



## April 2026 Bulletin

I am writing this early in the day and the sun is absolutely streaming down and we have the promise of a gorgeous, warm spring day. It's always been my favourite time of year for many reasons, not least because winter is officially over and everywhere starts to look so beautiful. The chestnut trees on the common are such a fabulous, bright green and I passed a bed of primroses yesterday which just made me smile. I know there will be typically dull days but it's time to plan holidays and put away the heavy jumpers and be generally more optimistic. The programme of Thursday talks looks very interesting too, over the next few months. We average about sixty people on these afternoons but there is enough room in the larger Abbeyfield Hall for up to a hundred. The talks are very different and diverse and a good way to sample different subjects. A list of all the talks up to the end of the year are at the end of this bulletin. Obviously, it is also a chance to chat and enjoy a cup of tea with friends you haven't yet met! So, see you on a Thursday, the garden and lawn mowing can wait!

**Judith Moseley**

Acting Chairman

### Members' News

We are delighted to welcome twelve new members –

**Michael Pearson, Vivian Eke, Alayne Cusick, Alison Moss, Sue Collins, Mike Rose, Angelina and Barrie Irving, Ridley Whitfield, Phil Murray, Brenda Anderson and Jonathan Sinfield.**

We look forward to meeting you and hope you enjoy your membership.

### Thursday Afternoon Talks

These take place on the first and third Thursday of the month at 2.15 in the Abbeyfield Hall, above the Co-op in Southdown. Parking is in the Co-op car park but, WARNING, this is getting very full these days, so we suggest you arrive in good time to find a space.

Recently, we have heard of members being unable to access the Trust Hall building as they do not have the code with them. **The code to enter is 0809.** This only works for the Thursday Afternoon Talks. Other meetings have their own codes. Please keep a note of this code either in your diary or on your phone.

The next two meetings are:

#### **Thursday, 16th April**

##### **Morgen Bailey – ‘An Author’s Journey through the Publishing Industry’**

Although creating stories has been in her blood since primary school, it wasn’t until she joined a critique group evening class in 2005, to meet people having moved counties, that writing really took hold. Initially creating for pleasure, it soon became apparent that Morgen wanted to share her stories with a wider audience, starting with self-publishing before securing a traditional ‘deal’.

#### **Thursday, 7th May**

##### **Peter & Moira Hart – “Reflections on Kitty Hart-Moxon OBE’s Story – Holocaust and Auschwitz Survivor”.**

Peter & Moira will tell the remarkable story of survival of Kitty Hart-Moxon OBE, spanning 7 years, who survived the horrors of the Holocaust, including spending 18 months in Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. We present Kitty’s testimony from a second-generation perspective, explaining the story of a Jewish individual fighting for survival, initially trying to escape the Nazis and then eventually captured and sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

### **A Thank You to all the Group Leaders**

Last week Brian Ball, the Group Co-ordinator, and myself had a coffee and cake meeting with most of the Group Leaders. We wanted to express the committee’s appreciation to them for all the work that they do. We also had some basic “housekeeping” to run through with them. The conversation ranged from Risk Assessments for insurance purposes and the need to keep a register containing emergency contacts for each group member, to their use of Beacon, our administration programme, which can help them with all of these requirements. It was really interesting to hear about all the work which is quietly going on to provide learning in so many subjects. Do you all realise that there are now 32 groups? Why not have a look at the website to see if there is anything you might like to consider? Or is there something you could start yourself? We will give you plenty of support and advice.

I hope the Group Leaders who attended found the meeting useful. Thank you again for the hard work you all do. I have already spoken to Suheil Sharyar, who is happy to

arrange some Zoom sessions about the use of Beacon for the leaders. More news about that, very soon.

