



September 2026 Bulletin

Most of my life since the age of four has been governed by school or university terms, so at the moment, even though everyone is still enjoying the late summer heat, my mind inevitably turns to planning what will be needed for the Autumn Term.

However, before that, I want to say a big thank you to **Barbara** and **Jan** for organising our lovely summer party at the Plough and Harrow in mid-August and to the members who helped by preparing the delicious food and for all the other help given, including clearing up afterwards. Although the first rain of the summer was forecast for that afternoon, it kept off until right at the end. I was delighted to see over 70 of our members enjoying the warm weather (not too hot, thank goodness), chatting, eating and drinking.

I am really pleased to say that we have had volunteers come forward for our committee and as long as our AGM agrees, we will have a new Membership Secretary and new committee members to help with the general running of Harpenden u3a in October. I am so pleased that they are willing to get involved.

The AGM will be held following our afternoon meeting on Thursday, 15th October, and you will receive your agenda and minutes for this around the middle of September. Looking at our Thursday afternoon calendar for the coming term, there are so many interesting topics amongst these general talks, beginning on 3rd September with our President, **Viv Chandler**, stepping into the breach left by the expected speaker pulling out. She will be repeating a talk she gave to the History Group earlier this year entitled "**Not One, Not Two but Three Sieges! How the small market town of Newark-on-Trent survived during the English Civil War**".

So enjoy our Autumn programme, the cooler days and the changing colours around us. Why not look at the group lists and see if anything new sparks your interest.

Judith Moseley
Acting Chairman

Members' News

We are delighted to welcome eight new members since July. They are:

Andrea Chapman, Dorothy Stewart, Lesley Urquhart, Pauline Pick, Nancy Fredenham, Gary Johnson, Helen Cobham and Sheila Rooke. 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 2.15pm in the Abbeyfield Hall, above the Co-op in Southdown. There is a full list of talks on the final page of this bulletin.

Please do not forget the code to enter the building. It 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.

Please note that the first talk in September is a replacement for our publicised talk.

Thursday, 3rd September

Viv Chandler will be giving a presentation on **"Not One, Not Two but Three Sieges! How the small market town of Newark-on-Trent survived during the English Civil War"**. This is a repeat of the well-received talk she gave to the History Group earlier in the year.

Thursday, 17th September

Philip McKinder's presentation is called **"An Unexpected Change in the Weather"** and is about the Lynmouth Floods of 1952.

Thursday, 1st October

A welcome return for **Sharon Torres** who, this time, is giving us a presentation on **"Venice H₂O"**.



Summer Party at the Plough & Harrow, 20th August

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/>

Are you Interested in **Architecture**? Would you like to join a new group to discuss various styles of buildings over the years, maybe with talks, lectures and local visits?

All the photos below are of buildings in St Albans. See if you can guess where they are and when they were built.



Note: If you enjoy guided tours, you will certainly enjoy the new **Architecture Group** which is planning its first guided tour on Monday, 16th November. (Put it in your diary) We shall publish further details next month. For more information, please contact the Group Coordinator, Brian Ball.

As a result of increased demand, we believe that the time has come to start a second **French Conversation Group**. The existing group is already full. These groups aim to have fun chatting in French. The level varies from slightly rusty 'O' level to fluent, but we are all eager to improve our own French and help each other to speak more fluently and confidently.

If you are interested in taking part in this new group, please contact the Group Coordinator, Brian Ball.

The last bulletin generated a lot of interest in forming a second **Scrabble Group** and we now have an active group leader. Scrabble may be a competitive game, it may test your vocabulary but it is also a friendly game, played at a friendly speed and we would welcome both beginners and experienced players to this new group.

For further information, please contact the Group Coordinator, Brian Ball.

The **Italian Conversation Group** is grateful to **Jenny Mottram**, who offered to host our July get-together. Although it was good to have a change of venue, the difficulties the group encountered navigating their way through nasty Italian verb endings were just the same! We always have fun during our sessions and really enjoy speaking this most beautiful of languages.

Contact Sharon Torres for more information.

The **German Conversation Group** is now well established, with regular members and good attendance. All manner of topics is covered as we endeavour to chat away in a language which, when spoken correctly, demands precision, concentration – and occasionally a little courage! Some members are fluent, having studied German at university or worked in the country; others find it less easy. But everyone's stress is eased when we hear the welcome tinkle of china heralding the arrival of tea and biscuits!

Contact Sharon Torres for more information.

Following July's well-attended **Science and Technology Group** meeting on a very topical subject (The Bedford Train Crash), **Peter Wharton** will be back again on September 9th this time talking about the Thameslink Upgrade Programme 1993–2018. Peter finished his career as Technical Director of Engineering, Construction and Programme Management in the Rail Sector for UK and International Programmes and Projects. His experience includes Mainline Railways, Metros (including the London Underground), and Trams. He was one of the Key Presenters on a Presentation to the House of Lords and House of Commons. He has also presented to Major City Councils/Authorities as well as many other organisations regarding major rail schemes.

The **S & T Group** has the following interesting talks lined up in the months ahead. We meet at the Plough and Harrow pub in Southdown (entry at the rear). Attendees are welcome to join us for lunch after talks.

