

Wheathampstead u3a April Newsletter

Editor Tina Cameron – tina.cameron4@gmail.com

AGM and Meet the Groups

The AGM took place on Thursday 26th March at 2:30pm in the Memorial Hall and saw our best turnout to date. Members heard a short address from our Chair, Chrissie, who provided an overview of the past year, while our Treasurer, Sarah, explained how funds have been used. Members also took part in voting for Committee Members for 2026. The event offered a great opportunity to meet representatives from the various interest groups, learn more about their activities, and perhaps be inspired to try something new.

At this year's AGM, Janice Whiting stepped down from the Committee in her role as Communications Officer. Over the past eight years, she has made an outstanding contribution to our u3a, including for the past 4 years as Communications Officer producing a newsletter that has kept members informed, engaged, and connected. Her dedication, reliability, and attention to detail have been truly appreciated by us all. She remains an active member and continues her involvement with the social committee, which we are very pleased about. Janice was presented with a small token of our appreciation to mark her many years of dedication as Communications Officer. The beautiful arrangement of flowers, accompanied by a bottle of prosecco and a heartfelt card, was a fitting way to say thank you for all her hard work.



Following Janice's decision to step down, I have joined the Committee as your new Communications Officer and will be producing the newsletter going forward. I look forward to bringing a fresh perspective while continuing the strong foundations that Janice has already established.

Next Speakers Meeting - The Life of a Terrorist Detective Part 2

Our speaker at the meeting in the Memorial Hall on **Thursday 23rd April (2:00pm arrival for a 2:30pm start)** will be a welcome return from a retired Metropolitan Police officer, who was awarded the Queen's Police Medal for her service. She will be continuing her engaging account of life as a Counter Terrorism Officer. This proved to be a very popular and engaging event last year, and we are delighted to have her back by popular demand.

Coffee Morning – Wednesday 13th May, 10.30 – 12pm, at The Swan

Come and put the world to rights, or exchange village gossip, or just enjoy a quiet coffee and biscuits in the company of other u3a Members. Make friends, bring friends if you like, there's no agenda other than to socialise with others. You can even stay behind afterwards and have lunch there – the food is yummy!

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Outings

Strawberry Hill House



On Thursday 16th April, a group of approximately 50 members enjoyed a visit to Strawberry Hill, a unique and fascinating Gothic Revival villa in Twickenham. Originally created by Horace Walpole in the 18th century, the house is renowned for its striking architecture, decorative interiors, and its place in literary history as the inspiration for the Gothic novel. It was a thoroughly enjoyable outing, with members appreciating both the guided tour and the opportunity to explore the beautifully restored rooms and peaceful gardens. The day was made even more sociable with coffee at a large garden centre on the way, followed by a great pub lunch, providing plenty of time to relax and chat. After lunch, there was also an opportunity to explore the surrounding area further. Altogether, it was a memorable and enjoyable day for all who attended.

Upcoming Trip on the River Lea – 3rd June 2026

A relaxing outing on the River Lea is planned for 3rd June 2026—an opportunity to sit back, enjoy the scenery, and spend time in good company.

The trip will include food on board, making it a leisurely and sociable experience on the water.

Further details will be announced soon, but this is one to look forward to and keep an eye out for!

Groups

“Meet the Groups” at the AGM provided a great opportunity for members to see the wide range of interest groups available and to chat with group convenors about what they offer. It was wonderful to see so much enthusiasm, and as a result, several groups have already filled spaces where availability allowed.

New Group – Ukulele (Beginners)

We are exploring the possibility of starting a Ukulele Group for complete beginners. The idea is for a relaxed, self-taught group, similar to the approach used by St Albans U3A. No experience required, just enthusiasm!

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New Group – Choir

We are also looking at forming a Choir for those with a basic knowledge of music and some ability to sight-read. This would be a great opportunity for anyone who enjoys singing as part of a group.

Both groups are in the early planning stages and will depend on levels of interest, as well as finding members willing to help convene them. If either of these sounds appealing, please do get in touch with **Annabel Lloyd** at annabeljay36@gmail.com.

If you have an idea for a new group, or would be interested in convening one, we would love to hear from you. Please do get in touch with Annabel Lloyd at annabeljay36@gmail.com to discuss your ideas.

Workshops

Workshops Talk – “Your Final Matters”

Workshops are hosting a talk by Caro Syson titled “*Your Final Matters*” on 19th May at 11:30am in the Lamer Room at Marford Hall.

