

u3a
learn, laugh, live

WELWYN HATFIELD
SPRING 2026 ISSUE 81



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Front page picture by Merle Gwyn, back page by Sue Ould,
both members of the Photography Group.

From the Editor

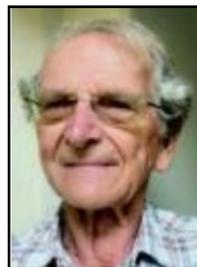
I have learned a lot from the free Zoom talks organised by the u3a. The AI ones have proved very useful, but those I enjoy most are on Aviation. Its organiser is a retired US Air Force pilot, living in Suffolk. He is a real expert on aviation but is at his best when commenting on America's current Commander in Chief. As the u3a is strictly non-political the moderator has her work cut out to keep him under control, and the talks are for obvious reasons not recorded. They are great fun though.

The latest one really engaged me because it dealt with the

struggle between British and German physicists during WW2 over electronic aids to bombers. Each side sought to develop ways to improve the accuracy of their bombers and to interfere with those of the enemy – the Battle of the Beams.

My father flew in a Pathfinder Squadron, which relied on electronic tools to find the target for the planes that followed. This talk has inspired me to write (page 22) about his experiences, which I hope you will find interesting.

Geoffrey Hollis



NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

We began the Autumn term with the atmosphere of summer still surrounding us and in a few short weeks were thrust into the hurly-burly of Christmas preparations. I can't believe how quickly the time has passed and how much we have done.

Just before term began we enjoyed a beautiful day at **Elton Hall**, near Peterborough organised by Corrie Godfrey for the Garden Group. Glorious sunshine and impressive gardens made this day a delight. I loved the topiary and the shell-covered arbour.

A few days later the Arts Appreciation Group had a great trip to the **Ashmolean Museum**, Oxford, organised by Jean Mackie (page 12). There was so much to see I spent the whole day inside.

We are very fortunate to have so many visits organised by our u3a.

Towards the end of September we had the opportunity to partake of Breakfast at the **Côte Restaurant**, organised by Tony

Tutton and much enjoyed by quite a large group.

At the end of that month the Travel Group set off for **Devon & Cornwall** for a rewarding stay (pages 10–12).



Unfortunately, this meant that I had to miss the **Open Day**, which was run by Joan Scales and Alison Wingfield, our Groups Organisers. This attracted some new members and a visit from the Mayor (pictured, by Peter Fox); everyone I spoke to afterwards said it was really successful.



In mid-October we enjoyed an Italian lunch at the **Terranova Restaurant**. This has become a very popular event organised by Tony Tutton with very good food at a very reasonable price. On 8 November another u3a highlight was the Dance with **Tony's Simply Sixties Band**. Once again this was well attended and it was a delight to see so many people dancing. This was an afternoon event with fish'n'chips in the break and it worked well.



In mid-November a small group of us, the **Viva Voce group**, led by Hazel Bell, performed a poetry reading for the residents of Oakview Care Home (page 20). This was a new venture, which we may repeat elsewhere. The following day Jean and the Arts Appreciation Group held a meeting at the Focolare Centre to explore the life and work of

the artist, **Paul Gauguin**. This is a lovely venue; a well-presented video and talk made for a really interesting afternoon, which was very well-attended (page 15).

In the last week of November, we had another lunch organised. This time it was a Turkish lunch at the **Misya Restaurant** in Welwyn Garden City. Our u3a certainly knows how to enjoy ourselves!

So then we were into Christmas activities. In the first week we had our **party with entertainment** at the Ludwick Family Centre. This took the form of an entertainment, a quiz and refreshments consisting of coffee with mince pies and stollen. The entertainment this year took the form of a review, *Deja Review* I called it, on account of the material comprising songs and sketches from our past. I feel sure you appreciated the efforts of the cast and their willingness to do something silly to entertain you all. Hopefully, it was funny, familiar and festive (picture on page 8). Then Tony did a very professional job as quizmaster

before we enjoyed our festive treats.

