

Wheathampstead u3a Newsletter – November 2025

Speaker Meetings

- Thursday, 27th November, Memorial Hall, 2.30pm

This month our speaker will be Colin Oakes, an Archaeologist, Speaker and Blue Badge guide. His topic will be “A Hertfordshire Christmas”, and so is guaranteed to begin putting us all in the Christmas spirit.

If you fancy really getting in the mood, it would be fun to wear something Christmassy.

Colin also guides walking tours and coach tours - this may be of interest to other members.

Refreshments will be available after the talk, so you can sit down for a chat with a nice cuppa, before tackling whatever the weather decides to throw at u

**** An Extra Christmas Special None-Speaker Meeting****

**** INVITATION ****

We hope you will join us on December 18th, at the Memorial Hall, 2.30 for a bit of a tea party, hosted by your Committee.

We have Ronan McArdle, a local, classy and versatile vocalist coming to entertain us with a selection of Christmas and other classic tunes, guaranteed to get us all singing along and into the Christmas spirit. There will also be a quiz and some Christmassy refreshments to enjoy.

This is open to all members especially those who prefer a daytime event rather than our evening Christmas offering.

There is no charge, but we would like an idea of numbers for catering purposes, so please let me know asap if you are coming.

<mailto:janice.whiting54@gmail.com>

NB. Recycling Printer Ink Cartridges

We have decided to support St Helens church in their efforts to collect these for recycling and will have a box or bag at Speaker Meetings to collect your old (unwrapped please) ink cartridges for recycling. If you have any, please bring them along. Thank you

- October Meeting

For those who attended the October Speaker Meeting, you will recall that as it was Breast Cancer Awareness month, we asked you to join in, wear something pink and donate to the charity. Even the Speaker joined in with a splendid pink jacket!

Here are a few “PINK pics” and a poem that Brenda was inspired to write **Think Pink**

“Wear it pink” they said to me

But to show support we needed all to see

So here at Wheathampstead u3a

We all wore pink for one special day

We listened to our Speaker, who also wore pink

He wore it with pride, not once did he shrink

We heard the songs of Buddy Holly

My goodness, we had fun, ‘twas a real old jolly

But throughout we remembered the cause we supported

Our primary aim would not be thwarted

Each of us knew how our lives had been touched

I waited, collection box in my hand tightly clutched

Their generosity was a delight to behold

Not one single offering had to be cajoled

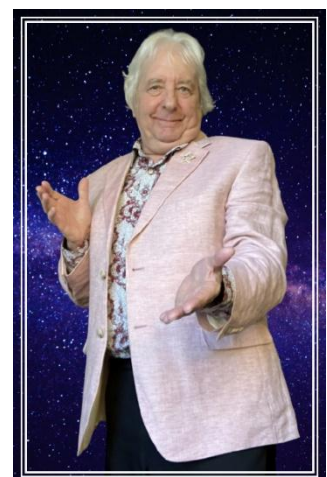
Each one of us can make a difference when we care

Especially when the cause is one we share

So a big “thank you” to Wheathampstead u3a

“Think pink” will have your donation today!

Brenda Bigland CBE, Wheathampstead u3a



renda has been very busy putting together the Speaker Programme for 2026 so here it is – hot off the press – something for you to look forward to next year.

WHEATHAMPSTEAD U3A SPEAKER MEETINGS 2026 – THE MEMORIAL HALL 2:30pm		
Date 2026	Speaker	Title of Talk
22 nd January	Zoe Jasko	Joyce Grenfell
26 th February	Mike Ruff	Stories and Songs from the Music Hall
26 th March	No speaker	AGM
23 rd April	Anne Lawrence	The Life of a Counter Terrorist Detective – Part 2
28 th May	Jean Fullerton	To be advised
25 th June	Nick Blatchley	Wicked Ladies and Pie Men – Highway Robbery in Hertfordshire
23 rd July	John Pearson	Blessed are the Cheese Makers
27 th August	Steve Lester	That's A Wrap
24 th September	Andy Smith	Love and Laughter
22 nd October	Keith Baldwin	When Policemen and Doctors Start to Look Young

26 th November	Howard Slater	Richard Rogers
10 th or 17 th December	Christmas Event	Christmas event organised by the Committee

Coffee Morning

- Wednesday 10th December

We hope you will join us for the last coffee morning of 2025. It will be a bit special with mince pies and sausage rolls, and Stewart Lawson will entertain us again, this time with a Christmas themed monologue.

NB. If you intend to stay on for lunch afterwards please make sure you check they have a table for you as they will be getting busy with Christmas lunches.

Outings

- Our last Outing of the year is to Waddesdon Manor on 4th December

The magnificent National Trust property will be decorated in all its glory for Christmas, there will be a fantastic Christmas Light Trail in the grounds and also be a Christmas market selling artisan food, mulled wine, hand-crafted gifts and lots more besides. This has proved so popular that we have had to put on an extra coach! Let's hope the weather is kind to us as it has been in previous years.

And here's a sneaky peek at what we have planned for you in 2026 -

Feb - Anglesey Abbey (to see the snowdrops)

March/April - Strawberry Hill House and Petersham Nurseries

April/May – River Boat trip and tea (Lea or Thames)

May/June - Ightham Mote (NT)

July/Aug – Shuttleworth Collection & Swiss Garden

Sept/Oct – Basildon Park & Cream Tea

Oct/Nov – Brick Lane Music Hall

Nov/Dec – Christmas Market/Lights (TBA)

Workshops

An Introduction to Astronomy 29th November 7-10pm, Marford Hall, £3.50

Members of the Hertford Astronomy Group will present an introduction to what is in the night sky. This will include demonstrations to show the distance of the Moon, etc

This workshop still has “space”! If interested – <mailto:sue@hawkmail.co.uk>

Art/Acrylics & Pastels (29 Oct)

There were plenty of budding artists attending this October workshop led by Tina Cameron and it was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Ident artists at work and the results of their labours. I think they could give Leonardo a run for his money don't you?