Future talks:

- **9th September** – Thameslink Upgrade Programme 1993–2018 – Peter Wharton
- **21st October** – The Butterflies of Harpenden – Malcolm Hull
- **18th November** – The Vesuvius Challenge: Using modern technology to read ancient scrolls – Paul Spinks
- **9th December** – Xmas Lunch + Talk (The Geology of the Forties Oilfield, UK North Sea – Mike Rose)

The next **History Group** presentation is at 2.30 on **Tuesday 8th September** in the Randall Room, Harpenden Trust Hall, Southdown. All Harpenden u3a members are welcome.

The talk will be given by **Sharon Torres** and is entitled: **"Domination – Ottoman style"**.

At the height of their power, the Ottomans controlled vast territories across the Mediterranean and beyond. So, what made these elite, formidable rulers so effective – and why did Europe fear the seemingly unstoppable advance of their Islamic armies? This talk reveals the secrets behind the rise, extraordinary success and eventual demise of the Ottoman Empire.

The following History Group presentations are:

- **Tuesday 13th October: Nicky Wilcox: "Tales from the Old Bailey"**
- **Tuesday 10th November: Dishan Singh: "How African slavery was replaced with Indian indentured labour in the British Empire"**

The next **Church and Pub Group** event will be on Friday 9th October at St Paul's Walden, starting at 10:30am at All Saints Church, followed by a very short walk to the Strathmore Arms for lunch around 12 noon.

Please let **Steve Gledhill** know if you wish to attend and stay for lunch. Menu options will be sent to all attendees.

St Paul's Walden is a twenty-minute drive from Harpenden via Kimpton and Whitwell. The area is associated with the Bowes-Lyon family, especially the late Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother who attended the church – there are memorials to her. We have arranged for two local guides at the church. It promises to be an excellent outing.

You are all most welcome to the next **Current Affairs Group** meeting when we will, no doubt, be having another lively discussion about what's being reported in the world's media. It's at 2.30 on Tuesday 15th September in the Randall Room, Harpenden Trust Hall, Southdown.



The **Singing for Pleasure Group** has just celebrated its 10th anniversary. The photo is of the six remaining original singers – Jane, Sandra, Jayne, Viv, Joanna and Jean. We have now grown to over 30 members, and the sessions are great fun and full of laughter, thanks to the wonderful Joanna, our leader, accompanist and teacher! Last term, we learned songs in two-part harmony from

"Carousel" and "South Pacific". We will likely continue with these songs next term, along with some much-loved carols. Can we really be approaching Christmas again?

We will be meeting in the Abbeyfield Hall, above the Co-op, from 2pm–3pm on the following Thursdays – **24th September, 8th and 22nd October, 12th and 26th November and 10th December.**

If you would like to come along and try us out, please contact **Viv Chandler**. You will need a code (different from the normal Thursday afternoon code) to get into the building.

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

Online Learning Events

All Harpenden u3a members can access talks, workshops and courses on Zoom organised by the National u3a at no extra cost.

These events are led by members with a passion or talent to share and sometimes by specialist guest speakers. To find out more, please go to: u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/educational-events

During September, the subjects include:

- **Reaching for the Stars, NASA's early days**
- **Wild, edible autumn seeds**
- **Triumph to Trauma (940–1042) Danes before the Normans**
- **Laughter Yoga**
- **Drones huh? What are they good for? Discussion**
- **Faith & Gratitude (In the World Faith Series)**
- **Introduction to Cryptic Crosswords**
- **The History of Personal Hygiene**
- **Mindfulness & Meditation Series**
- **Punk in the 1970s**
- **Secrets of the Human Brain: Sleep & Dreams**
- **Promoting Brain Health – from evidence to action**
- **AI News September: Four years of AI Chatbots**

Book Recommendations

The main u3a website has reported from six u3a reading groups across the UK, each recommending a book for summer reading. I'm always on the lookout for new book suggestions. Perhaps our own three book groups could share one or two of their favourite reads for our next bulletin. Here are the recommended books:

- **Remarkably Bright Creatures** by Shelby Van Pelt (Bakewell u3a Book Group)
- **Seven Sisters** by Lucinda Riley (Shimna u3a Book Group)

- **The Fortnight in September** by R C Sheriff (Hungerford & District u3a Book Group)
- **The Leopard** by Tomasi de Lampedusa (Hay u3a Book Group)
- **After Midnight** by Irmgard Keun (Newcastle u3a Novels in Translation Group)
- **The Shadow in the Wind** by Carlos Ruiz Zafón (u3a Office Book Club)

List of talks arranged for 2026/27

Date	Speaker	Topic
September 3 rd	Viv Chandler	"Not One, Not Two but Three Sieges! How the small market town of Newark-on-Trent survived during the English Civil War".
September 17 th	Philip McKinder	"An unexpected change in the Weather"
October 1 st	Sharon Torres	"Venice H ₂ O"
October 15 th		Talk on the Harpenden Trust prior to the AGM
November 5 th	Geoff Cunnington	"A day at the British Empire Exhibition 1924"
November 19 th	Bernard Lockett	"Gilbert and Sullivan"
December 3 rd		Christmas Miscellany
December 17 th		Christmas Party
January 7 th	Steve French	"Walking the Camino in Spain"
January 21 st	Bill Lindsay	"William Schaw Lindsay – from orphan cabin boy to shipping tycoon; the story of a Victorian entrepreneur"
February 4 th	Co-op Legal Team	"Tax, Care and Toy Boys"
February 18 th	Duncan Hess	"The Man from Auntie – BBC"
March 4 th	Martin Attridge	"Hogarth – The artist"
March 18 th	Simon Bailes	"The History of Sea Shanties"

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