**Judith Moseley**

## Group News

Please note, for further information, contact the relevant group leaders by following this link to the Groups page on our website: <https://harpenden.u3asite.uk/groups/>

The next outing for the **Church and Pub group** will be on Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> April, commencing at 10:30 when we will be visiting St Mary's Church in Redbourn, followed by lunch in The Cricketers. We have 9 confirmed attendees. For more information, please contact **Martin Collins**.

The **Needlecraft Group** meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month at 2pm for 2 hours. We do anything that requires a needle, so that includes embroidery, counted cross stitch, hand sewing and even, but rarely, knitting. We take it in turns to meet at each other's houses if you are happy to host, but you don't have to.

We are a friendly group but restricted to 6 members as when sewing you need room to manoeuvre your sewing, especially if it is on a frame and space for your bag of threads, scissors, etc. We have had spaces for 2 more members for quite a while. However, I have just discovered that the u3a website did not have my changed email address from about a year ago, so if you tried to contact me on my btinternet.com address, I would not have received it. Hopefully, that will not have deterred you from trying again. I will reply to you as soon as I can after receiving your message.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

**Anne Stephens**

**Current Affairs** "And I dreamed I saw the bombers, riding shotgun in the sky, and they were turning into butterflies, above our nation." (Joni Mitchell, 1969)

"We live in a world .... that is governed by strength, that is governed by force, that is governed by power: these are the iron laws of the world since the beginning of time." (Stephen Miller, White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy, 2026)

Do you have a view? We meet on the 3rd Tuesday of the month: details on u3a website, or email **Mick Nolan**.

**Science & Technology Group** All Harpenden u3a members are welcome to attend any of the **Science & Technology** monthly meetings. Just turn up on the day. Meetings are normally held on the third Wednesday of the month at the Plough and Harrow, 88 Southdown Road, Harpenden, AL5 1PR. Plenty of parking in the pub car park.

Check for future meetings in case the date has changed. Meetings start at 10.30am. Entrance to the meeting room is via the French doors from the rear garden.

Attendees are invited to stay on for a pub lunch from 12 noon. There is a small charge for room hire.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> April. The speaker will be group member, **Paul Spinks**, and the title is “**The organs of speech – producing and understanding natural language.**”

In the 1980s, Paul managed one of the UK’s first attempts to develop a system capable of understanding human speech. Within Edinburgh University’s Artificial Intelligence Department, the project brought together teams of programmers, linguists and engineers focusing on different tiers of language processing, namely signal processing, phonetics, morphology, lexicology, syntax, semantics and psycholinguistics. Although modern speech recognition technologies (Alexa, Siri, etc.) employ different approaches to the one followed by the Edinburgh team, the project taught Paul a lot about the science of linguistics. His talk will explain how the human body is able to produce and understand natural language.

Future meetings up to the end of November are on: 20<sup>th</sup> May, 10<sup>th</sup> June, 15<sup>th</sup> July, 19<sup>th</sup> August, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 21<sup>st</sup> October and 18<sup>th</sup> November. Any queries to group leader **Steve Gledhill**

The next **History Group** meeting will be on Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> April. The speaker will be **Gerald Cuff** who will talk about “**The Percys of Northumberland**”. It is one of the few families in Britain to preserve itself since it arrived at the time of the Norman Conquest. Various members of the family have played important roles at many stages of British history – not least in the Gunpowder Plot and the attempt to divide England and Wales into three separate kingdoms.

**Reading for Pleasure Group 1** has just discussed “**The Making of Another Major Motion Picture Masterpiece**” by **Tom Hanks**. The title of the book is wordy and most members found the book to be an exhausting slog. However, if, like me, you have no qualms about some parts, it gives a fascinating, in-depth account of the painstaking detail that goes into making a film, the prosperity filmmaking brings to a region, as well as the tedious hanging around that goes on between takes and the over-sized egos some actors have.

The **Poetry Appreciation Group** meets in Southdown and we have room for another appreciator.