At time of writing, I am anticipating our **Christmas Lunch** at Homestead Court Hotel. I value this as, with a family of vegetarians, it's the only Christmas lunch I have!

That leaves one more festive event before Christmas and that is the Theatre Visits group trip to see "Twelfth Night" at the Barbican. I am really looking

forward to it.

So that ends my report, but I really would like to credit all the committee, volunteers and group leaders who help to make this organisation thrive. We are very fortunate to have such a willing, talented and capable group of people who give their time freely. Thanks to you all.

Pamela Williams



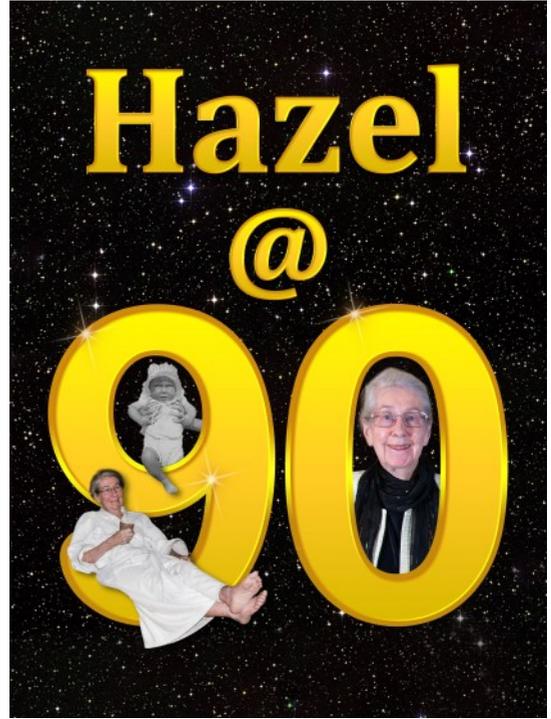
The **Scrabble Group** still has room for a few more members. They meet on a **Thursday morning** at **Birchwood leisure centre**, Hatfield, in the Well-field Trust room from 10-12. Don't worry if you haven't played for years, they just enjoy themselves! Plenty of parking, coffee bar.

Contact Group Leader Ann Bolt on 01707 260938

News

Many congratulations to **Hazel Bell** who celebrated her 90th Birthday last December. Although she has given up editing this Newsletter she still maintains its index, and edits the Newsletter of the Hatfield Local History Society. She is active in WhatNews! (page 21).

Country Life always has a small image of a ladybird somewhere on its front cover. This newsletter now has an intruder on its cover, with apologies to the Photography Group for interfering with their beautiful images.



Travel Group dates for 2026

Beautiful Jersey 1st – 6th May Tailored Travel 'Welu262'.

Industrial heritage of the Black Country 6th – 10th July

Tailored Travel 'Welu261'

Historic houses and heritage of Northumbria 7th – 11th September.

Are you are looking to book a holiday with **Riviera Travel**? If so, do remember to **book directly** with Riviera rather than via a travel agent, and **mention u3a Welwyn Hatfield** at the time of booking. **They will donate 10% of the holiday cost to us.** This does not cost you anything; the amount that would normally go to a travel agent comes to us. It **does help you** though because it keeps our annual subscription lower than it would otherwise have been.

Is there a techie in the house?!

The u3a depends on its members contributing their time, enthusiasm and skills.

Our Wednesday morning meetings, for example, simply could not happen without them. One important responsibility is shouldered by **Ann Davies**. With permission from the speaker, she broadcasts the talk over Zoom and simultaneously records it.

Afterwards I load the recording onto YouTube for members who cannot see it live. Links to these options are sent to more than 70 members who request them..

Ann and I have been managing this for nearly four years, though neither of us initially felt qualified. Since learning about Zoom during covid, Ann has led its use for our u3a, ensuring house-bound members stay connected even after in-person meetings resumed. Despite her many other responsibilities, she

handles this task every week as no one else has volunteered to help.



When Ann is away I fill in as best I can. Someone with technical expertise could greatly improve the recordings. Currently, the quality depends on many factors, and Zoom often filters out sounds like laughter, clapping, and music.

