

MARCH 2026

CHAIR'S REPORT

I am writing this on Tuesday 10 March and it is a lovely sunny day. Yesterday was very gloomy but I was cheered up by meeting Knitwits at the Green Man. We had a drink and a good chat - setting the world to rights! We are knitting all sorts of items: I have just knitted a lot of chicks for St Clare's to sell with creme eggs for Easter. Now I am starting on poppies for Remembrance Day. If you have any red wool we would be happy to use it.



This morning we went for a walk in our wonderful Town Park which is looking superb with lots of blossom on the trees and daffodils on the ground; it's well worth a visit. This afternoon I am hosting Play Reading and we are reading Oscar Wilde's, "An Ideal Husband". It is really fun.

We have a [New Members' meeting on the 24 April](#), any new members attending are invited to bring friends who may like to join us. Please let our Membership Secretary, Christine Chesham, know if you are coming: u3aharlowmemsec@gmail.com or tell her when you check in at our General Meeting on Monday 23 March.

Our dedicated members [Moyna, Betty and Margaret](#), who have organised the raffle at our monthly meetings for a long time, will be stepping down very soon so we are appealing for new volunteers to take this on. Do speak to me, or any committee member, if this is something you could help with. We are very grateful to them for running the raffle all these years and for the funds they have raised for our u3a. I hope to see you at the monthly meeting next Monday. **Jane Winterbotham**

SECRETARY'S NOTES

PLEASE SIGN IN WHEN ATTENDING GENERAL MEETINGS

When you attend the monthly General Meetings at The Link, **please make sure you sign in** with our Membership Secretary, Christine Chesham, who will be waiting in the Bar area near the rear windows. It's important we know which members are present for safety reasons. Similarly, if you leave before the end of the meeting, please sign out using the paper near the main entrance.

MADAME GALINA, PRIMA BALLERINA



Members enjoyed a very entertaining talk from guest speaker Iestyn Edwards at February's General Meeting. Iestyn shared his experiences as an entertainer raising the morale of British troops in Iraq – as Madame Galina Prima Ballerina and dressed in a tutu!

His account of life with the marines was very amusing and, at times, most poignant. He talked of the challenges he faced dealing with a very stern commanding officer who – over time – became a dear friend. He also related how, what started off as his costume maintenance sessions turned into a sewing circle which became a safe space attended by young marines where they could offload their fears of fighting on the front line of war.

As well as his stories, he demonstrated some of his signature ballet moves and also treated the audience to some opera. Feedback from members was very positive. Thank you, Iestyn.

ESPECIALLY FOR MATURE DRIVERS

You may remember, last year we had a talk from Essex Safer Road Partnership. One of the opportunities they offered to members was the free, Driving with Confidence scheme which is targeted at mature drivers to help them drive safer and for longer.

One of our members, Helen, accepted the offer and recently undertook the drive, finding it to be very helpful: “.....there may be quite a few members who would like at least a bit of reassurance that their driving is still OK, since when we ought to stop is a decision that most of us are likely to face at some point. And it's very straightforward: you make an appointment, they come to your house and you go out in your own car. It's all in confidence, no feedback to DVLA or anyone. “

If you'd like to know more or want to book a place on the scheme, follow this link: [DRIVING WITH CONFIDENCE](#) .

FUTURE GUEST SPEAKERS

PLEASE NOTE THERE IS A CHANGE TO THE GUEST SPEAKER FOR MARCH FROM THAT PUBLISHED IN FEBRUARY'S NEWSLETTER

23 March 'Down Memory Lane' with Johnny Cooper SAS 'One of the Originals' The exploits of the Special Air Service Regiment in World War II are legendary and full of intrigue and fame. Eighteen-year-old Johnny Cooper volunteered for the SAS in 1941 and became one of "The Originals" raised by David Stirling to conduct operations behind enemy lines. This pictorial presentation by his son Graeme tells his incredible life story. The Link

27 April [Spring Social](#). We look forward to welcoming back singer and musician, Gary Benjafield, who will be entertaining us with lots of favourite tunes. The Link

VISITS & OUTINGS



We are looking forward to our trip to Thriplow later this month, which is fully booked. We still have places available for our outing to Weybridge to [Brooklands on Tuesday 14th April £34.50pp](#), this is a great day out for everyone. Brooklands is celebrating 100 years since the first Grand Prix was held there. There are many vintage vehicles cars, buses motorcycles and a Concorde to look around. The Sunbeam café will be open for refreshments throughout the day to keep you hydrated. If you would like to join us on this trip please

contact Barbara Abbott: follow this link, <https://harlow.u3asite.uk/group-facilitators-email-contact/> scroll down to Visits and Outings and use the Contact form. Payments can be made at the monthly meeting at the Link on 23 March.