Starting in 2023, we’ve discussed poets ranging from Keats to Zephaniah, Dickinson to Duffy, or found poems using themes such as Water and Seasons. The group chooses one poet or theme for the following month. Each member will then select one poem and claim it (by WhatsApp) before the next session.

We are variably 9 or 10 in the group. One by one, each member reads out their chosen poem and there's a general discussion. This might touch on subject, meaning, words, structure, the period, the poet's background. It's all very informal, concluding with a cup of tea/coffee and chat to choose the next subject. People find poems online or in their own poetry books; there's no need to buy books.

Meetings are 2 – 4pm on the last Friday of the month. Convenor: **Susan Kerr**

**Hot Issue Seminars (HIS)** follows a semi-academic process of questioning and discussing key topics of our time. Each month, a group member researches and presents a topic of their choice, while the rest of the group commits to reading papers circulated beforehand and then participating in a discussion based on evidence and reason. There is often diversity of opinion but our golden rule is to disagree agreeably.

Our 2026 programme began with a discussion on the continuing role and effectiveness of the United Nations. In spite of a lot of criticism, much of it unfair, the UN still manages to do a great amount of useful work and is a beacon of hope in our troubled times.

This was followed by a seminar examining and questioning the role of religion in the 21st century and its impact on politics. We asked where the dividing line is between freedom of religion and freedom from religious imposition. We discussed the apparent increase in religious influence over law-making and governance, whether from the Christian Right in the USA, the Strict Orthodox Jewish culture in Israel or Muslim Fundamentalism in the Middle East. Why is this happening in a world with increasing levels of educational attainment, scientific understanding and the power of evidence-based reasoning?

Our next seminar, on April 28<sup>th</sup>, will ask the question "what has happened to the middle ground in politics and how might its influence be restored?" For a variety of personal reasons, we have lost two or three members recently, so if you might be interested in joining us, please let me know. **Chris Marsden**, HIS Convenor. (Details on u3a website).

**Singing for Pleasure Group** This is one of our most popular groups and everybody leaves the sessions with big smiles on their faces. You do not need to be able to read music, just enjoy singing.

We sing a variety of songs, usually in two parts, and find that songs from musicals seem to be our favourites. Between Easter and the summer holidays, we will be meeting in the Abbeyfield Hall above the Co-op from 2pm-3pm on the following Thursday afternoons: 30<sup>th</sup> April, 28<sup>th</sup> May, 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June and 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> July.

For further information, please contact the Group Convenor, **Viv Chandler** – the details are on the website.

## List of talks arranged for 2026

Date	Speaker	Topic
April 16 <sup>th</sup>	Morgen Bailey	"An Author and Editor's journey through the Publishing Industry"
May 7 <sup>th</sup>	Peter & Moira Hart	"Reflections on Kitty Hart Moxon OBE's Story: A Holocaust and Auschwitz Survivor"
May 21 <sup>st</sup>	Alison Wall	"Plague Houses and Pandemics"
June 4 <sup>th</sup>	Alex Amos	"Weddings in Art".
June 18 <sup>th</sup>	Alison Bourke	"Tunnel Vision; Stepping Through Time"
July 2 <sup>rd</sup>	Andy Smith	Poetic Presentation
July 16 <sup>th</sup>	Ron Koorm	"Fake news or Deceiving the Enemy"
August 20 <sup>th</sup>		Summer Party at Plough and Harrow
September 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Clare Jenner	"Ageing Well"
September 17 <sup>th</sup>	Philip McKinder	"An unexpected change in the Weather"
October 1 <sup>st</sup>	Sharon Torres	"Venice H <sub>2</sub> O"
October 15 <sup>th</sup>		AGM
November 5 <sup>th</sup>	Geoff Cunnington	"A day at the British Empire Exhibition 1924"
November 19 <sup>th</sup>	Bernard Lockett	"Gilbert and Sullivan"
December 3 <sup>rd</sup>		Christmas Miscellany
December 17 <sup>th</sup>		Christmas Party

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