

# HARPENDEN u3a GROUP NEWS

September 2023

## Art Appreciation Group

The popular Art Appreciation group continues to meet monthly on a Wednesday afternoon and recently Canaletto and Vermeer have been amongst the artists studied. Please contact **Pat Jaques** for further information on 01582 713166. You will find an appreciation of Vermeer written by Pat in the September Newsletter.



## Bus Pass Trips

Thanks to Group Leader, **Pat Jackson's** efficiency, the Bus Pass Group has enjoyed several days out this summer. They have travelled as far afield as Hitchin, Cassiobury Park, Rickmansworth, Bedford as well as St Albans to stroll around the lake and visit the wonderful 'Threads Through Creation' exhibition. If you want to be added to the Bus Pass Group's mailing list, **Pat's** contact no is 07811 717738,

## Church and Pub Group

Our latest outing was to delightful St Mary's, Redbourn. Most of us were ashamed to say that despite it being so close, we had not set foot in it before. And what a delight it was. We had a splendid guide who involved us all in the story of the history of the church. We finished the visit off with a delicious lunch at The Cricketers on the Common. For further information on this group, please contact **Roger Fox** on 07768 695916.

## Climate Change Group

There are so many subjects for the Climate Change Group to talk about but recently it has been concentrating on the development and use of hydrogen for power. **Pat Jacques**, the Group Leader reports:

"This is very topical just now. There are two problems with hydrogen; it is the smallest atom and difficult to contain, the other is it is unstable in the sense that it is explosive. It can be safely transported by mixing it with ammonia.

"One of the positive outcomes of hydrogen power is that the emissions are water only. I imagine several university departments are working together with industry on the best ways to exploit the benefits of hydrogen. It just has to be the future."

The meetings are held at 7 Coleridge Court, Milton Road, Harpenden on the third Wednesday of the month at 2pm. Further information from **Pat** at 01582 713166.

There is a longer article by Pat on Hydrogen Power for Transport in the September Newsletter.

## Creative Writing

**Brian Ball**, the Group Leader writes: "The creative writing group continues to increase in numbers.

In the past few sessions, we've heard stories based purely on imagination, radio plays about crowded trains, mother-daughter relationships, immigration, a wise old owl and many more. We've also heard stories based on fact and it was surprising how many members had met the late Queen during their younger days.

Currently, we are all writing stories based on songs recorded by the Kinks. The next group meeting will certainly be interesting!"

Further information on the group from **Brian Ball** on 07751 667551.

## Current Affairs

**Mick Nolan**, the new leader of this group has sent the following:

"Are you interested in current affairs? Do you want to share views on anything from the number of coffee shops in Harpenden to whether you think the Chinese government really is a threat to the UK?"

We discuss local, national and international issues, and the influences and ideas that inform our views.

You're welcome to join us: to listen, to join in the conversation, and to tell us about any research you do on issues you have a particular interest in.

We meet on the 3rd Tuesday of the month in the Randall Room at the Harpenden Trust Hall in Southdown. Doors open at 2.15. We start the meeting at 2.30 and end by 4.00. Further info from **Mick Nolan** at [micknolangalway@btinternet.com](mailto:micknolangalway@btinternet.com)."

## Exploring London Group

Not for the want of trying, we haven't managed a trip to London in the past few months. We have been thwarted at every turn by accidents, illness, operations, train strikes and emergency rail works.

As soon as the railway system settles down a little, Colin Oakes is ready and waiting to take us on the planned walk around Woolwich that has already been postponed twice.

To be added to the emailing list for this group, please contact **Roger Thompson** at [rogercthompson1940@gmail.com](mailto:rogercthompson1940@gmail.com)

## Family History

Our Family History group is always happy to welcome both newcomers to the hobby and those with more experience. When a new member joins us we are always delighted as we learn so much from each other's experiences and we enjoy helping one another. We are particularly interested in social history as it plays such an important role in our ancestors' lives and decisions.

These days it is necessary to have access to a computer, laptop or tablet to take advantage of the vast array of records now online. It's amazing how much technology has changed in just the past 20-25 years!

To learn more about our group, please contact **Viv Chandler** at [viv.vchandler@gmail.com](mailto:viv.vchandler@gmail.com).

## History Group

The History Group has changed significantly over the past year. One of the main achievements has been the increase in the number of group members who now make presentations. In the current year's programme, for example, seven History Group members are making presentations, ensuring that a range of contributions and approaches to history can be achieved. I hope that this will continue to be a feature of the History Group and that more members feel able to make presentations; we could also have two topics at a meeting so these could be accommodated.

