

APRIL 2026

CHAIR'S REPORT

Hello Everyone,

As I write this, I am hoping that any April showers are not going to be too significant as I am going to RHS Hyde Hall with a friend today, where we are hoping to enjoy the Spring flowers. Recently, I visited Wisley -where the tulips were stunning- and I've also enjoyed a seaside walk with family which was very windy, but I do love to see the sea. I hope you are enjoying the Spring, the daffodils, tulips and wonderful blossom on the trees in the Town Park are delightful at the moment.

Over Easter our son, Michael, was singing in John Stainer's oratorio, Crucifixion, which was most poignant, and then we went to a Tenebrae Service of Shadows. I have never been to that sort of service before: nine candles were lit on the altar, after each reading a candle was blown out and the church gradually darkened until the last candle (the Christ candle) was led out. There was music after each reading and it was very moving.

I have joined Joan Jones's new group, "Explore your Town", and a couple of weeks ago we took part in Harlow Rugby Club's weekly quiz; it was an enjoyable evening with friends. The group will be meeting to discuss further outings (see page 6) so do contact Joan if you are interested. Our playreading group is reading Pygmalion this month, I remember seeing, "My Fair Lady", the lovely film version.

We would very much like to hear from members about suggestions for other new groups. Is there an interest or activity you would like to see offered by Harlow u3a? Do get in touch and let us know; speak to any committee member or reply to the newsletter address if that's easier.

[Our New Members' Meeting is on Friday 24 April at The Link Social Club 2-4pm](#); I warmly invite new members to come along to meet some facilitators and our committee - and bring any friends who are interested in joining Harlow u3a.

I am very pleased to welcome the following recent new members; I hope they enjoy being part of our u3a and make the most of the opportunities it offers. I look forward to meeting them:

Imelda C.	Julie C.	Judith C.	Carole E.
David E.	Karen E.	Michael H.	Carol H.
Aidah K.	Lynda P.	Neville T	Julie Ch.

Regrettably, I am away for our Spring Social on Monday 27 April but you will be in our Vice-Chair Hazel's capable hands, and listening to Gary Benjafield, who always gives us an enjoyable light-hearted morning.

Jane Winterbotham

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2026-2027

You will remember that last year we changed our membership year to June 1st – May 31st, so for those members who have been inquiring about when memberships need to be renewed, don't worry you've got a few weeks yet. Our Membership Secretary, Chris Chesham, will send out all the relevant information as required.



AN APPEAL TO THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE NATIONAL U3A MAGAZINE, U3A MATTERS, by post five times a year, and don't really read it: if it gets put in the trash unread please ask the Membership Secretary to cancel your subscription. Email: u3aharlowmemsec@gmail.com

Each copy costs Harlow u3a money; **since 2024/5 it has more than doubled in price!** This money could be put to better use for members if you no longer require it sent to you. You will still be able to read it online, click the link: [u3a MATTERS](#) then scroll down to the latest issue.

PAYBACK TIME! HMRC HANDS OVER CASH TO HARLOW u3a! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?

It's a rare occurrence when the taxman actually gives you money, but it's happened for Harlow u3a AND IT'S ALL THANKS TO OUR MEMBERS!

As a result of members opting in to our Gift Aid scheme, we have claimed back £1,150 and this helps us to keep our subs low. **FOR THE THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR, OUR FEE WILL BE MAINTAINED AT £16.** If you are a tax payer (and some members may now be in that position this year) and haven't signed up to the Gift Aid scheme yet, please consider doing so. It costs you nothing but it allows Harlow u3a to gain funds from HMRC. **Isn't it great that we can actually get money back?** To sign up, ask Helen Simpson, Treasurer, or Chris Chesham, Membership Secretary, for a form at one of our monthly meetings at The Link or go to our website: <https://harlow.u3asite.uk> Quick Links page, scroll down to Forms and you can download the Gift Aid Form.



“DOWN MEMORY LANE WITH JOHNNY COOPER SAS- ONE OF THE ORIGINALS”



Speaker Graeme Cooper delivered an interesting talk on his father, Johnny Cooper, at March's meeting. Johnny was one of the original members of the renowned SAS (Special Air Service) commando unit formed in 1941 by Lt Col. David Stirling and what a courageous man he was. Graeme's pictorial presentation of his father's exploits was fascinating.

Johnny enlisted in the Scots Guards in 1939, having slipped the recruiting sergeant a few shillings to turn a blind eye to him being underage. He was sent to Cairo in 1941 and, along with some of his peers, was invited to join a select group of soldiers who would be trained to, “.. get behind them (the enemy)

without them knowing.” The early days of this fledgeling unit proved to be extremely hard with the initial training designed to weed out those who lacked the determination, fitness and faultless weapon handling to make the grade. For those who did make it, getting established proved just as hard with them having to borrow and, literally, steal equipment.

Graeme’s talk took us through the years of Johnny’s service in places such as Yemen, Benin and Sicily to name just a few. One of the experiences that profoundly affected Johnny was being part of the liberation team going into Belsen concentration camp where he saw sights he, “ ...never thought to see...”