While the subject may sound serious, the session aims to provide clear, practical guidance on a range of important topics relevant to us all, in an accessible and informative way.

The talk is free of charge and has proved very popular, with all places now fully booked (subject to any cancellations).

Water Sports

A **water sports workshop** featuring canoeing, kayaking and paddleboarding will be taking place on Thursday 11th June at 11am and Friday 19th June at 3pm at Stanborough Lakes. Whether you’re gliding gracefully across the water or perfecting the art of staying upright! It promises to be a lively afternoon.

At the time of writing, there are just three spaces left, so if you’re feeling adventurous (or don’t mind the occasional splash!), do get in touch with Chrissie Chadney at chrissie.chadney@googlemail.com to secure your place.

Lawn Bowls

We have also been kindly invited by St Albans u3a to join them for **Lawn Bowls** on April 27th and May 11th, 15th and 25th, starting at 2:00pm.

Whether you’re a seasoned bowler or someone who simply enjoys the idea of a gentle afternoon with a competitive edge, this promises to be great fun. Expect a mix of

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concentration, quiet triumphs, and the occasional “I meant to do that!” moment as woods roll their way (more or less accurately) towards the jack.

Places have already been booked, so it looks set to be a very enjoyable series of afternoons.

Acrylic Art Workshops



Three acrylic art workshops were held by myself at the Chapel Halls on 25th March, 1st and 8th April, where a brave group of members took up brushes and embraced their inner artists.

Across the sessions, we tackled a wonderfully eclectic mix of subjects - Sri Lankan monkeys, tranquil waterfall scenes, and a charming French café. The results were varied and creative, with everyone bringing their own individual style and interpretation to the paintings.

There was plenty of concentration, a fair bit of laughter, and only the occasional moment of wondering how on earth that monkey's face ended up looking quite like that!. All in all, it was great fun, and everyone left with something unique to show for their efforts. A photo is included to give a glimpse of the creativity (and enjoyment!) on display and a special shout out to Monika Parker who produced this beautiful French Café scene.



A further set of three acrylic and oil pastel workshops is being planned for the end of July. Whether you're a returning artist or keen to give it a try for the first time, these sessions will offer another opportunity to get creative.

Further details will be sent out by email shortly, so please keep an eye out if you're interested in joining.

Social Events

Music Quiz Night

Our recent Music Quiz, hosted by our very own favourite 60's singer Tony Tutton, took place on 27th March at the Memorial Hall and proved to be a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

With a lively mix of music-themed and general knowledge questions, there was something for everyone - along with plenty of opportunities for teamwork (and the

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occasional confident guess!). The fish/halloumi and chip supper added to the relaxed and sociable atmosphere.

The photos give a great flavour of the evening, from Tony in full sparkle mode, to members enthusiastically joining in, hands raised and ready with answers!



All in all, it was a great night, full of laughter, friendly competition, and a wonderful sense of community.

Social Group – Events for 2026 & 2027 – **Save the Date**

A reminder that our events calendar for 2026 and 2027 is now available, with a wide range of social activities planned. Emails will be sent out with further details about each event nearer the time. We look forward to seeing you at as many as you can make!

<i>Please SAVE THE DATE for our Social events in 2026</i>	<i>Please SAVE THE DATE for our Social events in 2027</i>
June 5th : Roman Murder Mystery Venue: Memorial Hall Time: 07:00 to 10:30pm	January 29th : Burns Night Hooley Time: 7.00 to 10.30pm Venue: Memorial Hall
August: Picnic on the Meads Date: To be decided	March 18th : Tea Dance Time: 2.00 to 5.00pm Venue: Memorial Hall
October 2nd : Pumpkin Patch Hoe Down Venue: Memorial Hall Time: 07:00 to 10:30pm	June 11th: Murder Mystery Night Time: 7.00 till 1030pm Venue: Memorial Hall
December 11th : Christmas in the Caribbean Venue: Memorial Hall Time: 07:00 to 10:30pm	August: Picnic on the Meads Date to be decided
	October 8th: Rock 'n' Roll Bingo Time: 7.00 to 10.00pm Venue: Memorial Hall Where Bingo meets the excitement of music
	December 11th: Prom Night Time: 7:00 to 10:30pm Venue: Memorial Hall

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New Horizons Programme – Starting in May

An exciting new series of talks, *New Horizons*, is due to begin in May, offering members the opportunity to explore some of the key challenges that may shape our future.