We're not looking for the new Cecil B. DeMille, just someone who could see a way to improve what we're doing.

The committee have agreed that, if new equipment is needed, they would gladly provide it, so we really need someone to take on this subject and come up with some suggestions. Or at least someone to share the task on the occasional Wednesday morning!

Are you up for the challenge? Your u3a needs you.

Jill Longman

A Trio of Triumphs!

As usual we've had three different end of term entertainments, all of them Triumphs.

First was the biannual dance (often referred to as **Tony's dance**) in the afternoon of Saturday November 8th (*picture page 4*).

After a successful experiment last year we again held the winter dance during the afternoon. It was indeed a triumph of music and fun! We all love the vibrant atmosphere and the general feeling of people enjoying themselves whether able to dance or not. We had fish and

chips at 2 pm. They were delicious and fuelled us for the second half.

Our own Tony Tutton and his group 'Simply 60s' played the music which took us back to our youthful selves—unfortunately in spirit only for many of us as the flesh is not quite so cooperative as it once was. There were around 120 of us so the ambiance was really buzzing.

NB The summer dance will be in the evening of May 9th 2026; don't miss out! Tickets will be available from around March.



Santa's Special Brew Tea from Hatfield Market was worth every penny!



Undoubtedly another great triumph was the **Christmas Party and Quiz** on December 3rd at Ludwick Family Club in WGC. Around 130 members came along to enjoy the fun. This year the entertainment was a medley of sketches and musical items taken from the 50s, 60s and 70s – timeless snippets. We all remember the ‘I look down on him’ skit, and the rather irreverent music of Tom Lehrer.

The highlight and finale was the Ladies Chorus (with one token gentleman) who gave us an hilarious version of ‘If I were not at u3a somewhere else I’d surely be.....’ (supply your own tune), we portrayed a policeman (who couldn’t reach the microphone); a cleaner, a gardener and a ballet dancer were some of the other occupations. (*captured opposite by Peter Fox*). There were some questionable and suggestive lyrics which might not have been heard by all.

After the audience had calmed down, Tony Tutton did another great job with one of his excel-

lent quizzes. The photos of ‘Where in the World is this?’ were brilliant. Then people were amply rewarded for their patience with tea or coffee and mince pies or stollen.

Near the end of term, our third triumph was the final meeting of the year, as always



our **Christmas Lunch** at Homestead Court hotel. Around 100 people, many in Christmas jumpers, enjoyed a good meal.

The room looked festive and the tables had very smart black and gold crackers. Chatting and laughter didn’t stop and the atmosphere was joyful. The waiter service was excellent and no one had to wait too long to tuck in. This was a delicious end to a triumphant term.

Ann Davies

WESTWARD HO! THE GARDENS AND HISTORIC HOUSES OF DEVON AND CORNWALL 28 Sept– 2 October

As Shakespeare wrote in one of his sonnets, "*Summer's lease hath all too short a date.*" But this year the **Travel Group's** visit to the Devon/Cornwall borders stretched summer for us. We had very good weather—sunny, if not always warm – and glorious countryside to enjoy. Coach travel affords better views than from a car, and Wiltshire was looking gorgeous. The outward journey on the A303 gave me pleasure—a route familiar from visits to my daughter at Exeter University and near Stonehenge.

En route, we diverted to N Devon to visit **RHS Garden Rosemoor**. It was a steep drive in places. We left the A30 at Okehampton towards Bideford and Westward Ho! Lunch was a scramble, but we had plenty of time to explore the interesting gardens, including the hot, cool, rose, and shrub gardens, plus the lake and woodland. Heading back to Plymouth, we skirted Dartmoor and arrived at The New Continental Hotel in good time for dinner.

Day 2: This began with drama. Many chose a full English breakfast but were told they could only select THREE items! This caused consternation but was rectified the next

morning by our super-attentive guide, Paul.

