

Harpenden u3a January 2026 Bulletin

So many people have wished me a "Happy New Year" in the last few days and it's just what we need at such a dull, cold time of the year. We all tend to focus on "Happy" but perhaps "New" should be the focus. Learn something new, listen to new opinions, make new acquaintances who become new friends, take part in new activities. Sound familiar? It's exactly what u3a gives members the opportunity to do. In 2026 new groups will be formed, new speakers will visit and, hopefully, new members will join us.

So, Happy New Year, why not join a new group, do something you have never done before, you could even volunteer to become a Group Leader, but most of all, enjoy u3a in 2026.

Judith Moseley – Acting Chairman

Members News

We are delighted to welcome five new members –

Fiona Ayres, Kay Balaam, Jenny Mottram, Ruth Cassidy and Nicholas Carter. We look forward to meeting you and hope you enjoy your membership.

We are sad to report the death of **David Young**. David and his late wife, Jo, were stalwart members for very many years. David was also a Committee Member and organised outings. We send our sympathy to his family.

Thank You

Jan would like to thank all those who came to the Christmas party and very generously purchased tickets for the raffle. We made a profit of £170, which Jan has already donated to the Alzheimer's Society, a cause very close to her heart.

Thursday Afternoon Talks

We usually hold two general talks a month on the first and third Thursdays at 2.15 in the Abbeyfield Hall, Harpenden Trust Hall although for January there will be only one, as the first Thursday was New Year's Day. So, the only talk in January will be held on 15th January. Our speaker will be **Mike Barbakoff**, who will be giving a talk on "The Secret War in St Albans '39-'45". This will be Mike's third visit to us. You may remember that in 2023, he talked to us about Bletchley Park and in 2024 he spoke about the first Enigma Codebreakers. Both talks were well received, enjoyable and informative.

You will find a list of all the Thursday afternoon talks for the rest of 2026 at the back of this bulletin.

Can you help us?

Those of you who attend the Thursday afternoon meetings in the Abbeyfield Hall will know that we have to provide the speakers with microphones and facilities for showing their slides. Thanks to the Harpenden Trust, we finally have reliable and easy-to-work equipment for doing this, but someone has to set it up and operate it each time.

I am able and happy to do this myself on most occasions, but we badly need at least one other person to cover those I can't do, and, equally importantly, to provide possible back-up in emergencies.

No special technical knowledge is needed – I don't have any!

You would just need to be able to arrive well before the start of the meeting to set up, and to stay to the end to put things away. I would envisage that, once you were trained and confident with the system, you would come on a rota to do the job once every two to three months to keep your hand in.

We all benefit from the excellent and varied programme of Thursday speakers, but our arrangements do need to be more resilient. So please consider if you could help.

If you think you might be able to, please contact me, [Hugh Fricker](#) so we can discuss it further.

Thank you.

Hugh Fricker

Online Learning Events – January

These are FREE to all UK members and are organised by the national u3a for the benefit of members. The January talks are listed below. For further information about the talks, go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning>.

Exploring World Faiths; Mindfulness and Compassion meet Poetry; Understanding Online Content & Misinformation; Laughter Yoga; How to Build Confidence in Later Life; Mindfulness & Meditation; When Numbers turn Nasty; From Roman Britain to the Dark Ages; Bollywood Laughter Yoga Dance; How do your Medicines Work? – Asthma; Smart Cities with u3a Lets Talk Tech; A Voyage through the Scottish Hebrides; Artificial Intelligence News; The Calendar, Time & the Cosmos; Why Snails Might Hold Some Answers to Age related Memory Loss; Cryptic Crosswords in Context; The Story of Tootje (Cato) Granaat 1926–2020; Preparing for an AI World; Space & Aviation: The New High Ground; After Alzheimer: Memory, Ageing & What Comes Next; How Do Medicines Work – Hypertension; Smashing Particles – Behind the Scenes at CERN; The Mathematicians' Library.

Christmas Photos

Steve Gledhill has kindly provided us with some photographs of various u3a festive gatherings held before Christmas!