There has also been a range of topics and attention is made to ensure that talks are varied and not dominated by particular branches of history and I hope this approach will continue. Attendance of members has in general been high and again we very much want this to continue. There is a full programme of events for 2023, and some events for 2024 have already been planned and confirmed.

On **September 12th**, **Eric Midwinter** will talk on the subject of 'Hitler and Others: A Study of Dictatorships'.

The October History Group meeting on Tuesday **10th October** is a presentation by **Malcolm Rainbow** with the subject of 'James the Second and William of Orange'.

All meetings are at 2.30 in the Randall Room at the Harpenden Trust Halls. Further information from Roger Thompson at [rogercthompson1940@gmail.com](mailto:rogercthompson1940@gmail.com).

## Local History

Group Leader, **Paul Gardiner**, writes "The Local History group meets on the third Wednesday of the month at 2.15pm and has room for a few new members. Recent discussions have been the Romans in Harpenden and Frank Salisbury. The August meeting looked at the Harpenden Oval. We are always open to suggestions for new topics but have covered Harpenden Common, Harpenden houses and shops, Harpenden names and population growth, Jarvis and Hodgson, Made in Harpenden, Harpenden Ghosts, Harpenden Schools. If you wish more information, please email me at [paul.gardiner@gmail.com](mailto:paul.gardiner@gmail.com) with the heading Local history.

## MahJong Group

The MahJong group, currently with 22 members, continues to meet weekly, even all through the summer months, in a room at the Salvation Army Hall. Sadly, we feel we can't accommodate any new members for the time being, but **Penny** is always happy to put would-be players, whether beginners or experienced players, on a waiting list with a view to being contacted for a teaching session sometime in the future.

We play strictly British/u3a rules on the first Wednesday of the month and use a sheet of extended special hands to be played along with basic '4 pungs and a pair' for the other sessions. Further info from: **Penny Turnbull**, 01582 766824, 07816 031714, [turn17sal@aol.com](mailto:turn17sal@aol.com)



## Needlecraft Group

One of our most popular Harpenden u3a members, **Norma Windle**, is 92 and she has made this wonderful timeline sampler charting her life and depicts many of the events, both personal and national, to tell her story. Amazing and what fine work, Norma, your eyesight must be excellent. Norma designed the sampler herself with some later input from her grandchildren.

The rest of the group have been carrying on with their own projects. They have been meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month in members' homes. Unfortunately, they do not have room for more members but Judith Moseley is starting

a second Needlecraft group imminently. So, if you wish to join them, please contact Judith at [judithmoseley@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:judithmoseley@hotmail.co.uk) or on 07593 579415.

## Reading Group 1

**Jean Rapier**, the Group Leader, reports: "We have recently read **"The Magician"** by Colm Toibin. It was a fascinating fictional biography of the German writer Thomas Mann, whose wife was of Jewish heritage. The arrival of Hitler forced him, his wife and eventually his whole family to flee to Switzerland and then the USA. When McCarthyism swept the USA, they retreated back to Switzerland. Another book we have read is **"Songbirds"** by Christy Lefteri, which weaves a story around the treatment of maids from the Philippines in Cyprus.



We shall shortly be discussing “**One August Night**” by Victoria Hislop, which is loosely based on the repercussions when a cure is found for leprosy and the inhabitants of the local leper colony on Spinalonga are returned to mainland Crete.”

Unfortunately, this group cannot take any more members, so if you want to discuss books with others interested in reading, then I suggest you join.....

## Reading Group 2

The Harpenden u3a second book group has around ten members, an equal mix of ladies and men. Members read one book a month. Meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month in The Engineer in Southdown from 12 noon. Members take it in turns to nominate the book to read. We discuss our reactions to the book for an hour and optionally stay on and continue discussions and have a light lunch and a drink. Books are obtained from a variety of sources such as second-hand from Amazon or eBay or borrowing. Some use ‘Kindle’ e-readers or use ‘Audible’ digital audiobooks which are surprisingly effective.

Our books for the last three months were ‘**The Mayor of Casterbridge**’ by Thomas Hardy, ‘**Invisible Child**’ by Andrea Elliott and ‘**The Underground Railroad**’ by Colson Whitehead. A mix of late Victorian English and contemporary American, with fiction and non-fiction. Contact **Steve Gledhill** if you are interested in joining or to just attend a meeting to try it out – [steve.gledhill@outlook.com](mailto:steve.gledhill@outlook.com) or 07785 381912.

## Science and Technology

**David Collins**, the Group Leader, reports “The new Science and Tech Group started in June with a discussion, led by **David Collins**, on Artificial Intelligence, its sudden rise to public awareness and the widespread concern about its potential progress. Two books, one warning of AI’s dangers and the other looking forward to “Superintelligence”, were recommended to the Group.

