November 2026 Bulletin

This month I wanted to thank all of you who attended the AGM back in mid-October. It was lovely to receive so much support and encouragement from so many members. We are lucky that some of you have come forward this year to join the committee. We have gained the help of Carolyn Beecham, Ako Burima and Diana Brimblecombe and as we have already had our first committee meeting, new responsibilities have been shared amongst them. I am certain you will get to know them over the coming months.

Sadly, at the AGM we had to accept the retirement of Alan Thomas, our Membership Secretary. Personally, I will miss his organisational skills and his kindness. He has given so much time to Harpenden u3a and we will miss him. We are delighted that Ako Burima has offered to take over.

Finally, as you know, our new membership year started on November 1st and we are happy to report that there will be no increase in our subscription fees this year. However, if you have not yet paid this year's fees, please could you wait until you receive an email from us, which will contain a new email address for your subscriptions. Please don't worry if you have already paid, as we can deal with this.

So, we start a new Harpenden u3a year and we couldn't do it without all of you!

Judith Moseley
Chairman

Members' News

Alan Thomas, who has been our Membership Secretary for over 10 years (at first, with his late wife, Joyce) has decided it is time to retire. Alan has been a welcoming presence for all new members and we will miss him greatly. We presented him with a food hamper after the AGM as a token of our appreciation.

"We wish to send our congratulations to **Pauline Milner**, who will celebrate her 100th birthday on 1st December. Pauline was an active member of Harpenden u3a for many, many years, resigning in 2022 when she was no longer mobile enough to attend meetings. Her daughter, **Mary Butcher**, is still a member and regularly attends Thursday afternoon meetings."

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.
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.

Thursday, 5th November - Geoff Cunnington, one of our own members, will talk on 'Palaces, Pavilions and Amusements: A Day at the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley, 1924'.
Thursday, 19th November – Tim Perkins of Midshires Search and Rescue will talk about their work as the lowland rescue organisation covering Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.
Thursday, 3rd December – Christmas Miscellany
Thursday, 17th December – Christmas Party

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

Architecture Group There has been plenty of interest in the new Architecture Group. There will be monthly meetings which will be a mixture of visits, presentations by members and lectures about the history and styles of architecture over the centuries. Depending on numbers, the venue may be in one of the Harpenden Trust rooms, but can be discussed at the first meeting. This first meeting is planned for Monday 16th November, meeting at 10.30 at Harpenden War Memorial when there will be a short Harpenden walk entitled "Ancient to Modern". This will be followed at 11.15 by a discussion of the programme over a cup of coffee at Bennetts

Arts and Crafts Group This group continues to have fun almost every Monday! To quote Dr Julia F Christensen (a research neuroscientist), "For cognitive wellbeing we all need to spend time in the flow state, when total absorption in a task banishes anxiety. Neurologically, entering the flow state reduces activity in the self-monitoring prefrontal cortex regions of our brain and promotes deep focus and long-term psychological wellbeing. It gets rid of clutter in the brain." So, if you have been hoarding clutter in your brain and are keen to explore the flow state, please join us.

French Conversation Group 1 had lots to talk about at our October meeting. The topic was "Drinks", which kept us chatting for a long time about French wines, pastis, North African mint tea customs, Breton-style Americanos, Saudi "champagne", and cassis. The topic led us on to discuss traditions in French speaking and other countries. We also watched an Easy French video about train travel from Paris to Brussels, then reminisced about our own travels by train. Our hostess kindly provided us with tea and French biscuits.

We were delighted to learn that a **Second French Conversation Group** has just been formed. “Nos meilleurs voeux et amusez-vous bien!"

German Conversation Group This group meets at Sharon’s house from 2.30pm until 4.00pm on the last Tuesday of the month. If you are a u3a member and enjoy the challenge of working out “Zusammengesetzte Wörter” (literally, put-together words), then come and join us. For details contact Sharon Torres.

History Group The next presentation is at 2.30pm on Tuesday 10th November in the Randall Room, Harpenden Trust Hall, Southdown. **Dishan Singh** will be talking about: **“How African slavery was replaced with Indian indentured labour in the British Empire”**. He’ll also be looking at why there are Indian communities in so many countries around the globe and how Indian indentured labour changed the host countries, helped promote the Indian independence movement and changed the British Empire.

And for those of you interested in the history that is being made today, you’re welcome to attend our **Current Affairs Group**, which meets the following Tuesday (17th November) same time, same place.

Italian Conversation Group This group meets at Sharon’s house from 3pm until 4.30pm on the last Monday of the month. If you are a u3a member and would like to parlare un po’ with the locals on your next visit to Italy, come and join us. For details contact Sharon Torres.

Play Reading Group They meet every month to enjoy a variety of plays. Mysteries and dramas appear amongst their selection, but most are comedies. Farce is usually visual – so reading that the characters keep turning up in the wrong place (usually someone else’s bedroom) can get more confusing than amusing. Alan Aykbourn wrote lots of good comedies for amateur players, with plausible characters and dialogue, so they often return to these. They are interspersed with more classical authors. The group is keen, but is limited in number by space, as we meet in one another’s homes.