Also booking on 23 March, is a coach trip to [Henley on Thames on Thursday 14 May for £15.pp](#). When there, you can choose to take a boat trip along the Thames or stroll along the high street where you will find several coffee shops and a Wetherspoons. The walk along the river is mainly flat and very enjoyable. Payment for this will be taken at the March meeting.



If you are unable to attend the meeting, and wish to attend the Henley trip, please contact Barbara Abbott using the contact details already given above. **Hazel Sugarman**

BALANCE PAYMENT DUE FOR BLACKPOOL TRIP

At the meeting on Monday 23 March, we will also be collecting the [balance of our Blackpool holiday: £320 pp](#) by cheque made payable to Waltham Abbey Travel Ltd. We reiterate that only paid up Harlow u3a members can attend the trips as we require membership numbers to allocate seats and for the u3a insurance cover.

FEBRUARY'S VISIT TO THE V&A MUSEUM



We enjoyed a stroll around the V and A taking in the jewellery gallery and enjoyed refreshments in the amazing Art Nouveaux restaurant

Last month's visit to the V&A Museum in London was very enjoyable. One member, Chris, remarked that it was her fourth visit to the museum and she still saw things she hadn't seen before. Here are some special pieces they enjoyed seeing, including ceramics and paintings from the Adobe Creative Residents : a display of the works of Ciara Neufeldt, Jess Starns and Michael Akuagwu. The display explores each artist's creative journey, their connections with different communities and how their experiences at the V&A changed their ways of working. Franz Xaver Winterhalter's 1842 portrait of Queen Victoria also caught the eye and proved a marked contrast to the contemporary pieces from the Adobe Residents.



GROUP NEWS

CONTACTING FACILITATORS

To contact facilitators regarding group activities, follow the link below which will take you to a list of the groups and their facilitators; by clicking on the facilitator you wish to message you will open a Contact page to complete. <https://harlow.u3asite.uk/group-facilitators-email-contact/>

HAVE YOUR SAY: AI and Social Media

The Have Your Say Group discussed the topic of AI and Social Media at its March meeting. Some members of the group did watch the documentary Molly vs The Machines. (A documentary which tells the tragic story of a young girl, Molly Russell, whose involvement in social media led her to take her own life.)



This is the second time the group has discussed this topic. Some felt banning under-16s from accessing social media could protect mental health and safety, others thought teaching safe-use would be better than banning it completely

The UK government started a national consultation in March 2026 asking parents, teachers, and young people whether social media should be banned for people under 16. No doubt the group will be discussing it again in the future. **Nusrat Shah**

GARDEN GROUP AT THE GIBBERD GARDEN

It was very cold, but it didn't rain and a reduced u3a Gardening Group had a splendid time visiting the Gibberd Garden recently.



The snowdrops and hellebores were in abundance and the trees were filled with birdsong. The changing seasons in the garden always provide a show of colour, so it's worth visiting when the season opens at the beginning of April.

Julie loved the hellebores and found her favourite growing by the barn. The colour was superb. Nancy made a quick visit to the garden, admiring the different varieties of snowdrops - some twice the size of others.



Janet wondered what had happened to the tree house which is no longer there; a photo in the Barn explained that it had to be taken down when the apple tree became too fragile to support it. We hope that one day the swing will return, but at the moment there is no tall tree strong enough to support it safely.

Carol, commented that she had been christened in the font that had come to the garden from St John's Church, now The Arc.

It was well worth a visit and the tea and cake, as always, was delicious. **Ann Flint**



VIPIN'S STROLLERS

What a lovely day!