Our first trip was across the Tamar to the **NT Cotehele** property, a Tudor house with fine armour and tapestries. The route was challenging, involving backing up narrow lanes—we blamed sat-nav! It was well worth the visit, though I always find myself fixated on interiors and missing the gardens. In the afternoon, we visited **Buckland Abbey**, associated with Sir Francis Drake and Sir Richard Greville. It was interesting to revisit and see the changes, as the Abbey now hosts modern art exhibitions alongside its extensive walks.

Day 3: We enjoyed a naval **harbour cruise**. While awaiting our boat, **Pam Fogarty** (pictured second from right, in navy jacket) shared recollections of her time in Plymouth as a WREN (see page 12). The cruise was interesting, passing warships and nuclear submarines on the Tamar. On our return, we set off for **Lanhydrock** which I had never visited before. It is an impressive late 19th-century NT house with gardens featuring rhododendrons and camellias—sadly, not the right time of year to see them.

Day 4: A full day with two highlights. First we visited the **Eden Project** near St. Austell.





Unlike many, I had never been, and it didn't disappoint. The giant Biomes were spectacular. I spent considerable time in the Rainforest Biome and in the atmospheric Mediterranean Biome, which featured a Dionysian Bacchanal sculpture by Tim Smit. In the afternoon, we visited The **Lost Gardens of Heligan**. I decided to forgo the challenging Jungle routes, instead soaking up the peace before the drive back to Plymouth.

Day 5: Our final day featured a splendid drive back through Dorset on the A35. I felt nostalgic driving roads I hadn't visited for nearly twenty years, recalling family and Thomas Hardy. At the NT's **Kingston Lacy**, (pictured previous page), I was shocked to discover how near it was to my parents' old home. The House hosted a Rembrandt self-portrait we had missed earlier. Serendipity! Egyptian artefacts, including an obelisk from Philae and a stone sarcophagus were also most impressive.

I must mention our brilliant guide, Paul, who made the experiences richer, and our leaders **Jean Davis** and **Tony Bristow** who organised such a wonderful trip. I would also like to thank everyone for making it so convivial.

Pamela Williams

Pam Fogarty remembers:

I joined the WRNS as a stenographer when I was 18 – WREN EDWARDS 119768. I went to HMS Dauntless in Reading to do SQUARE BASHING – that is learning about the Royal Navy. After a few months at Chatham I was sent to Plymouth Command and worked as a stenographer at the Hoe.

I lived at a place called St. Budeaux, looking over HMS Drake Dockyard, and worked in the Commander in Chief's building at Mount Wise opposite the dockyard.

I used to type the DAILY STATE which is a record of the ships coming and going to and from Plymouth Command. One day I was asked to attend a BOARD OF ENQUIRY and take the minutes on board ship. I was escorted up the gangplank to the Captain's cabin. A document, labelled CRYPTOGRAPHIC MATERIAL TOP SECRET, had been stolen from the safe. I went back for a week to type the minutes and was given a letter of recommendation from the Captain for my work. I have kept the letter all these years.

This trip brought back many happy memories of my time in Plymouth."

Pictures by Stephen Hodges

Exploring London Group 3

Our trip this autumn on 25th September was to the birthplace of **Charlie Chaplin**. 22 of us made our way to Kennington tube station where we met our guide Robin who was dressed for the occasion as Charlie Chaplin complete with bowler hat and cane.



He took us on a tour of the streets and addresses where Charlie Chaplin was born in April 1889 and grew up in extreme poverty with his parents and brother. Both his parents were on the musical hall stage, so his upbringing was unconventional to say the least, with his alcoholic father absent a lot of the time.

Robin had a book filled with pictures of the area and took us to the various houses where Charlie lived with his mother and brother, often in one single room. We went to the workhouse where Chaplin lived twice, before he was 9 years old.

The main building is now a museum and cinema showing old films, whilst the dormitories have been pulled down or have become expensive apartments.

Our guide then took us to the pub grating where it is believed Chaplin learned to tap dance. We also learnt about how he then found fame and fortune from the age of 14 in local music halls, touring the USA vaudeville circuit in 1914 and then becoming a film star, using the skills he learned whilst growing up. We walked down Black Prince Road to the pub known as the Queen's Head where his uncle was the owner and his father died aged 38. Saying goodbye to Robin most of us retired inside for a rather nice lunch, at the now Queen's Head café. Highly recommended!