Our second meeting was dedicated to the extraordinary ecological project to create The Greenway Spinney Nature Reserve by **Brian Rapier**, his family, neighbours and friends, with support from a wide network of charities and civic and public bodies. After his presentation, Brian took us on a guided tour of the Spinney.

At our third meeting, our member, Orthopaedic Consultant **Dishan Singh** gave us a fascinating account of the history of the science of joint replacement. We heard of the pioneers who developed new materials, the current best practice and the politics that supports the demand and supply of joint replacement.

“Our next meeting, on Sept 20th at The Plough and Harrow, starts at 10.30. We will discuss the importance of the public perception of Science, preceded by a presentation on this topic by **David Evans**. Later this year we will have talks on the design and manufacture of satellites, and on prospecting for oil in the North Sea and Sudan.” Please contact **David Collins** at [davidscottcollins@icloud.com](mailto:davidscottcollins@icloud.com)

## Scrabble

From **Joyce Bunting** "The outcome of a Scrabble game can be determined by chance, from the moment you dip your hand into the bag of tiles to see who will play first, to picking out the last tile left in the bag. But skill comes into it, too. Pulling out seven vowels or seven consonants can be particularly challenging. A player will need to call on her reserves of word knowledge, tricks – and patience.

Our group is not overly competitive – indeed, we all enjoy seeing a masterly hand placed on the board, especially one using all seven tiles in one go! The experts willingly show newer players 'tricks' for gaining the most points. After one game and a short refreshment break, we reassemble in two new groups, and the winners aren't always the same!

We meet in the homes of members on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 10am." Please contact **Joyce Bunting** at [joycebunting@btinternet.com](mailto:joycebunting@btinternet.com).

## Singing For Pleasure

With effervescent Joanna directing us from the piano our singing sessions are full of laughter and they certainly live up to the title of the group.

We sing a wide range of music in two-part harmony, often from the musicals but this past term we've been having fun exploring some retro and disco classics. This coming term we will, no doubt, shift our focus to Christmas carols and songs so we can entertain you all at the Christmas social. Please don't think you can't join us if you don't read music as many of our members are in the same boat.

If you would like to know more about our singing sessions, please contact **Viv Chandler** at [viv.vchandler@gmail.com](mailto:viv.vchandler@gmail.com).

## Spanish Conversation

**Rosemary Fenton** reports: "Our Spanish Conversation group has taken a break over July/August as many of our group were off to foreign parts – no prizes for guessing which country was the most popular destination! We're looking forward to resuming in September, fortnightly on Tuesday mornings at Southdown.

We currently have nine regulars with varying degrees of fluency; our sessions are friendly and inclusive, with everyone able to contribute to the chat. So do pay us a visit, whether you are finding your way in Spanish or want to put into practice what you already know. Give me, Rosemary, a call on 07443 425826 or email me at [defenton@hotmail.com](mailto:defenton@hotmail.com)."

## Weekday Strollers

The Weekday Strollers group was started in July for those members who want some regular exercise but feel that the four to six miles of the Walkers group is just too far. We aim at two to three miles. This group is in addition to the Saturday Strollers who have been strolling at the

weekend for many years. We have managed four lovely strolls so far and have had to postpone our walk around Batford Springs Nature Reserve twice. Hopefully, we'll get there this month. We walk on different days of the week to suit as many members as possible and with luck, our strolls will be at more regular intervals in the autumn. Further information from **Viv** at [viv.vchandler@gmail.com](mailto:viv.vchandler@gmail.com) or **Gillian Edward** at [gill\\_edward@btinternet.com](mailto:gill_edward@btinternet.com).

## Walking Group

From **Hugh Fricker**, Group Leader. "Since the last newsletter, car sharing has helped us to enjoy excellent walks from St Paul's Walden, Sandridge, Codicote, Peter's Green, Flamstead and Studham. Our thanks, again, to the members who have planned and led these. A highlight at the end of May was the chance to celebrate his seventieth birthday with **Graham Norman**, one of our keenest members and inventive walk leaders; two of Graham's family were able to join us for the walk and a pub lunch on the day. And, most recently, weeks of unsettled, rainy weather miraculously yielded to a day of unbroken sunshine for a splendid walk on the Greensand Ridge at Ampthill.

"Sadly, but perhaps unsurprisingly, third-age health issues have afflicted several members of the group: a reminder of how lucky we all are when we can get out into the countryside for good walking in congenial company. Our routes are between four and six miles, taken at a comfortable pace, with a break for a snack halfway. If you would like to join us you will be most welcome.

Contact: **Hugh Fricker** at [hfricker13toller2002@yahoo.com](mailto:hfricker13toller2002@yahoo.com)"



Graham's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Lunch



At Houghton Hall, Ampthill