beginning to forget what a wet walk is like. Once again, the sun shone on both our outings this month, the first a circuit from Notcutts around Ellenbrook Fields – a country park created on part of the old Hatfield Aerodrome – and returning along the Alban Way. Walking a route that was completely level was a novelty, and a welcome one on such a warm day.



Our second walk, from Rothamsted, was more typical, and rewarded us with lovely views across the Ver valley from the hillsides east of Redbourn.
Hugh Fricker