Some personal elements which resonated with Harlow members included the information that the SAS unit was based at Hylands Park near Chelmsford and whilst stationed there Johnny, and some pals, ventured to the White Hart pub at Moreton near Ongar for some liquid refreshment one evening, where he met a young barmaid, Constance, who became his wife. Their descendants still live in the village and Johnny, who died in 2002, is buried in its churchyard.



Johnny rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, he was awarded the DCM and in 1957 went to Buckingham Palace to receive his MBE. In 1995 he was the focus of the TV programme This Is Your Life, where his action-packed career was related by Michael Aspel.



For those who would like to know more about his remarkable life, look out for Johnny’s autobiography, One of the Originals: Story of a Founder Member of the SAS.

FUTURE GUEST SPEAKERS

- 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](#)
- 18 May** [Back to Reality](#). Anne Small returns to talk about her return to the UK after her life as an ex-pat in Papua New Guinea and Kenya which members heard about, and enjoyed, last year. [The Link](#)
- 22 June** [Adventures in Helicopters](#) with Duncan Bickley . An experienced commercial pilot, Duncan will tell us about the interesting places he’s flown to, some of the famous faces he’s flown with and some of the interesting events that happened on his travels. [The Link](#)
- 27 July** [Dogs Trust Rehoming Centre](#) The UK’s leading dog welfare charity, Dogs Trust support dogs to live their best life and to find a happy home. Stephanie Disch will be talking about the work and successes of the charity. [The Link](#)



THRIFLOW DAFFODIL WEEKEND



Glorious sunshine put the cherry on the top of another great trip organised by Harlow u3a's brilliant Visits and Outings Team. Members enjoyed a great day out at Thriplow Daffodil Weekend where these bright, cheerful, Spring flowers took centre stage - especially on such a lovely sunny day. Country crafts, stalls, wagon rides and welcoming villagers made it a day to savour.



VISITS & OUTINGS

At this month's General Meeting Monday 27 April at The Link Social Club, Parsloe Road, we have on offer:

Polhill Home and Garden Centre in Sevenoaks, Kent on **Monday 1 June**, for the sum of **£11 per person**. Family run since 1964, the garden centre also has many retail partners, including Cottage Farm Butchers, Coopers of Kent Seafood, Cotton Traders, Klass, Pavers, Polhill Farm Shop plus others. This is a popular venue for coach trips and has been recommended to us by members.



Henley-on-Thames 2: Due to the very long waiting list we had for our visit to **Henley on Thames** we have arranged another trip on **Tuesday 9 June**; we have offered places to everyone on the waiting list but still have some places to fill. You can join us for **£15 per person**.

Both of these trips can be booked at the monthly meeting on Monday 27th, if you are unable to attend the meeting you can contact the facilitators via the website AFTER the meeting. Follow this link, <https://harlow.u3asite.uk/group-facilitators-email-contact/> then scroll down to Visits And Outings.

AI TRAINING – ROUND 2

It was back to school for Harlow u3a members when they attended AI training with Nicola from the AI Centre for Harlow last month. It was very informative, interesting and useful. Nicola's presentation was clear and she was very helpful in assisting attendees to download apps and experiment with their features. Concerns were also allayed by information and advice given on safeguarding.

Members used the app to create a weekly meal plan, a walking tour of Valetta for seniors; to turn handwriting into printed text, to create photographs of



places from their past in specific styles and more.....It was fun and educational and they went away keen to try out more features with their new-found confidence. Thanks, Nicola!

Another session has been arranged for Friday 12 June 11.30am-1pm for those unable to get a place on February or March's training session. Follow this link to book your place:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/u3a-ai-training-session-tickets-1987750385913?aff=oddtcreator>

The tickets go live on 22nd April 1.15pm. As it's hands-on places will be limited and attendees need to bring their own device: smartphone, laptop or tablet.



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/>

HARLOW U3A GROUPS JOINING FORCES



Our choir and ukulele band got together recently to share their talents in preparation for the band joining the choir at its Summer Concert on 13 June at the Walled-Garden of Harlow Museum.



Everyone really enjoyed the session and was pleasantly surprised that songs they had been practising in their individual groups married so well when they got together. They look forward to another joint session soon.

EXPLORE YOUR TOWN – NEW GROUP

This is a NEW interactive group where group members can invite other members to events of interest around Harlow – these can include quizzes, exhibitions, cinema, theatre, walks etc. The possibilities are only limited by members' interest and enthusiasm. If you would like more information about this group, please email Joan Jones: harlowu3a.groupscoord@gmail.com



LONDON EXPLORERS



On Friday 20 March, the London Explorers group visited the Postal Museum near Chancery Lane where we spent an interesting hour or so. It was fascinating to see all the information and memorabilia of the post office from when it started with green post boxes - which changed to red to be easier and brighter to see - the early red and black horse

drawn carriages and post men and women's uniforms. There were lots of interactive exhibits, such as the many different types of phones to try out, and an audio-visual show telling of a century of postal engineering developments.