The strollers were very lucky to have sunshine for their walk around Lea Valley Park.

NEW GROUPS:

BOARD GAMES

Anyone interested in being involved in a Board Games group is invited to meet Ann Nutt for a brief chat about this group [after the General Meeting at The Link on Monday 23 March](#). Please meet her in the Bar at 12pm. If you are unable to attend, any decisions/plans will be shared.

ENJOY YOUR TOWN

A new group is being discussed which has provisionally been called 'ENJOY YOUR TOWN' and could include visiting museums, the cinema or the theatre, walking the sculpture trail or the Town Park. The possibilities would only be limited by your interests and enthusiasm.

Initially, [please register your interest with Ann Flint or Joan Jones](#), Groups Co-Ordinator, at the General Meeting or follow the link on page 4 to Group Facilitators and scroll down to Art in and Around Harlow. A meeting will be arranged at the Playhouse coffee shop to discuss the group.

NEW MEMBERS' MEETING

**New members are warmly invited to a WELCOME MEETING
at The Link Social Club on FRIDAY 24 APRIL 2-4pm.**

***Come and meet the committee and group facilitators.
Tea and coffee provided.***

MUSIC, MUSIC, MUSIC!

The Music In Mind Group visited Alexandra House, next to the hospital, recently. Their Sun Room is big and spacious so there were a number of residents enjoying the music and singing along. It's always a pleasure visiting the homes; care staff pop their heads round the door to see what is going on and they join in as well.

Even if the sun isn't shining, we might still sing 'O What A Beautiful Morning' and our finishing song is always "Thank You For The Music" by ABBA - very appropriate I think.

We only stay for forty-five minutes which is enough for us (a volunteer recently said, 'It's almost a work out!') as we like to move with the residents, play tennis with the balloons and become an orchestra with the instruments. "Amarillo" usually sounds pretty good.

If you think you would like to join this group, do contact me, using the link to groups on page 4, scroll down for Musical Memories. Perhaps you could also let me know of any other community groups which might like a visit from us. **Ann Flint**



HIGH LEIGH SEWING RETREAT

“Happy days!”

Many of us went off to High Leigh, Hoddesdon -

Such a great venue,

Great accommodation,

We had the most wonderful time.

This trip was a sewing / craft retreat.

Oh my goodness such pleasure was enjoyed.

Clever people, my own embroidery paled into

Insignificance to that of everyone’s craft!

Sewing machines chugged,

Needles knitted,

Cotton threads reeled,

Sewing took place -

Threads maximus,

Irons were hot,

Not to mention so much more.

Oh how we laughed!

The hospitality at High Leigh is great:

Tasty food friendly staff

Oh I just don’t know where to finish

For sure the Harlow u3a had the best of times.

Paula Howells XX



We were pleased to help Denise celebrate her birthday while we were there.

COFFEE-TIME QUIZ

Unscramble the words to find names of Harlow pubs

The word “the” is not included in the anagrams

1. DRY ENOUGH	2. REKNIT LAPTOP	3. MOON HER
4. RENT HIM DORK	5. TRULY MISLED	6. SPIKE EXPRESS
7. FONDLE TWIGS	8. CALMER PLOPS	9. EMAIL ARM WILLY

U3A VIRTUAL VISITS

u3a Virtual Visits is a place where members can record and share their most interesting trips and discoveries with the wider u3a community. Whether you've explored a hidden garden, wandered through a museum or admired artwork in a gallery, we'd love to hear about it!

This Learning Activity invites u3a members to create a short visual and written record of a visit they've enjoyed. These submissions will be used to:

- Inspire other members or interest groups to visit new places
- Create a growing gallery of real-life recommendations especially of less well-known locations.
- Provide slides and stories that can be shared in meetings or talks by members both online and in local u3as.

If you, or your Harlow u3a group, would like to know more please follow this link: [VIRTUAL VISITS](#)
Current virtual visits on the site include: The Vietnamese Museum of Fine Arts, Hanoi and The Centre for Computing History, Cambridge.

