



August 2025 Newsletter

Chairman’s Report

1. New Members joining in July 2025

Five new members have joined this month:

- Paul Mayo
- Wendy Mayo
- Gavin Rundstrom
- Rita Rundstrom
- Gavin Mutch

All of the above new members are warmly welcomed to the Harpenden u3a.

2. List of talks arranged for the remainder of 2025

Date	Member and Others	Speaker	Topic
August 21 st	Summer Party		The Summer Party will be held at the Plough and Harrow commencing at 2.30
September 4 th	Member	Art Appreciation Group	Presentation by the Art Appreciation Group.
September 18 th	Speaker	Paul Barwick	“Double Agent Zigzag”
October 2 nd	Member	Sharon Torres	“The Royals of Monaco”
October 16 th	Speaker	Fiona Lukas	Exploring London’s Underground – Including Art, Architecture and Design.
November 6 th	Member	Phil Marsh	“The Use and Abuse of Power”

November 20 th	Speaker	Mary Smith	"A School Girls War"
December 4 th			Christmas Event.
December 18 th			Christmas Party.

3. List of talks arranged for 2026

Date	Member and Others	Speaker	Topic
January 1 st	Bank Holiday		No talk. New Year's Day Bank Holiday.
January 15 th		Mike Barbakoff	"The Secret War in St Albans 1939/45"
February 5 th		Suheil Sharyar	A Talk on Artificial Intelligence
February 19 th		Colin Smith	"Coffee - from tree to cup"
March 5 th		Sharon Torres	"The Papacy versus Michaelangelo"
March 19 th		Colin Oakes	"London and its museums"
April 2 nd	Creative Writing Group		A presentation by the Creative Writing Group
April 16 th		Morgen Bailey	"An Author and Editors journey through the Publishing Industry"
May 7 th		Peter & Moira Hart	Reflections on Kitty OBE's Story: "A Holocaust Survivor!"
May 21 st		Alison Wall	"Plague Houses and Pandemics"
June 4 th	Art Appreciation Group		A Presentation by the Art Appreciation Group.
June 18 th		Alison Bourke	"Tunnel Vision; Stepping Through Time"
July 2 rd		Alan Smith	Poetic Presentation
July 16 th			To be arranged

August 20 th	Summer Party		Summer Party at Plough and Harrow
September 3 rd		Clare Jenner	"Well Work Physio Ltd"
September 17 th		Philip McKinder	"An unexpected change in the Weather"
October 1 st		Sharon Torres	"Venice H ₂ O"
October 15 th	AGM		AGM
November 5 th & 19 th			To be arranged
December 3 rd			Christmas Miscellany
December 17 th			Christmas Party

All the above to be held at 2.15 in the Abbeyfield Hall unless otherwise indicated.

Roger Thompson – Chairman

(Contact via this link: <https://harpenden.u3asite.uk/contact/>)

4. A Message from Suheil Shahryar

Interest Groups and Convenors

Hello everybody!

There is a very active u3a in Harpenden with 32 Interest Groups, ranging from Art Appreciation to Walking Groups. The size of Groups vary from 4 to 80, but the most common size of a Group is 7/8. Most Groups meet once a month, or on a pre-arranged basis. There is always the scope for new Groups to be formed, depending on the interest, keenness of members and the availability of accommodation. There are now over 300 members in Harpenden u3a, a very significant increase in numbers.

Each Group has Convenors, but this is not always an easy role, in particular, for those offering their own homes in which a group can meet, with the need to provide refreshments, and the need to predict how many members may attend at a meeting. We are fortunate to have some very good and committed Convenors.

The Harpenden u3a is fortunate to have our Convenors, who offer so much in the support of their Groups and we are very appreciative of the work that they do.

Suheil Shahryar – u3a Site Admin

Group Reports

History Group

The next History Group meeting will be held on August 12th when there will be a presentation of paintings and the history they represent, given by members of the Group. This event follows on from a similar and very successful and enjoyable history presentation in 2024, relating to talks about artists.

As usual, the meeting will be held in the Randall Room of the Harpenden Trust 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.

The first talk will be given by Pauline Waddilove with a presentation of the paintings by Breugel, in the great Vienna Art Gallery.

The second presentation will be given by Nicky Wilcox on a Painting in Tate Britain – The Death of Major Peirson, 1782 – 84.

Both events should be very enjoyable and all members of the History Group are welcome to attend.

Roger Thompson [contact history group](#)

Reading For Pleasure Group 1

The last book we read was 'Violetta' by Isabelle Allende, which received universal approval. It covers a period from 1920 up to the recent pandemic, and is set in the country of Chile.

The central character is Violeta, the first girl born into a family of five boisterous sons. She is from a wealthy family thrown into destitution by the reckless financial dealings of her father. After his suicide, Violeta and some of her family resettle into the southern region of Chile, which has a cold, wet climate, and where they live in relative poverty. However, Violeta is a feisty child who grows into a feisty teenager and adult! We follow her life as the country descends into a fascist dictatorship, and her own personal family disintegrates.