After this, a few of us took a stroll down Lambeth Walk, opposite the pub, resisting the urge to sing and dance the song, and made our way to the **Imperial War Museum** in Lambeth Road. This is impossible to see properly in a short visit, but we managed one or two floors and some of the very impressive exhibits. Well worth a trip of its own.

All in all, a great day out.

Sue McLellen, Tony Dodd

Arts Appreciation

Our Group had a slow start in 2025 but picked up in the second half of the year with a number of events, including a fascinating guided tour around **Knebworth House** on a beautiful sunny day.

A highlight was our visit to the **Ashmolean museum in Oxford**, with its world-famous collections ranging from Egyptian mummies and classical sculpture to Pre-Raphaelite paintings and contemporary art. It was an early start but, with heavy traffic on the M25, we only just arrived in time for our planned welcome coffee break at 11am.

For our tour of the museum we were split into four groups, each with a guide. Everyone agreed that they were truly excellent – knowledgeable about the artefacts and also so enthusiastic. As one of them explained, the museum is a 'collection of collections', as many of the displays were donations from benefactors of their complete personal collections.

One gallery was full of beautiful musical instruments and another, tiny room, stacked full of exquisite silver

pieces. We were shown their most famous items such as the Alfred Jewel made of enamel and quartz enclosed in gold. Dating from the late 9th century, reign of Alfred the Great, it is inscribed "AELFRED MEC HEHT GEWRYCAN", "Alfred ordered me made".



Each guide gave well over the hour's allocated time and left us wanting to explore more. A number of us did just that, after a well-deserved lunch break. Overall, a very enjoyable day with lots of commitments to return to this remarkable museum. During contact with the museum leader after the event, she commented on how impressed the guides were by the groups' level of interest and curiosity – very nice feedback for our u3a!



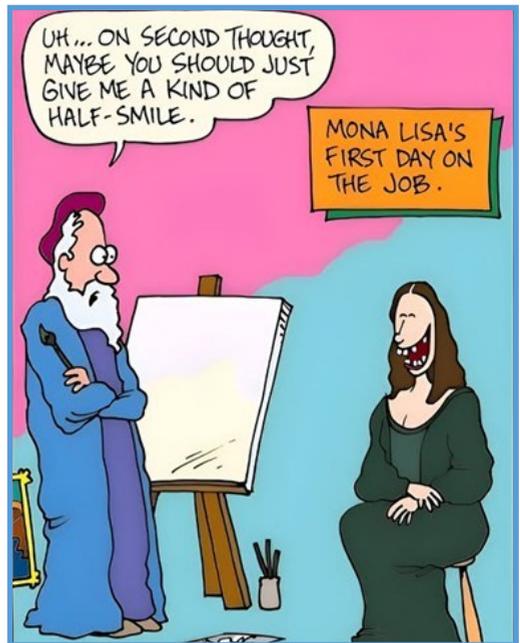
Our final meeting of the year was at an excellent venue, **Focolare Centre for Unity** on Parkway, where we discussed **Paul Gauguin**, a very interesting, possibly controversial, individual both in terms of his personal life and his artwork. We learnt about his early life as a successful lawyer in France and then his move into painting at a relatively late stage. He was well known to the impressionist circle, particularly Van Gogh, and was present in Arles when Van Gogh cut off part of his ear. His move to the South seas and subsequent marriage to a local 12-year-old is well-known. We looked at the works he produced there and in a favourite haunt, Pont Aven, Brittany.

At the break we enjoyed some fes-

tive fayre – the stolen was a particular favourite – and then looked in more detail at a few of Gauguin’s most notable paintings, considering both his technique and the stunning colour palettes that he used. We finished off by discussing one of his very last pieces – a large mural entitled ‘Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?’

We shared copies of the piece and had a lively discussion about its meaning and impact. We all learned a lot more about Gauguin and his paintings but the question is, ‘How much of it will we remember?’ !!

Jean Mackie



New Architecture Group?

