



November 2025 Newsletter

Chairman's Report

1. New Members joining in October 2025

There were no new members joining in October. We currently have 312 members.

2. November Talks

We have two talks taking place in November and details of these are outlined below. As usual the talks are held in the Abbeyfield Hall, above the Southdown Co-op, where there are parking facilities.

On November 6th, there will be a presentation given by Phil Marsh, who has been a regular contributor of interesting talks. His topic on this occasion is "The Use and Abuse' of Power". This is one of our events that have been much appreciated by members.

On November 20th there is to be a talk by Mary Smith called 'A School Girl's War', Mary was headteacher (2006 -14) at Maidstone Grammar School and has produced a book to accompany the talk. It is the story of the girls lives during WWII as depicted by the then Art teacher, Helen Keen in a scrapbook of paintings and drawings. It promises to be a very interesting talk.

3. Online Learning Events

Did you know that as a member of our u3a, you can join many online learning events that the national u3a organise. These are available for FREE to paid up members of any u3a in the UK.

The national u3a runs a programme of web talks, workshops and events, as well as online initiatives such as competitions, memory collections and puzzles for you to get involved with during these dark winter evening. There's something for everyone.

In November, the talks include 'The Geology of Britain in the Palaeozoic Age', 'The Talking Drums of Africa'; 'The UK and the US Constitutions', 'Cryptic Crosswords for Beginners: a six-session course', 'Exploring World Faiths', 'Catherine the Great', 'Making your Smartphone easier to Use', 'Laughter Yoga' and many others.

Do have a look at what is on offer on: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning>

I shall endeavour to put a list of what is on offer each month in the newsletter.

Viv Chandler

4. Patrick scores a century!

One of Harpenden u3a's longest-standing and formerly most active members Patrick Kenny marked his 100th birthday on October 23rd with a celebratory lunch at the Plough & Harrow hostelry at Southdown.

Among the 25 invitees were family members including his son James, who had travelled from South Carolina in the USA and his other two sons John and Peter and their families.

Also sharing in the celebration were Patrick's many Harpenden friends, notably from the u3a, but also from the Harpenden Trust's Tuesday coffee club.

A Harpenden resident for about 45 years, Patrick was born in 1925 in a village in County Tipperary in Ireland and at the age of 16 embarked on 40 years' service in the Royal Navy where he served on an aircraft carrier during the Second World War, and in due course rose to the rank of Petty Officer.

For the last five years he has been a resident of Lea Springs sheltered accommodation home at Batford, though he continued driving until only about a year ago.



5. Eric Midwinter Photo.



Above is a very nice photograph of Eric Midwinter and our former Chairman Viv Chandler. The photograph was taken by member Steve Gledhill at the Harpenden Seniors' Fair.

Group Reports

Please note, for further information please contact the relevant group leaders by following [THIS LINK](#).

New Groups

We are currently planning to arrange the following new groups:

- French conversation
- Scrabble 2
- Poetry Appreciation 2

If you are interested in joining any of these groups it would be most helpful if you could contact Brian Ball Group Coordinator:

The Needlecraft group also has a vacancy for two members

Church & Pub Group

The last Newsletter gave details of the forthcoming Church and Pub Group meeting on Wednesday 5th November at St John's Church in Southdown followed by lunch at the Engineer. There has been a very good response. You may wish to make a last-minute reservation. It is essential to book, please contact Steve Gledhill

Members of the group will take turns to organise each future group meeting.

- January 2026: Sally Hickman: St Stephen's Church, St Albans and King Harry pub
- February 2026: Martin Collins: St Mary's Church Redbourn and The Hollybush pub

Current Affairs Group

Are you concerned about what's happening in the world?

If so, you're welcome to join us: to listen, to join in the conversation, and to initiate discussion on any issue that concerns you.

Just turn up to our next meeting on Tuesday 18th November in the Randall Room at the Harpenden Trust Hall in Southdown.

Doors open at 2.15. We start the meeting at 2.30 and end before 4.00.

There will be a £2 donation towards the cost of hiring the room.

Family History Group

The Family History group meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 2:30pm in the Randall Room at the Harpenden Trust Halls in Southdown, opposite the Plough and Harrow. Our November meeting will take place on November 26th.

During our meetings, we cover a range of topics and allow ample time for discussion, questions and individual research advice. With family history, you never know what discoveries await you or in which direction your ancestors might lead you. It's easy to get sidetracked, but that is part of the joy of the search.

You will be very welcome to join us, whether you are new to family history research or an experienced researcher.