Christmas Card Making Workshop (18 November)

Once again, Sue Hawkins led a Christmas card making workshop. There were 3 designs to choose from and everyone enjoyed a couple of hours of crafting fun and chatter as well as producing all the lovely cards pictured here.



Social

- Christmas Party – 12th December 7pm, Marford Hall

Well, we've really pushed the boat out for this one – our final evening event of the year.

For 1 night only, Marford Hall will become an Art Deco 1920's dance venue with live music from "The Gershwin Gang" to Fox Trot, Black Bottom and Charleston to (and, we promise, definitely no Craig Revel Horwood to criticise the lack of swivels – we have to be kind to our knees at our age!)

We'd love it if you'd "dress to impress" (think roaring 20's, flappers and sheiks, beads and tassels and art deco black and gold!), but don't be put off if you don't want to dress up – we'll just be pleased to see you and celebrate Christmas together whatever you wear (might draw the line at PJ's though!)

There will be a raffle and a bar and a yummy supper too.

- Raffle Prizes – We are hoping some of you might have some lovely, but unwanted gifts that you could donate as raffle prizes. If you can help with this, please bring them along to the Speaker meeting or the next coffee morning and hand them to a Committee member, or contact one of us and we'll arrange to collect. (Our contact details are all on the Wheathampstead u3a website)

Now then, where did I put my Ostrich feather headband?

Groups

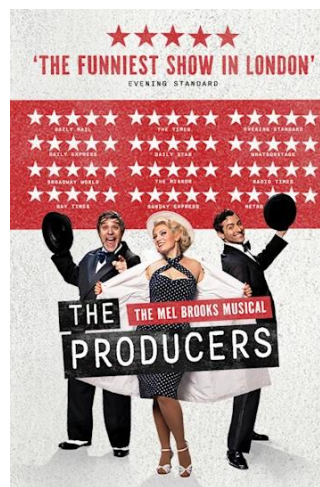
We may have some progress on finding an Italian tutor so all of those who wanted an Italian group keep everything crossed and watch this space!

Another couple of new groups have been suggested –

- a “Local Outings” group (may be combined with the use of bus passes, or perhaps using the “Harpenden Hopper” bus)
- a Garden visits group (I think there has been one of these before)

The London Theatre Group -

enjoyed a visit to the Garrick Theatre to see “The Producers”.



Supper Club – on 18th November 25 people had a meal at the newly refurbished Wicked Lady, the last Supper Club meal this year.

There is a planning meeting for members on 1st December, 6pm at The Swan to plan where we hope to go next year.

Subscriptions – In order to attend our groups, speaker meetings, workshops and social events you need to be a member of our u3a, To date, we have **41** people who have still not paid their subs this year!

Local News/Events you may be interested in

Wheathampstead Scouts are looking for organisers, decision-makers, and safety checkers. If you’ve got a bit of time to spare, want to build your CV, or help give young people [#SkillsForLife](#), why not become a trustee? (Or you may know of someone this would suit – if so, please let them know)

Badminton – If you’re interested in playing, there will be sessions for the over 50’s every Friday, 2 – 4pm at Marford Hall. £5 a session, racquets included

Wheathampstead Community Group – are holding a Christmas Singalong at Marford Hall on 11th December at 7pm.

This is a free event featuring singing Carols and Christmas favourites from local children's choirs accompanied by the Abbey Gateway Orchestra. There will be a raffle and refreshments including mulled wine and mince pies.

News from our members

This is your Newsletter and last month I asked for stories from you, our wonderful u3a community. as I'd thought it might be nice to add a bit of extra interest rather than just the normal "business" stuff. I'm sure that many of you have something you're proud of, a funny incident, a topic you'd like to air, or even just a photo of something that you'd like to share with us.

We had a response from Richard Crooks, who has just had his 7th book published! It's called "Ruling the Roost, The Managers of Sheffield Wednesday"

Richard told us how a chance remark from his grandson inspired his writing career. Here is his story -

My interest in writing came about when I took my grandson to a football game in 2015 - he was eight years old and I thought about what football was all about for me when I was his age and going to my first game (mid-1960s) - there were huge differences in my experiences compared to his - and I thought I'd write about them. Hence my first book:

"Grandad - What Was Football Like in the 1960s?"

And following that theme more followed:

"Grandad What Was Football Like in the 1970s?"

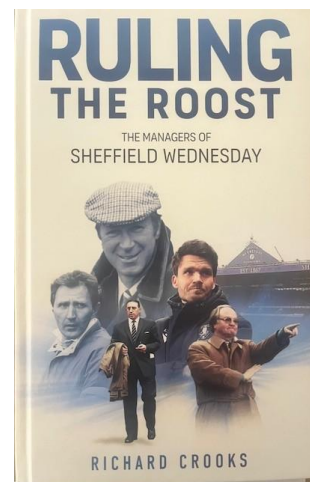
"What Was Football like in the 1980s?"

"What Was Football like in the 1990s?"

"Wednesday v United, The Sheffield Derby"

"The Rolling Stones in Sheffield" (the only one not on a football theme.

I find the researching for and writing the books enriching, mentally stimulating. and rewarding once published. Fortunately. I have a publisher who is prepared to publish the



books (Pitch Publishing) and after the one I've started writing, they have confirmed they'd like another book. I have ideas for at least another two or three more books.

Congratulations Richard – and if anyone would like to purchase one of his books he has some copies of them (except for the 1960's one). Just let me know and I will put you in touch. <mailto:janice.whiting54@gmail.com>