PAINT OR DRAW

The national u3a runs a monthly challenge to encourage people to paint or draw a piece of artwork, then take a photo of their work and submit their pictures via the online form. It posts a different theme each month and invites u3a members to submit photos of their creations on that topic. This is not a competition and it is not about your artistic ability – what is wanted from you are interesting pictures, possibly different perspectives on everyday scenes or objects, anything which has inspired you to paint or draw. Follow this link for more information and to find out April's theme and deadline: [PAINT OR DRAW](#) Here are a couple of the entries from recent months.



IMAGE ON WATER by
SALIM HARROW U3A



REFLECTIONS by JANET BRADFORD-ON-AVON U3A

HAVE FUN AND GET FIT WITH GENERATION CIRCUS

FREE CircusFit classes for those 50+years who live in Harlow, are being offered by Generation Circus and take place at Moot House, The Stow on Wednesdays at 1.30-2.45pm. Get your body moving and your brain focused; you'll forget it's exercise, you'll just be having fun! No experience is needed and everything is adapted to suit all abilities.



CircusFit combines playful games, creative challenges, and circus techniques using equipment like juggling scarves, balls, hula hoops – and often just the body itself. Sessions begin with laughter-filled games that capture the energy of a playground, and challenge co-ordination, memory, and concentration. It's lively, brain-boosting, and just makes people feel great. There's a wonderful mix of ages from 50 all the way up to 95, all supporting and cheering one another on regardless of fitness level or experience. To find out more or to sign up, follow this link: [CIRCUSFIT](#)

RAINBOW SERVICES EVENTS

JOIN US FOR OUR

Easter Afternoon Tea

Book now

Easter Bonnet Competition, live music from Thomas Huttleston, great company, fun, friendship, dancing and delicious food.

Date & time:
Tuesday 24th & Thursday 26th March, 1.30-4.00pm

Venue:
24th - The GPCA CM18 6YJ
26th - Rugby Club CM20 3FD

Suggested Donation:
£6 per session

Booking essential

JOIN US FOR OUR

Hampton Court Coach Trip

Book now

We will be visiting Hampton Court during the Tulip Festival. Come along to enjoy the stunning gardens and explore the historic palace.

Date & Time:
Thursday 16th April - 9.30am

Pick up point:
Harlow Bus Station.

Departure:
9.30am prompt

Suggested donation:
£18, booking essential

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Volunteers are invited to help at the [Matching Green Charity 10K Run on Monday 4 May \(8am-12pm\)](#); it is the ideal volunteering opportunity for u3a members who would like to give their time to the community and attend a delightful May Day Fair afterwards. No experience is needed, training will be provided. Matching Green is accessible by car so, fill a car up with happy members and enjoy a day out; there will be plenty of car parking available for volunteers. If you'd like to help out, and have a fun time while doing so, contact Anne Richards morningtons@hotmail.co.uk or Geoff Longster glongster@hotmail.com

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

21 March	Trip to Thriplow Daffodil Weekend		
23 March	General Meeting	The Link Social Club	10am-12pm
23 March	Balance due for Blackpool Trip		
13 April	Committee Meeting	St James's Church	10am
14 April	Trip to Brooklands Motor and Aviation Museum		
17 April	Deadline for April's Newsletter		
24 April	Welcome Meeting for New Members	The Link Social Club	2-4pm
27 April	Spring Social with Gary Benjafield	The Link Social Club	10am-12pm

SAVE THE DATE! SATURDAY 13 JUNE 2-4pm

Harlow u3a Choir & guests present

Choirs In The Garden

in the Walled Garden at Harlow Museum

GET IN TOUCH

You can contact [Committee Members and Facilitators](#) by email through links on the website. harlow.u3asite.uk . Using this method keeps personal information out of the public domain. The [Harlow U3A Newsletter](#) is published by Harlow U3A, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), Registered Charity Number 1197680. The registered office of the CIO is in England, at 2 Wych Elm, Harlow, Essex, CM20 1QP. [Contact the Editor](#) with comments and contributions at: harlowu3anewsletter@gmail.com

COFFEE TIME QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Greyhound
2. Poplar Kitten
3. Moorhen
4. Drinker Moth
5. Dusty Miller
6. Essex Skipper
7. Golden Swift
8. Small Copper
9. William Aylmer