This is not an interest group, but will run more like our regular Speaker Meetings, so any member is welcome to attend, especially if you're keen to stretch the grey cells!

Topics will include developments in health, environmental issues, and political challenges affecting us all.

The talks will be delivered by speakers with experience and expertise in their respective fields and will take place at **Marford Hall** in the late morning on the third Thursday of each month. Each session will last around an hour.

We are delighted that the first session on **Thursday 21st May 11am to 12noon**, will be led by Alexander Cameron, a third-year PhD Researcher in Neuroscience from the University of Reading. He previously gave a well-received talk to the u3a science group about the ageing brain and strategies that may help delay cognitive decline and will be presenting a similar topic to launch the series.

Please note that there will be no refreshments provided however, following the talks, there will be an opportunity for further informal discussion at The Swan, where the speaker will join as our guest.

To help gauge interest and likely numbers in this new initiative or if you are likely to attend the first session, members are encouraged to register their support either by emailing jparke102@googlemail.com or by leaving their name at the next Speaker meeting.

Save the Date

Wheathampstead Village Day – Saturday 11th July

Wheathampstead Village Day will take place on Saturday 11th July from 12 noon through to 10pm, promising a full day of entertainment, activities, and community spirit.

This year's theme is "Toybox Treasures", which is sure to inspire plenty of colourful and creative interpretations - especially in the ever-popular High Street parade.

u3a will be there too, with our own stall on the day, so do come along, say hello, and support us if you're attending. More information on how members can get involved and help support our stall will be included in the next newsletter.

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With stalls, live entertainment, food and drink, and activities for all ages, it's always a highlight of the village calendar and a great opportunity to meet up with friends and enjoy the atmosphere. Do keep the date free and come along to join in the fun!

Wider u3a

u3a Festival, York – 1st to 3rd July

There is still time to sign up for this – here is the link

<mailto:https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/festival-2026>

Here is a link to this month's u3a Friends Newsletter.

<https://mailchi.mp/u3a/april-26-online-events?e=9180adf469>

I suggest that if these are of interest to you, or may be in the future, (invaluable if you have to spend any time when you can't get out and about) you sign up to receive these emails yourself. Topics include;

- "Oi, Mind Yer Language" - 30 Apr - Discover the delights and differences in the English language.
- "The Spruce Goose" - 5th May - Discover how Howard Hughes built the Hughes H-4 Hercules "Spruce Goose," the giant wooden aircraft that flew once and proved his vision.
- "Laughter Yoga" – 13th May - Laughter Yoga combines hearty laughter exercises with deep yoga-style breathing (pranayama).

There's also a project about listed buildings for you to join in with and news about online interest groups.

Other Local News/Information

Carpet Bowls at Chapel Hall - Reminder

Following last month's item, there is still interest in introducing carpet bowls at the Chapel Gym in Wheathampstead. As a reminder, carpet bowls is a mini, indoor version of lawn bowls—easy to learn, sociable, and playable all year round, making it a great option, particularly during the winter months.

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The Chapel Gym is currently considering purchasing the necessary equipment, but before making a final decision, it would be helpful to gauge interest from members.

If this is something you would like to take part in, please do send a quick email to richard.brett@can-do.co.uk. Your response will help determine whether this new activity goes ahead.

Fencing Evening – Try Something Different!



With water sports on the horizon and plenty of activities to keep us moving, it seems U3A members are not slowing down any time soon! So why not add a little swordplay to the mix? Fancy channelling your inner musketeer or, simply proving that we can still be surprisingly nimble when required. Ann Chance-Read has shared details of an exciting Fencing Evening taking place at Marford Memorial Hall in Wheathampstead on Friday 1st May at 7:00pm.

No need for Olympic ambitions (or lightning speed!). This is all about having a go, sharing a laugh, and discovering that a bit of fencing is great fun at any age. Graceful lunges are entirely optional, and style points may well count just as much as accuracy!

This fun and energetic session offers the chance to try your hand at fencing, with games, duels and plenty of light-hearted competition. No previous experience needed.

The cost is £16, and all are welcome. If you're interested in taking part, please contact Ann on 07951 169233 for more information or to book your place.

It promises to be a lively and enjoyable evening. Why not give it a go?