HARLOW u3a NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2026

CHAIR'S REPORT



Welcome to October and rain at last! I love the autumn, as the trees change colour, we are so lucky here in Harlow with our Park, our Nature Reserve and so many mature trees to see everywhere. I have just bought autumn baskets, to cheer up my garden, and some wallflowers which are already coming into flower.

My playreading group read a most strange play this month, "Mr Whatnot", by Alan Ayckbourn. It was challenging to read as 50% of the book was stage directions, so a bit hard to follow, and a typical farce with people rushing around but we enjoyed it nevertheless and had a laugh reading it. I enjoyed the "Importance of Being Ernest", at the Victoria Hall, an interesting production but very good. We are lucky having opportunities to see plays and hear music locally.

"Lions on the Loose", St Clare's fundraising lions have now come to an end. It was an imaginative project and there is to be a similar one next year in Cambridge with decorated pandas - something to look forward to.

Thank you to those who submitted the survey which is now complete; the committee is looking at the results with Julie, who designed it. We do need to remember that our u3a is run entirely by volunteers who give their own time and efforts to manage Harlow u3a and to provide most of our activities. Without their commitment we would not have such a thriving organisation.

Have you thought of a group you could run with help from your friends? Maybe there is an activity you would like to see offered and that you could initiate? We are always glad to have new groups and there is plenty of help to set them up. We are still hoping to get the Board Games group up and running and further progress has been made on the Line Dancing activity. See the Groups section of the newsletter.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

Robert B.	**Sharon B.**	**Rita G.**	**Linda J.**
Barry S.	**Denise S.**	**Tara W.**	

I look forward to meeting you.

Do enjoy the autumn colour, especially when the sun comes out, and I hope to see you at our General Meeting at The Link Social Club on Monday 26 October 10am-12pm.

Jane Winterbotham

NEW MEMBERS' MEETING: FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2-4PM

THE LINK SOCIAL CLUB

New members are warmly invited to come along to meet Harlow u3a's Committee and Group Facilitators and find out more about what your u3a can offer you. If you have a friend interested in our organisation, do bring them along. Tea & coffee provided.

- *Please let our Membership Secretary, Chris, know if you wish to attend: u3aharlowmemsec@gmail.com*
- *Group Facilitators, please inform Joan or Vipin of your attendance.*

LIFE AS A SCREW: PRISON OFFICER (Rtd) BRIAN DAVIS

Having worked as a Civil Servant for thirty five years – prison officer and Border Control – Brian gave members a very interesting talk about his experiences and how, during those years, he has seen "..the worst of mankind and the best of humanity."



Brian entered the prison service in 1991 and served in HMP Wandsworth when it was seen to be the bastion of the prison service and where he was trained in the "Wandsworth Way". On day one it was a daunting prospect; new officers wore a shirt and tie for the first 3-4 months not uniform, which marked them out as "fresh meat". New recruits had to prove themselves not only to the prisoners but to their colleagues as well. Armed with a whistle to raise the alarm should trouble arise, and a truncheon – known as Officer Woody – Brian set off on his career which proved to be highly rewarding and ended with him receiving a medal for long service, good conduct and courage as well as three Jubilee medals marking anniversaries of Queen Elizabeth II's reign.

We learnt of a rookie error in the early days when responding to the whistle alarm the first time: he threw the prison doctor in a cell thinking he was an inmate! As his career progressed, the more experienced Brian became the officer in charge of segregation.

Brian shared stories of some of Wandsworth's more infamous prisoners like Reggie Kray, Charles Bronson and Ronnie Biggs. He also emphasised how with power comes responsibility and that, in his experience, being seen to be fair and having a good sense of humour was the best way to treat those in his care and to earn their respect.

An engaging speaker, Brian's experiences proved to be very interesting to members and there were lots of questions at the end of the talk. Thank you, Brian.



If you found Brian's stories about the inmates in his care fascinating, and have an interest in crime and criminals in general, you might be interested in this podcast on BBC Sounds

FUTURE GUEST SPEAKERS

26 October	Bradley Chapman: English Canal System and Canalability	The Link
23 November	Neil Hanson: The Ghost Writer. Neil Hanson is an award-winning storyteller, speaker, and author who has written extensively both under his own name and as a ghostwriter for others.	The Link
21 December	Christmas Social: Enjoy a Christmas Quiz, Christmas Carols and songs as you tuck into Christmas treats with your tea and coffee	The Link
25 January 2027	Iestyn Evans: A return visit from Ietsyn who talked to us about his adventures entertaining the British Military – in his tutu– last year. What surprises does he have in store for us in 2027?	The Link
22 February	10.40am: Harlow u3a AGM 11am: Nicholas Henderson: Great Mysteries and Conspiracy Theories (Explaining the Inexplicable)	The Link

VISITS & OUTINGS

TRIP TO WOODBRIDGE



On the recent u3a visit to Woodbridge, we went into the Woodbridge Tide Mill museum and had a guided tour. One of two tide mills left in the country, it is centuries old and was in royal ownership following the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII.