The Architecture Group running on the first and third Mondays at the Cricket Club is full. We are very lucky to have retired Architect Mike Nicolas prepare very interesting and varied lectures for us, on subjects ranging from cathedrals to art deco, modern architecture and lots more.



As Mike says, he "is not getting any younger", and it would be great to have a second Group, on a different day of the week, running in tandem. Perhaps some of our current Group members may be interested in doing this, or do we have any other retired Architects among our membership? The second Group would be free to decide the format and content of the talks/lecture on Architecture. Help would be provided in finding a suitable venue (possibly the Cricket Club on a different day), and Welwyn Hatfield u3a would fund any equipment needed.

Joan Scales

Mixed Media Painting

It's been just over a year since the Group was formed and it's proving popular.



We meet alternate Tuesdays in the very comfortable Woolmer Green Village Hall where artists of all levels join each other to paint, draw or do whatever else they enjoy creating. During the summer we even managed a session in the grounds though it will be a while till we can do that again !



Space is limited but we could squeeze in one or two more, so if you fancy a social afternoon with like-minded folk creating art and sharing a cuppa please get in touch.

Susan Cooper 07827 474046

Shakespeare Study Group

Many people find reading or watching Shakespeare daunting or incomprehensible. The fault probably lies in the way that Shakespeare's works have been taught in school. It's true that some of the language can be convoluted and some words were used in ways that are unfamiliar to us today but his plays, characters and verse have continued to delight and fascinate audiences for over 400 years. He is, rightly in my view, still considered England's greatest author.

In the Shakespeare Study Group, we approach his plays, not as an academic exercise, but as a way of getting inside the minds of his audience. We look at how he uses verse to guide his actors in how to show the thoughts, motivations and world view of his characters. We also look at his sources (he very rarely made up an original plot) and how he adapted those sources to reflect the political realities and events of his day.

We begin by reading a section

of a play (an Act or a few scenes) as a way of familiarising ourselves with

the words and characters and then we watch that section acted in a DVD – usually from the BBC Shakespeare series from the 1970s and '80s.

We discuss what we've read and seen, to understand and follow the action and recognise how he develops his ideas. Inevitably, we encounter dialogue and action that is driven by the context of contemporary events and the biased history acceptable to the ruling elite. We also discover the mythologies and superstitions that drove his interpretations.

We are not in a pressurised school environment but we discover together his fascinating legacy that has enthralled generations of theatre-goers.

We meet on the fourth Wednesday of each month. No previous experience of studying Shakespeare is needed and all are welcome.



Sam Segar

Art and Photography Exhibition 18th February 2026

Last February we had a wonderful turn out for our annual exhibition. It's a great way for dedicated members to 'show off' their many artistic talents. We have a diverse range of art Groups, from crafts to painting to photography. Members are always happy to talk about the work they do in their study time and encourage new members to join or start a group.

In 2026 we are welcoming one of our new art Groups, Mixed Media Painting to the exhibition. This

new Group is led by Sue Cooper, a talented artist (see page 16).

We will also have the following study Groups displaying their artistic skills:

Craftea led by Nicola Beynon
Oil Painting, Muriel Montgomery
Painting, Raúl Curiel
Photography, Henry Brzeski
Watercolours, Richard Griffiths

Please do drop in and remember your cup for free tea and coffee!

The exhibition is open to U3A members only.

Alison Wingfield



U3A Welwyn Hatfield

Art & Photography Exhibition

**Wednesday
February 18th
2026**



**Ludwick Family Centre, Hall
Grove, WGC AL7 4PH
10am to 11.30am
Free tea and coffee - Bring
your own cup!**

Poetry Reading for a select audience

When a local care home, Oakview Lodge, sought u3a groups to share their interests, Hazel Bell was quick to respond with an offer of a poetry reading, a life-long interest of hers. She enlisted Pam Williams, Sam Segar, and me to help.

Choosing which poems to read took quite a bit of thought; between us, we have an almost endless supply of "favourites" so the first thing to consider was how long the session should last and what sort of selection we should present.