After a lunch break we went on The Mail Rail, the 100 year old postal railway, where we travelled on an underground train that used to take the mail around London through tunnels that used to reach from Paddington to Whitechapel, avoiding the busy roads, and which used to be in service twenty two hours a day. A very interesting commentary was given which we all enjoyed.

Many thanks to Joan Jones, who organises the group, for a fascinating day out. **Jane Winterbotham**

OUT AND ABOUT IN HARLOW: ESSEX OUTDOORS HARLOW



Last year we had "Try Something New Week", an event everyone enjoyed. Essex Outdoors Harlow is now opening for a new season and just in case anyone is interested, these sessions can be tailored to our age group. Some of you might like to relive your canoeing experience!

Of course, even if four people wanted to take part, a mutual date and time would have to be found; for this reason, if you find your own u3a friends you have your group organised.

Essex Outdoors Harlow can offer bespoke sessions for up to 4 participants for one hour in the following activities: [Archery](#) [Abseiling](#) [Climbing](#) [Canoeing](#) [Kayaking](#) [SUP \(Stand up paddle boarding\)](#) Currently priced at £89 for four participants for one hour. Group bookings are £180.00 per group of ten per 1.5 hour activity.

All sessions are led by trained instructors and focus on our age group, which will ensure success. If anyone is interested, let me know and I'll try and sort something out. Follow the link at the top of page 6, then scroll down for Arts In and About Harlow. **Ann Flint**

SPRINGTIME QUIZ

1. To which country does the Netherlands give 10,000 tulips each spring to thank for housing their exiled Royal Family during World War 2 ?
2. What adjective describes something as taking place in, or relating to, Spring?
3. What star sign would you be if you were born on the 22nd of April?
4. Which famous event takes place at the Royal Hospital Chelsea every May?
5. How many petals does a snowdrop have?
6. What kind of dancing might you see at a town fair on May Day in the UK?
7. If you were admiring sakura in Japan during springtime, at what would you be looking?
8. Which famous English playwright was born and died on the same day in April 52 years apart?
9. What ancient site in England is aligned with the rising sun on the spring equinox?
10. In Roman mythology, who is the goddess of Spring?

U3A FRIENDS COMMUNITY

EXPLORE YOUR LOCAL HISTORY WITH MISSING PIECES

The u3a has an exciting new learning activity for u3a members, inspired by *Historic England's* national project celebrating the stories behind listed buildings. To take part, choose a place in your local area to investigate, share your memories and knowledge, and carry out research to contribute to the national record. We have a series of online talks to support and inspire you, starting with **The Missing Pieces project**: connecting people and place, on **Thursday 23 April at 2pm**. You can [get involved now and throughout the summer](#), so if you're intrigued to discover local history and share your experience of a place, click this link: [MISSING PIECES](#)

Oi! MIND YER LANGUAGE! Oi! Mind Yer Language!: explores the English Language: history, structures, usage, mysteries, magic.. and more. It's a **FREE, ONLINE** session on **Thursday, 30 April from 2 pm to 3:30 pm**. It'll briefly look at examples from four typical areas of language interest: children's language learning, dictionaries and new words, surnames, and the nature and sources of 'language data' -- finding what's 'out there' to discuss.

It's all aimed at general, non-specialist members. To whet your appetites even more, there'll be two quick interactive polls, and a Q&A session to finish. To book your place click this link: [MIND YOUR LANGUAGE](#)





u3a Festival 26
1-3 July 2026 University of York

With special guest
JOHNNY BALL

Music & dance Sport & wellbeing Hands on workshops Talks & walks

Just some of the activities on offer:

WEDNESDAY

- * Opening ceremony with Johnny Ball *
- * Staying safe online * Guitar * Dance exercise * Improv *
- * Laughter yoga * Climate Matters * Jewellery making *

THURSDAY

- * Photography * Futurology * Playing jazz * Steel band *
- * Men who challenge misogyny * Beginners painting * AI *
- * Chair yoga * Pub quiz * Wine appreciation

FRIDAY

- * Dystopias * Destress your life * Dance choreography *
- * Flower arranging * How to be happier * Forest bathing *
- * Ceilidh * Handbells * Crosswords * Museum visits

plus more surprises to be announced!



GRIFFIN B.C. OPEN DAYS 2026

Saturday 25th April 11am-4pm
EVERY Wednesday April to September 6. 00pm-7. 30pm

Come and TRY BOWLS for FREE!
Includes 4 weeks FREE coaching

The Griffin Bowls Club
Latton Bush Centre, Southern Way, Harlow, Essex CM18 7BL
01279 451338
thegriffinbowlsclub@gmail.com
www.griffinbowls.co.uk

The Griffin Bowls Club is located at the top car park of The Latton Bush Centre, next to the Tennis Club!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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
8 May	Deadline for May's Newsletter		
11 May	Committee Meeting	St James's Church	10am-12pm
14 May	Trip to Henley-on-Thames 1		
18 May	General Meeting	The Link Social Club	10am-12pm

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. Canada
2. Vernal
3. Taurus
4. Chelsea Flower Show
5. Six
6. Maypole
7. Cherry Blossom
8. Shakespeare
9. Stonehenge
10. Flora