We learned that when the tide comes in, it fills a mill pond at the rear of the museum and, twice a day, enough water is collected there to be used to turn the massive water wheel and to turn grain into flour. The mill still works as it still produces flour for local business (they also sell the flour to visitors). We got to see it in action around 2pm; it's so surprising what the power of moving water can achieve.

Schoolchildren visit and are thrilled when they can charge their mobiles up when the water wheel is in action. The guide told us that they had installed a small electric motor so, if the wheel mechanics ever failed, they would have a back-up system to work the wheel. The electric motor had some mobile cables attached to it and the guide said he sometimes played tunes on his mobile to entertain the school kids when they visited.



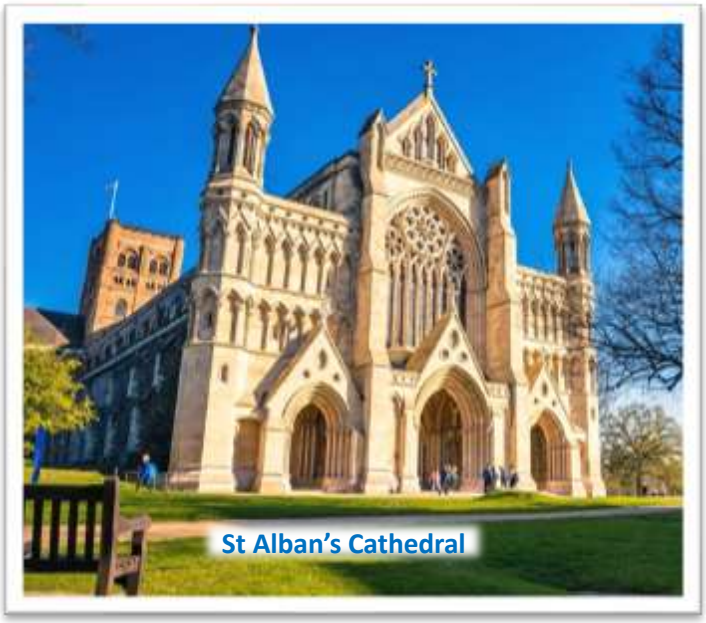
We learned so much, it was fascinating. They still had some of the original furniture and I got to sit at the desk of the clerk who wrote down the mill workers wages in days gone by.

A highly interesting and enjoyable trip was had by us both and it made me want to return one day, with our grandchildren. Thanks u3a V&O team! **Elaine and Graham Lloyd**

TRIPS ON SALE THIS MONTH

How lucky have we been with the weather recently, for the time of year, we've enjoyed some beautifully warm days but we can't go forward expecting this to continue so the two trips we have going ahead are shopping trips. Our first outing on offer is to **Lakeside Shopping Centre in West Thurrock, Greys.** With a wide range of stores available, you can find exactly what you're looking for and make the most of your visit there. Sorry to mention the C word but Christmas is approaching and this could be a good opportunity to start your shopping somewhere different. We plan to go on **Monday 9 November for the sum of £11 pp.**

Our second trip on offer is to the **Roman town of Verulamium that we know as St Alban's. We travel on Friday 20 November for the sum of £12.50pp.** Its vast, centuries-old cathedral has medieval wall paintings; the nearby Verulamium Park has ornamental lakes and the remains of the city's ancient Roman wall. Also here, is the Verulamium Museum, displaying artefacts from the city's Roman past, including mosaics and the Sandridge Hoard of gold coins. A 2nd-century Roman theatre stands nearby. All this, and the large number of shops in the town may help to finish off that shopping list making you well prepared for the festive season.



These outings will be on offer at the monthly meeting on Monday 26 October at The Link on Parsloe Road; the trips' desks will be open 10am, The Link opens at 9.30am. If you are unable to attend the meeting then please contact Barbara Abbott AFTER the meeting via the link to group facilitators at the top of the next page; scroll down to Visits and Outings.

We look forward to seeing you there. **Hazel Sugarman Vice Chair**

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/

PILATES GROUP - WELCOME BACK!

Recently, the ever-popular u3a Pilates group welcomed two strong women back into the fold: both had undergone hip operations during the summer and enjoyed returning to Pilates sessions. They agreed this u3a fitness class gets your body working and makes both mind and body achieve more harmony. Special thanks go to Marion, our wonderful group contact and treasurer. We also thank the group volunteers who all stepped up to keep the group functioning over the previous weeks. *Great Women, Super Trainer, Wonderful Class*. **Christina Huxtable**

LINE DANCING

We are hopeful to have this group up and running in the near future; if you're still interested/newly interested please contact Marion Newell via the link at the top of this page; you will find Marion under Pilates. It is likely to be a Friday morning but there may be some flexibility on days.