Reading For Pleasure Group 2

The forthcoming selected book for August is 'Orbital' by Samantha Harvey, the Booker Prize winner for 2024. This is what Booker wrote, "Takes place over a single day in the life of six astronauts and cosmonauts aboard the International Space Station. Orbital invites us to observe Earth's splendour, whilst reflecting on the individual and collective value of every human life." An innovative and original scenario for a book.

Our September book is 'The Gift of Rain', the first novel by Malaysian novelist Tan Twan Eng set before and during World War II. This illustrates the wide range of books we read. Later in the year we will have a Jane Austen book.

Steve Gledhill

Saturday Strollers

In early July we set off from Harpenden in three or four cars, though nevertheless in strolling mode, towards Stevenage – admittedly an unlikely destination for our customary countryside exploration. Unless, that is, one remembers that, as one of the biggest of the country's designated New Towns created after the Second World War, it was built cheek by jowl with our planned strolling itinerary, that is around the 250 acre park surrounding the venerable and imposing Knebworth House, whose history dates back to the 15th Century, through twenty generations of the Lytton family.

Once inside the park, our intended stroll of about 2 miles was to circumnavigate its pleasantly wooded boundaries where added interest came from glimpses of the estate's resident grazing herd of red and sika deer. The stately home itself, which underwent drastic architectural remodelling in the mid-19th Century, to what is now referred to as Tudor Gothic style, occupies a central position in Knebworth Park, whose mixed woodland and green open space, are an attraction for a host of active and not-so-active outdoor pursuits including the likes of Harpenden's leisurely u3a strollers.



Most of the park is open to the public with the notable exception, as we saw, of the regularly moved enclosed areas housing the deer herd.

On the day of our stroll around the park it was gratifyingly peaceful, prompting the thought that it is not always so, notably when thousands of pop music enthusiasts have regularly descended on Knebworth's Arcadian acres to enjoy necessarily amplified performances. One of the first such events was during the hot summer of 1976 when the Rolling Stones' Knebworth concert attracted 120,000 fans.

Associations with the Lytton family extend beyond the boundaries of the park and include the Lytton Arms, a 19th Century hostelry situated in Old Knebworth, a peaceful village two or three miles from the bustling town of what is effectively new Knebworth. And it was to the Lytton Arms we repaired for a pleasant pub lunch after our strolling exertions. We noted that one of the local specialities on its extensive menu was, maybe unsurprisingly in view of the deer we had seen in the park, 'Knebworth Estate Venison Shepherd's Pie'.

Alan Bunting

Science and Technology Group

Our July meeting was another "Away Day", this time it was to The De Havilland Aircraft Museum at London Colney. A group of 21 u3a members, family and friends assembled at the museum.

Two very knowledgeable guides were provided; each taking a separate party around all the exhibits, and going inside some of them. The guides are normally only available for organised groups such as ours.

Stars of the show are the three Mosquitos including the original prototype. You can attend the museum yourself or you may wish to organise a tour.

The website gives you an idea of what is on offer – www.dehavillandmuseum.co.uk There is a superb "fly through" on YouTube which is recommended, click <https://youtu.be/xEH7iLgMDsI>



Some of the u3a Science and Technology tour group in front of a De Havilland Mosquito



A Mosquito aircraft on display at the museum



All 21 of the group who went on the accompanied visit to the de Havilland Museum on 16 July

Note: we have had to change the date of our next meeting to be addressed by our MP, Victoria Collins. **It will now be on Wednesday 27th August (not 20th August)**. The meeting will start at usual time of 10:30 am.

We have had to change the venue too because the Plough and Harrow function room is not available on that day. The meeting will be held in the Gibbons Hall above the Co-op in Southdown. The room is adjacent to the Abbeyfield Hall which many of you will know from our 'Thursday Talks'.

Our speaker is the Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Science, Innovation & Technology which is why we have invited her to address our Science and Technology group. There will be time for a question-and-answer session.

If you do not regularly attend the group meetings you are still very welcome to attend. Please let Steve Gledhill know that you wish to be there to ensure that there will be enough seats available. Details of venue access and menu for the optional lunch will be sent to you. Lunch will be served after the talk at the adjacent Plough and Harrow in the main bar.

Steve Gledhill

Walking Group

The early summer has been kind to us, with three fine, bright walking days, the latest one very much against the odds.

So we've seen the sunshine at Studham, at Colney Heath and Bowman's Lakes, and in the more familiar but equally attractive area between Harpenden and Redbourn. As always, it has been good to enjoy the countryside and the exercise in such congenial company.



The Walking group at Studham church.

**The Walking Group,
Tyttenhanger Park in the
background**





The Walking group near Redbourn.