



April 2024 Newsletter

1. Chairman's report

I am pleased to be writing to all members in this April Newsletter. As of early March, our u3a has 250 current members, a considerable increase up from 216 at the end of last year.

We also have 4 new members in March, so I would like to give them all a very warm welcome. Their names are listed in the Members news below. I have had the opportunity to ring the new members and welcome them to the u3a.

A key matter that I think is helping to assist in the rise of our numbers, is the increase in the number of Groups that are being offered by the Harpenden u3a. This helps to provide interest in an increasing range of subjects. There are currently three new Groups in prospect: a new Needlecraft Group; a Crossword Group and a third Book Group. Also there is an interest in the possibility of organising a Theatre Group.

I hope also that both new and existing members are pleased that our u3a has talks on the first and third Thursdays of each month. I recently circulated to all members, a complete list of talks being given to both our Member and Speaker meetings that have been held, or are to be held in 2024. Only 1 date is yet to be filled!

We hope that the range of topics being presented are varied and interesting.

It would be helpful, for members of the u3a, to let me or members of the committee know if they wished to give members talks, or any views they have on the subjects they would like discussed.

2. April Dates for the Diary

I am pleased to confirm the two talks that we have in April. The first is the Members event on April 4th at 2.15. There is to be an innovative joint presentation between members of the Art Appreciation Group and the History Group. 7 members from the two Groups, will each talk about a painting and the history associated with it. We hope that this will be an enjoyable event and one that can be repeated.

On 18th April at 2.15, the Speaker talk is by Anne Luder, with the title 'The Plants of the Passover Plate'. For over 20 years, Anne has specialised in providing Therapeutic Horticulture for people with severe disabilities. She also worked as a Garden Designer. She is still working as a landscape and horticultural consultant.

3. Members' News

As mentioned above, we welcomed 4 new members in March:

- Jon Sanders
- David Abernethy
- Carol Cuthbertson
- Haldena Roberts

We hope that they enjoy their membership of this u3a.

We also continue to send good wishes to David Collins, Group Leader of the Science and Technology Group, who remains in hospital after breaking his leg very badly earlier in the year. We are all grateful to Steve Gledhill for looking after the Group in David's absence. A photograph of the Science and Technology Group is contained within this Newsletter.

Our best wishes also go to any members who are unwell at this time.

Roger

4. New Groups

Cryptic Crossword Group

Solving cryptic crossword is very popular among u3a members. There are more than 120 u3a crossword groups in the U.K.

Harpenden u3a intend to start its first cryptic crossword group. The group objective is to have fun learning how to solve cryptic clues and to understand the "cryptic language" used by setters, I/We shall cater for both beginners and experienced members.

Solving puzzles is challenging but is also very satisfying.

And you don't have to solve puzzles on your own.

If you would like to join the Harpenden u3a Cryptic Crossword group or want more information, please contact **Brian Ball**, Group Coordinator.

Reading for Pleasure 3

The new Reading for Pleasure group will hold its first group meeting on 9th April 2024. Following discussions between group members it was decided that they will not be expected to read the same books.

Group members will each bring a book of their own choice to the meeting. These books will become the focus for discussion. We will learn about many books that we otherwise may not consider reading. Members will recommend genres (biography, history or romance, for example), book series and favourite classic and children's books. Non-fiction will be welcomed and at Christmas the theme could be your favourite Christmas story.

For further information contact **Jane Leek**, group leader.

5. Existing Groups

Book Group 2

One of our members, Nicky Wilcox, has commented that she is enjoying the book club as it gives a reason to read a book recommended by the group which she wouldn't have chosen otherwise. She said, "I have enjoyed reading these books and have found the discussions interesting and enlightening. It's fascinating to discover how other readers interpret the texts and their views are informative and thoughtful."

We have twelve members which is the maximum membership to allow free discussion, but a third group is being created as you can read elsewhere.

The last book we read was the classic 'All Quiet on the Western Front' by Erich Maria Remarque. Surprisingly many group members had not read this infamous anti-war novel. It is poignant, heartrending and emotional and is considered to be the most read of Anti-war literature. "Everyone should read it".

Current Affairs

If you have an interest in current affairs, please feel free to join us. We discuss local, national and international issues. We also discuss a "big question" each month. April's is: "Does the distinction between left wing and right wing mean anything these days?"