COFFEE-TIME QUIZ



WORK OUT YOUR SPOOKY NAME FOR HALLOWE'EN

1. Your Birth Month
January – Dark
February – Crimson
March – Venom
April – Phantom
May – Chaos
June – Toxic
July – Wicked
August – Silent
September – Shadow
October – Blood
November – Hollow
December – Frozen

2. Birth Date
1 – Queen
2 – King
3 – Reaper
4 – Witch
5 – Hunter
6 – Ghost
7 – Raven
8 – Demon
9 – Wolf
10 – Viper
11 – Angel
12 – Skull
13 – Siren
14 – Crown
15 – Blade
16 – Flame
17 – Killer
18 – Rose
19 – Storm
20 – Mask
21 – Prince
22 – Heart
23 – Whisper
24 – Fury
25 – Curse
26 – Doll
27 – Knight
28 – Snake
29 – Moon
30 – Shadow
31 – Fate

3. Last Digit of Your Birth Year
0 – The Untouchable
1 – From Hell
2 – Never Forgiven
3 – Of Midnight
4 – Without Mercy
5 – The Fallen
6 – Of Chaos
7 – The Eternal
8 – The Forgotten
9 – Of Darkness

u3a FRIENDS COMMUNITY

INTRODUCING *u3a REWIND*

Share your memories of the music and youth cultures that shaped your younger years in the u3a's new learning activity. What songs got you dancing? Who did you see live? What did you wear and who inspired your style? Help us to create a unique collection of u3a members' experiences for everybody to reminisce and enjoy. Follow this link : Submit your stories and photos, and suggest a song for the u3a rewind playlist.

BOOK A U3A GETAWAY

This November, join the u3a's *Yorkshire Festive Treats* getaway and experience one of Britain's biggest Christmas markets and York's rich confectionery heritage.

You can also plan ahead, as the tours for 2027 are taking bookings. Learn about aviation heritage in March, explore *Dartmoor Zoo* in April and enjoy expert-led wine tasting in May. Each trip offers learning opportunities and a chance to meet u3a members from across the UK. Have a browse and reserve your place on the *u3a getaways* website.

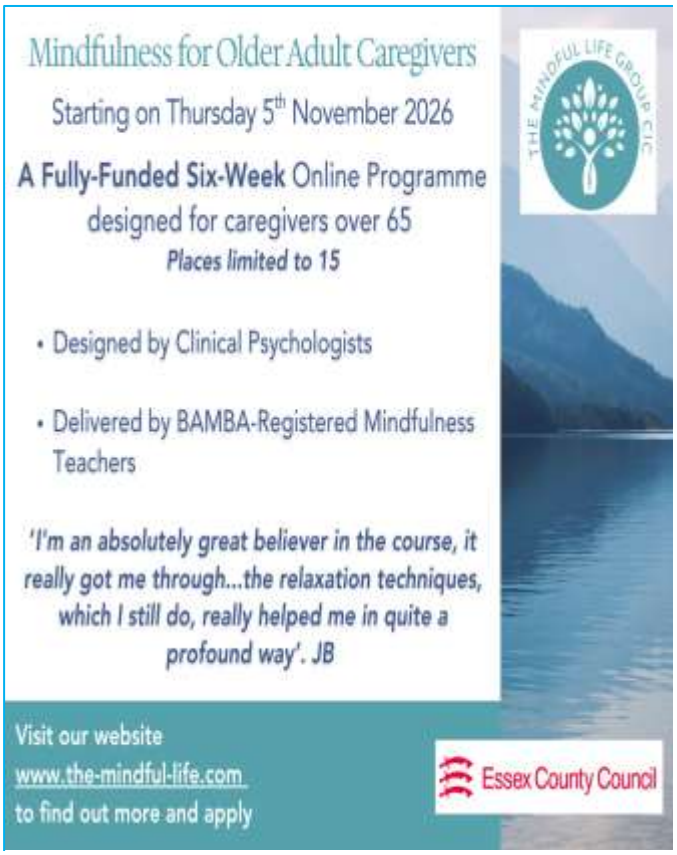


LOCAL HARLOW NEWS

GREAT AUTUMN GATHERING

In partnership with Plant Pots and Wellies and PACT for Autism, the Great Autumn Gathering takes place on 25 October 12-3.30pm at Parndon Wood with pre-booked entry times available.

This inclusive family-themed event includes Autumn-themed activities, crafts and the enchanting Woodland Folk Trail celebrating nature, creativity and community. **It is not a Hallowe'en event.** Further information can be found via: https://www.zeffy.com/en-GB/ticketing/the-great-autumn-gathering.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

26 October	General Meeting	The Link Social Club	10am-12pm
9 November	Committee Meeting	St James's Church	10am-12pm
9 November	Coach Trip to Lakeside Shopping Mall		
13 November	**Deadline for November's Newsletter**		
20 November	New Members' Meeting	The Link Social Club	2-4pm
20 November	Coach Trip to St Alban's		
23 November	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 Foxglove	**2** Snowdrop	**3** Bluebell	**4** Buttercup	**5** Sweet pea
6 Snapdragon	**7** Bleeding heart	**8** Pansy	**9** Lupin	**10** Sunflower

