



## October 2026 Bulletin

I was at a meeting of our u3a Committee last week and the subject turned to how many groups we now have in Harpenden, which Brian Ball, who looks after our groups, was telling us is now thirty-six. This month two new groups are being put together, an Architecture Group and a second French Conversation Group.

I have to say it never ceases to surprise me how our numbers grow every single month. We now have 335 members and, I believe from conversations I have had with members, that a large proportion of these new people try Harpenden u3a because one of you has recommended us to them. This was confirmed today when I was at a birthday party and I was sitting next to a member of a different u3a who asked what I thought our secret to being so successful was. I could only say that we have such an enthusiastic, knowledgeable and friendly body of members, and that is what makes our membership grow month on month. Thank you. Long may it continue!

**Judith Moseley**  
Acting Chairman

### Members' News

We are delighted to welcome five new members since July. They are: **Steve Larkins, Lucinda Coleman, Jan Seager, Mary Ann Colledge, and Ann Cox.** We look forward to meeting you and trust 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.

- **Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> October** – A representative of the **Harpenden Trust** will give us a talk on the very worthwhile services they provide to all of us who live in Harpenden. This will be followed by our **AGM**.
- **Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> November** – **Geoff Cunnington**, one of our own members, will talk on 'Palaces, Pavilions and Amusements: A Day at the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley, 1924'.

## 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 **Church and Pub Group** event on Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> October will start at All Saints Church, St Paul's Walden at 10:30am, followed by lunch at the Strathmore Arms. We have a few places still – all are welcome. Please let Brian Ball know if you wish to attend.

St Paul's Walden is a twenty-minute drive from Harpenden. We have arranged for two local guides at the church. It promises to be an excellent occasion.

**Walking Group 2** is now up and running, and we have already had three enjoyable walks. New members will be very welcome. Our walks are from four to six miles in the local area every fourth Monday morning, and the next is on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October. If you would like further information, please contact the Group Leader using the **Group Contact Details** on the website (see above).

The new **Arts & Crafts Group** has been meeting weekly since July. There is a huge diversity of talent: watercolours, marquetry, acrylics, decoupage, pastels, appliqué, crochet, collage, colouring, knitting and drawing. To say everyone loves it is an understatement! Some members are working on projects they haven't touched for twenty years...

This drop-in group is still open to new members. So, if you would like to spend two hours on a Monday morning being creative in a tranquil, welcoming atmosphere, please get in touch via the [Groups](#) page on the website.



The group meets every Monday from 10.30am to 12.30pm (except when the group leader is on holiday). Parking isn't generally a problem. Unfortunately, the venue is not suitable for wheelchairs or artists who are allergic or averse to cats!

The **French Conversation Group** continues to meet once a month. We always find lots to chat about and discuss after watching a short video by a native French speaker.

Recent topics include phrases for travellers to France, favourite films, the Tour de France, setting a table for a dinner party, daily life for Parisians, our own activities and creating imaginary stories from random sentences.

The waiting list for the French Conversation group has prompted us to start a **second French Conversation Group**, which will hold its first meeting in October. For further information, please contact **Brian Ball**.

The waiting list for the **Creative Writing Group** is getting longer. We are, therefore, considering starting a second group. If you would like to share your short stories or poems with us (no need to be an experienced writer), please contact **Brian Ball** for further information.

**Anne Stephens**, Leader of the **Needlecraft Group**, is pleased to report that the Group is now up to its full capacity of six members. Unfortunately, it would be difficult to have more members, as you need elbow room when sewing and we have found that six is the ideal number. There was talk of starting another group but there has never been enough interest. If this would be of interest to you, please contact **Brian Ball**.

The **Reading for Pleasure Group 2** is currently reading 'A Wild Sheep Chase' by Haruki Murakami. **Nicola Wilcox**, the Group Leader reports: "This is a strange, hypnotic novel; part detective fiction, part comedy, ending in a tale of possession. It tells the story of a drifting Tokyo copywriter who is sent on a surreal quest to find a sheep with a star-shaped mark on its back, leading him into encounters with eccentric figures, telepathic girlfriends, and the enigmatic Sheep Man".