Reading for Pleasure Group 1 This group continues to meet in members' houses to read books from the library selection.

They are currently reading "Air" by John Boyne. This is a slender book but packed full of emotions and problems that have lingered on from a problematic adolescence. It should lead to a lively discussion.

Reading for Pleasure Group 2 This month the group is reading a Cold War spy novel called “Gabriel’s Moon” by William Boyd. This is the thrilling first book in a trilogy set in 1960s London. The central character, Gabriel Dax uncovers political conspiracies and long-buried secrets from his own past, in a story that explores memory, identity and betrayal.

Reading for Pleasure Group 3 This group has been running since October 2024 and has eight members. Each member takes a turn hosting the discussion at their own home on the second Tuesday morning of each month. **Jane Leek** is the group leader. Book choices are wide and varying and this year have included two novels by Tan Wang Eng, a Malaysian author and winner of the Man Asian Literary Prize. The group has also enjoyed some Margaret Atwood and Maja Lunde. To get in the festive spirit and to enjoy some Dickens members will soon appreciate the wonderful story that is ‘A Christmas Carol’.

Saturday Strollers meet every week at a different pub at 10.30am and stroll for 2-3 miles around the local area. Lunch is at the same pub at 12.30pm. They have about 10 different routes to choose from within 5-10 miles of Harpenden. They can take a maximum of 12 members for lunch but more can join for the stroll beforehand.

Scrabble Group 1 has two Scrabble boards now with a special retentive surface on which the tiles rest more securely. This is very convenient, as even a slight jog on the table could send the whole game into chaos.
Our games are not seriously competitive – indeed, we help each other out when one gets stuck. Yes, a player can put all her tiles back into the bag and start again if she wants, but that can feel like a defeat.
Our pleasure comes from players contributing their linguistic knowledge and co-operating within the rules to ensure everyone enjoys themselves. We meet in each other’s homes once a fortnight.

Science and Technology This group’s most recent meeting heard **Malcolm Hull** (Chair of the Herts & Middlesex Branch of Butterfly Conservation) give an excellent talk on 'Butterflies in Harpenden', covering species, habitats, conservation efforts, and ways to support them in your own garden. We are now investigating the possibility of organising a guided 'butterfly spotting' walk in Heartwood Forest in summer 2027.

November's talk (18th Nov) will be **"The Vesuvius Challenge: Using modern technology to read ancient scrolls"** by one of our members, **Paul Spinks**. And on 9th December, **Sharon Torres** will talk about **"Gustav Eiffel: Beyond the Tower".**

Sharon's talk will be followed by our Xmas lunch. Anyone wishing to attend the lunch must pay a non-refundable £5 deposit to our Treasurer, Frank von Glehn.

You can access our meetings at the Plough & Harrow via the car park at the rear of the building. Doors open 10:15, talks start at 10:45.

Online Learning Events

Below is a list of the online talks arranged by the National u3a for the next month and available free to all members. You can find more details about them at: u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/educational-events

During November, the subjects include:

- Staying Safe Online
- Exploring World Faiths – Faith and Interfaith
- Auracast: an audio streaming technology that could help the hard of hearing
- Mindlefulness & Meditation
- Screening to Prevent Stroke: do we do too much or too little
- Laughter Yoga
- Shaping Fashion: The Elizabethan bodice, buckram and busks
- Future Lives – Thinking ahead: housing, care & support options in later life
- The Ultimate Guide to Editing your Creative Writing
- Learn about the House of Lords
- AI News: Ethical aspects of AI in public services and the need for a code of ethics
- Learn Bridge
- Memoir Writing in 12 Easy Steps
- The Life and Work of the poet, Charles Causley (1917-2003)
- The Bayeux Tapestry: Embroidery or Fabrication

List of talks arranged for 2026/27

(Updates in **Bold**)

Date	Speaker	Topic
November 5th	Geoff Cunnington	"Palaces, Pavilions and Amusements: A Day at the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley, 1924'.
November 19th	Tim Perkins	Tim Perkins of Midshires Search & Rescue will be talking about their work as the lowland rescue organisation which covers Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.
December 3rd		Christmas Miscellany.
December 17th		Christmas Party.
January 7th	Steve French	"Walking the Camino in Spain".
January 21st	Bill Lindsay	"William Schaw Lindsay – from orphan cabin boy to shipping tycoon; the story of a Victorian entrepreneur".
February 4th	Co-op Legal Team	"Tax, Care and Toy Boys".
February 18th	Duncan Hess	"The Man from Auntie – BBC".
March 4th	Martin Attridge	"Hogarth - The artist".
March 18th	Simon Bailes	"The History of Sea Shanties".
April 1st	**Hugh Pickford-White**	**"An AI Optimist"**
April 15th	**Murray Craig**	**"The City of London Livery Companies"**
May 6th	**Martin Orkin**	**"60's Music, the History of the Beatles"**
May 20th	**John Kinory**	**"My Life and Times as a Film Extra"**
June 3rd	**Adam Smith**	**"The Rothschilds and the Vale of Aylesbury"**

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