Our next meeting is on the 16th April (as usual the 3rd Tuesday of the month) in the Randall Room at the Harpenden Trust Hall in Southdown. Doors open at 2.15 pm for setting up. We start the meeting at 2.30 and end at 4.00.

Further info from **Mick Nolan**.

German Conversation

The very first meeting of the German Conversation Group took place on 8th March. Due to flooding that day, not everyone was able to make it to the venue. Of the eight people who registered an interest in joining the group, just three made it. We spent, however, a delightful couple of hours, chatting about our experiences of German cities in, well, understandable Deutsch. We are extremely lucky to have Mrs Marianne Hamilton as a group member as she is a native German speaker.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place at 2.30pm on 8th April. Precise details will be confirmed by email. If you would like to be added to the list, please contact Sharon Torres, Group Leader.

Danke.

History Group

The next meeting of the History Group will be on Tuesday, 9th April at 2.30 in the Randall Room of the Harpenden Trust Hall.

The presentation on that day will be given by Derek Morris, on the subject of 'Captain Cook's Voyages'. As usual, there will be a £1 charge towards the cost of the room hire.

We have decided to make the start of the room hire commence from 2.00, both to allow more time for attendees who come early to the talk, but also to assist the members who have to set up the equipment required. This will not affect the time of finish. For further information, please contact Roger Thompson.

Roger

Latin Group

Salvete! The Latin group is now on Chapter VI of our Minimus course book! We've had a lot of fun reviving our knowledge of nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs, lingering over word derivations and comparisons with other languages. We have even listened to Morgan Freeman reciting a Latin love poem (on YouTube)!

Shona

Needlecraft Group 1

We continue to meet on the 1st and 4th Wednesdays of the month, where we all carry on with our respective projects and catch up on each other's news while we sew or knit.

Unfortunately we cannot take more people but would recommend anyone else interested to join the new group being set up.

Anne Stephens, Group Leader

Play Reading Group

The Play Reading Group now numbers nine members, some with theatrical experience, others with an interest in theatre or a desire to catch up on 'things not seen'.

We enjoyed Noel Coward's Hay Fever, then in March The Mousetrap by Agatha Christie. Did we remember the surprise ending? Some did, most didn't. In April we will return to the prolific pen of Alan Ayckbourn for a treat with Absent Friends.

Meetings take place in the homes of members. Performing Arts Library supplies our choice of play sets from its stock and delivers them to Harpenden Library for us to collect.

Joyce Bunting and Judith Moseley

Science and Technology Group

Meetings are normally held on the third Wednesday of the month at the Plough and Harrow in Southdown. Meetings start at 10:30 am. Everyone is welcome regardless of whether or not they have a scientific background. Please check for dates as they occasionally have to change due to meeting room availability.

Future meetings in the next few months will cover such diverse topics as Sugar, Science on Captain Cook's Voyages, The James Webb Space Telescope and 'Passivhaus project' – design of ultra-low energy buildings that require little energy for heating or cooling. Later in the year we plan to cover climate change, earth observation satellites exploring minerals and oil and the history of wireless. After the formal meeting we stay on for a chat and optional snack lunch.

Steve

Science and Technology group meeting...



Singing for Pleasure

The Singing for Pleasure group is very enjoyable with about 30 members signed up. We meet on a Thursday afternoon in the Trust Hall from 2 to 3pm and sing a variety of music in two parts, the most popular songs being from musicals.

Our dates for the summer term are:

- 11th and 25th April
- 9th and 23rd May
- 13th and 27th June

If you are interested in joining us, please contact **Viv Chandler**.

Walking Group

We've been blessed with fine, mild weather for both our March outings. We've enjoyed the spaciousness of the huge fields north-west of Redbourn; the beautiful views of the Lea valley from the footpaths leading to Wheathampstead; and had good conversation along the way. There is still too much mud in places, but we hope that, with advancing Spring – and judicious choice of routes – we'll be less troubled by that from now on.

Further information from **Hugh Fricker**.

Weekday Strollers

After a couple of strolls in the winter, we had hoped to return to more regular outings approximately every two or three weeks, but the wet weather has prevented this with the ground being very muddy and slippery underfoot. Hopefully, the weather will soon improve so the ground can dry out. We walk in the mornings on varying days of the week to try and suit everybody – the distance being from one to three miles in the local area. We usually finish at a café or pub for refreshments, but this is not always possible.

Further information from **Viv Chandler**.