Members enjoying the u3a Christmas party at the Abbeyfield Hall.



Festive carols being sung by the choir at the Christmas Party.



Members of the Walking Group having lunch at The Fox



Members of the Science & Technology group enjoying their Christmas lunch at the Plough and Harrow.



Members of Book Group 2 dressed for the occasion.

Groups Update

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

The following groups currently have waiting lists:

- Creative Writing
- Scrabble

If you are interested in joining either of these groups, please contact **Brian Ball** Group coordinator.

New Group

As the existing Spanish Conversation Group is already full, we are going to start a second Spanish Conversation group.

For further information please contact **Sheila Anderson**.

Church and Pub

The next outing of the Church and Pub Group will be on Monday, 19th January. We will be meeting at St Leonard's Church, Flamstead at 11.00 and afterwards we will move to the Three Blackbirds Pub for lunch. To book a slot and/or find out more information, please contact **Sally Hickman**.

French Conversation

The new French conversation group is scheduled to start 2nd February 2026. For further information contact **Brian Ball**.

History Group

The History Group meets in the Randall Room at the Trust Halls opposite the Plough and Harrow at 2.30 on the 2nd Tuesday in the month. All are welcome.

Please don't forget to bring £1 to pay towards the cost of hiring the room.

The next three meetings are:

- 13th January – 'The Spartans, the fiercest warriors ever known' by Sharon Torres
- 10th February – 'The Anarchy in 12th-century England' by Malcolm Rainbow
- 10th March – 'The Sieges of Newark in the English Civil War and how the citizens were affected' by Viv Chandler

Further information from **Roger Thompson**.

Hot Issues Group

This group mainly meets at 45 Bloomfield Rd on the fourth Tuesday of the month, 2-4 pm. Our first meeting of the year is on 27th January, when the topic will be:

'How can immigration be managed humanely?'

For further information, please contact: **Chris Marsden**.

Science and Technology

The following are the first meetings of 2026:

- 21st January – A brief history of Exoplanets – planets beyond our solar system, Stephen Mills.
- 18th February – The gas journey from the North Sea to your home boiler – Mike Pearson
- 18th March – Astro-photography – Robin Barrett
- 15th April – The organs of speech – producing and understanding natural language, Paul Spinks

Meetings start at 10:30am for welcoming beverages. Entrance to the meeting room is via the rear door entrance from the garden. There is plenty of parking space in the pub car park.

All Harpenden u3a members are welcome to attend, there is no need to book a space – just turn up and join in.

Attendees are invited to stay for lunch from 12 noon if they wish.

For further information, please contact **Steve Gledhill**.

Singing for Pleasure

Our popular Singing for Pleasure Group meets in the Abbeyfield Hall on alternate Thursdays to the general meeting. The dates for the next term are:

- 22nd and 29th January
- 12th and 26th February
- 12th and 26th March

Further information from **Viv Chandler**.

Weekday strollers

This group meets at 10.30 on the last Friday of the month for a short walk around the local area. The next couple of strolls will be on: 30th January and 27th February.

For further information and to be put on the mailing list for details of the walks, please get in touch with **Brian Ball**.

List of talks arranged for 2026

| Date | Speaker | Topic |
|---|------------------------|---|
| January 1 st | | No talk. New Year's Day. |
| January 15 th | Mike Barbakoff | "The Secret War in St Albans 1939/45" |
| February 5 th | Sharon Torres | "The Papacy versus Michaelangelo" |
| February 19 th | Colin Smith | "Coffee - From tree to cup" |
| March 5 th | Suheil Sharyar | A Talk on Artificial Intelligence |
| 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 Editor's journey through the Publishing Industry" |
| May 7 th | Peter & Moira Hart | Reflections on Kitty Hart Moxon OBE's Story: "A Holocaust and Auschwitz 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 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 |
| November 5 th & 19 th | | To be arranged |
| December 3 rd | | Christmas Miscellany |
| December 17 th | | Christmas Party |

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