The **Science and Technology Group's** October meeting will be held on Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> October and will feature **Malcolm Hull** talking about **The Butterflies of Harpenden**. Malcolm is Chair of the Herts & Middlesex Branch of Butterfly Conservation, a charity which is devoted to saving butterflies, moths and their habitats throughout the UK. Butterflies are in trouble, but there are still over thirty different species in and around Harpenden. Malcolm will introduce them and describe local recording and habitat management initiatives, including how many species can be attracted into parks and gardens. Future meetings of the **Science and Technology Group**:

- 18<sup>th</sup> November – The Vesuvius Challenge: Using modern technology to read ancient scrolls – **Paul Spinks**
- 9<sup>th</sup> December – Xmas Lunch – Gustav Eiffel: Beyond the Tower – **Sharon Torres**
- 13<sup>th</sup> January – The 5-degree temperature difference between Heaven & Hell – the case for cooling in deep mines – **Frank von Glehn**
- 10<sup>th</sup> February – A deep dive into the dangerous chemical, Dihydrogen Monoxide – **Mike Pearson**

As ever, all meetings commence at 10:30am and will be held in the conservatory of the Plough & Harrow, which is accessed via the car park at the rear of the building.

There has been a lot of interest from members in the proposed new **Architecture Group**. It is planned to have regular monthly meetings, with the first one scheduled for Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November, probably in the morning. **Diana Brimblecombe** will lead a short walk around several interesting buildings in Harpenden, followed by a coffee break at the end to discuss the way forward, dates and meeting venues. As a taster, do you recognise these Harpenden buildings, which will be included in the first walk entitled 'Ancient to Modern'?



Future meetings will be on a variety of topics to do with architecture over the ages, and will be a mixture of visits, discussions and talks, all given by members of the group.

If you have not already said you are interested in the new group and would like to join the list, then please contact **Brian Ball**.

Our next **History Group** presentation is at 2.30pm on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October in the Randall Room, Harpenden Trust Hall, Southdown.

The talk will be given by **Nicky Wilcox** and is entitled: "**Tales from the Old Bailey**". It will be about *The Proceedings of the Old Bailey* website, which contains information about the nearly 200,000 trials held there between 1674 and 1913 with accounts of the lives of executed criminals.

On Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> November: **Dishan Singh** will give a presentation on: "**How African slavery was replaced with Indian indentured labour in the British Empire**".

Then on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December we'll be having our **Christmas Quiz**, hosted by Malcolm Rainbow and Mick Nolan.

And if you're interested in the history that is being made today, you're welcome to attend our **Current Affairs Group**, which meets at 2.30pm on Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> October in the Randall Room, Harpenden Trust Hall, Southdown.

## Online Learning Events

All Harpenden u3a members can access free talks, workshops and courses on Zoom organised by the National u3a. 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](https://u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/educational-events)

During October, the subjects include:

- Bruce Springsteen and the American Dream
- Music, Imagination and the late 60s–early 70s
- Introducing AI and AI in Scotland
- Your Guide to Feeling Connected in a Digital World
- Laughter Yoga
- Mindfulness and Meditation Series continuation
- Keeping Warm and Cutting Energy Bills – practical advice and support
- Cryptic Crosswords for Beginners (six sessions starting 3rd November, registration closes 15th October)
- David Hockney as I knew him (by Peter Webb, a friend of Hockney since 1970 and the author of the first biography of DH)
- Delivered to Your Door – the complexities of efficient parcel delivery
- The US Constitution vs Unitary Executive Power
- Secrets of the Human Brain – behaviour and personality
- Art Deco Days
- The History of Pirate Radio
- Preparing for an AI World
- Soulsville USA Series – The History and Legacy of Stax Records (series of four talks)

## List of talks arranged for 2026/27

(Changes in Bold)

| Date                      | Speaker            | Topic                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October 15 <sup>th</sup>  |                    | Talk on the Harpenden Trust prior to the AGM.                                                                                                                        |
| November 5 <sup>th</sup>  | Geoff Cunnington   | "Palaces, Pavilions and Amusements: A Day at the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley, 1924'.                                                                          |
| November 19 <sup>th</sup> | <b>Tim Perkins</b> | <b>Tim Perkins of Midshires Search &amp; Rescue will be talking about their work as the lowland rescue organisation which covers Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.</b> |
| December 3 <sup>rd</sup>  |                    | Christmas Miscellany.                                                                                                                                                |
| December 17 <sup>th</sup> |                    | Christmas Party.                                                                                                                                                     |
| January 7 <sup>th</sup>   | Steve French       | "Walking the Camino in Spain".                                                                                                                                       |
| January 21 <sup>st</sup>  | Bill Lindsay       | "William Schaw Lindsay – from orphan cabin boy to shipping tycoon; the story of a Victorian entrepreneur".                                                           |
| February 4 <sup>th</sup>  | Co-op Legal Team   | "Tax, Care and Toy Boys".                                                                                                                                            |
| February 18 <sup>th</sup> | Duncan Hess        | "The Man from Auntie – BBC".                                                                                                                                         |
| March 4 <sup>th</sup>     | Martin Attridge    | "Hogarth – The artist".                                                                                                                                              |
| March 18 <sup>th</sup>    | Simon Bailes       | "The History of Sea Shanties".                                                                                                                                       |

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