For more information, please feel free to contact me, Viv Chandler, I would be happy to tell you more about the group.

German Conversation Group

This group meets on the last Tuesday of each month from 2.30 – 4.00 pm. If you enjoy battling with the arcane grammar to be found in the German language, then this could be the group for you.

Next meeting dates for 2025:

- 25th November
- 30th December

For further information, please contact Sharon Torres.

History Group

The next meeting of the History Group will be held on 11th November when there will be a presentation by Sharon Torres, who will give a talk entitled "Hannibal the Carthaginian".

The talk will commence at 2:30 in the Randall Room of the Harpenden Trust building, although the room will be available from 2:00. As usual, there will be a charge of £1 to cover the use of the room.

Roger Thompson

Italian Conversation Group

Ti piace parlare Italiano? Then come along to our conversation group where we try our best to chat in this most beautiful of languages.

We meet on the second Monday of each month from 3 – 4.30 pm.

Next dates are:

- 10th November 2025
- 8th December 2026
- 12th January 2026

For further information, please contact Sharon Torres.

Reading For Pleasure Group 2

In October we had a fascinating discussion on “Persuasion” by Jane Austen and the contrasting lives and roles of men and women in the Regency compared to today.

Our book for November is “My Father’s House” by Joseph O’Connor. Inspired by a true story, It’s a thrilling tale about the setting up of an escape route from inside the Vatican during the Nazi occupation of Rome in 1943.

Nicky Wilcox

Reading For Pleasure Group 3

The group meets monthly (usually the second Tuesday of the month in the morning) in members’ houses. The last book choice was “The Vanishing Half” by Brit Bennett which was shortlisted for the Women’s Prize 2021. This novel is a deeply compelling exploration of identity and powerful themes of race. Twin sisters growing up together in a small, southern black community running away at the age of 16 but going on to lead very different lives. From the Deep South to California; from the 1950s to the 1990s, this book is a riveting, emotional family story.

Our next read is “Old Baggage” by Lissa Evans. This book promises to be a funny and bittersweet portrait of a woman who, during the Women’s Suffrage Campaign, was a militant, but now in middle age is looking for a fresh mould into which to pour her energies.

For more information about the Reading Group, please contact Jane Leek.

Science and Technology Group

On 15th October Peter Lord from Wokingham u3a spoke on 'The Fediverse' – a collection of social networking services that can communicate with each other. This may be the successor to social media such as Facebook, X and Instagram. A fascinating topic which stimulated debate.



The meeting concluded as usual with members having lunch together. Our guest speaker is shown at the head of the table.

19th November "Ham Radio Explained – It's not CB"

Group member Peter Wilson will give the talk. Peter has been an Amateur radio (radio ham) enthusiast for over fifty years. Starting out with an old converted taxi radio, culminating many years later by talking to orbiting spacecraft! He will explain the many different modes of operation open to the enthusiasts and hopes to give a live demonstration by erecting an aerial in the pub garden and talking to other radio hams around the world.

The meeting is at the Plough and Harrow in Southdown on 19th November from 10:30 am. As usual all u3a members are welcome. Entrance to the meeting room is through the doors at the rear in the garden.

December – Christmas lunch

The group's tradition is that there is no formal meeting in December. Members of the group will meet earlier in the month and have a traditional Christmas lunch together.

21st January 2026 "A brief history of Exoplanets"

Stephen Mills, a guest speaker, will talk about Exoplanets which are planets beyond our solar system. Studying Exoplanets can help us learn how planets form and develop. The first Exoplanet was confirmed in 1992 and since then over 6,000 exoplanets have been discovered.

Spanish Conversation Group

Over the past few months our group has been steadily growing. It now consists of a range of levels of knowledge, so we aim to improve by helping each other. As they say – use it or lose it!

Top 5 benefits for a learning another language:

- Improve your Career & Business!
- Build Deeper Connections With More People.
- Sharpen your Decision-Making.
- Feed your brain.
- Boost your Confidence.

For further information, please contact Sharon Torres.

Walking Group



Most of our walks are quite local, like our latest one: a fine circuit from the West Herts Golf Club via Lamer House to Ayot St Lawrence, then down to Sparrowhall Bridge and back along the Ayot Greenway, the autumn colours

glowing even under a grey sky. But occasionally we venture further afield.



At the end of September, we went to Ashridge for a lovely route taking in Prince's Riding, the Golden Valley, Ashridge House and Berkhamstead Forest. We were fortunate that a beautiful autumn day fully justified the extra travel.