Would the audience be keen and knowledgeable fans of poetry, or a random selection of residents whose organized entertainment for the afternoon happened to be us? Probably the latter, so went for a broad variety of offerings, with some that should be easily recognized by most and a few that might appeal more to those of a poetic bent. A running order was planned, beginning with light-hearted stuff and working up to

more serious subjects.

On the day, we were shown into a warm communal room with about 15 residents seated in a large circle. After asking for the radio to be turned off, we began with Pam reading T.S. Eliot's "Macavity." We were somewhat distracted by a "mystery cat" in the room—a realistic robotic marmalade cat that mewed loudly every 30 seconds as a resident stroked it.

Other distractions included noise from the reception area and someone sorting cutlery. In spite of this, we soldiered on. The audience listened attentively and were very appreciative. Afterward, they enjoyed reminiscing about the poems they had learned in their school days.

One lady, a former WHU3A member, hoped for future visits, specifically suggesting a watercolour painting session. We may indeed return to share more poems—hopefully with a little less competing noise!



Jill Longman

WHATnews!

Several u3a members are among the volunteers who every fortnight produce extracts from the *Welwyn Hatfield Times* on CDs for circulation to partially sighted people. The CDs are sent free of charge via Royal Mail and are also uploaded to a YouTube channel within 36 hours of the newspaper's publication.

This effort is co-ordinated by a Registered Charity called WHATnews! part of the national Talking Newspaper movement.

WHATnews! was founded in 1977 and now publishes fortnightly. The service is a true labour of love, powered by four dedicated volunteer teams of editors, readers, recordists, and copiers. All roles are carried out at home. Hazel Bell is one of the longest serving volunteers, having joined in 1981.

WHATnews! are always looking for listeners and recordists. If you know someone who could benefit from this free service, or are interested in recording, do email info@whatnews.org.uk.

Family History Group

This Group is for members who want to know more about their forebears.

We are not all experts, just a friendly set of people with a common interest, who meet in the afternoons of the 3rd Tuesday of each month, normally at a member's home.

Our meetings are an eclectic mix of social history and family history with a mixture of formal lectures using YouTube, talks given by members and group help sessions where members try to breakdown the 'brickwalls' other members have hit while trying to go back in time for their family.

For u3a members new to family history, it's become so much easier with companies such as Ancestry and Find my Past and access to free sites such as FreeBMD and FamilySearch.

We are here to help you solve these mysteries so why not join us?

Brian Bolton-Knight
01438 714304

Bomber Command.

On 24th February 1944 at 18.48 GMT Lancaster bomber JB 721 with a crew of seven took off from Warboys airfield near Peterborough to start a bombing run to Germany. Three and a half hours later, returning from its mission, it was machine gunned over NE France by a German night fighter attacking from beneath and therefore undetected.

The pilot ordered the crew to bail out; the bomb aimer, who spent the whole flight lying on a mattress looking out through a perspex canopy at the front of the plane, threw aside the mattress, wrestled to open an emergency door beneath, then threw himself headfirst into the icy night sky from 20,000 feet.

Unfortunately, his parachute failed and he fell to his death on a railway station at Valleroy. However his actions allowed three of his colleagues at the front of the plane to bail out. Two of them landed safely although one had severely broken legs. The third is buried in nearby Abbéville-lès-Conflans, which named a street after him, *Place Roy Tandy*.

The three members of the crew at the rear of the aircraft went down with it, on the outskirts of Briey, a town in northeast France; they were buried in the local cemetery. The crash explosion blew out all the windows in this town.



The bomb aimer was my father, Flight Sergeant William John Hollis, aged 22. The following day was my mother's birthday and she received two missives: one a Birthday card from him, the other a telegram saying he was missing in action. She dyed her hair black as a sign of mourning, then struggled to bring up twin boys, Patrick and me, born in November 1943.

She died in the early evening of the 24th February 2018, the eve of her 96th birthday, the very same day and time that John as he was called had set off on his fatal flight. Had she decided this was a good time to be with him?

He left behind a lot of letters that she had kept, and his Log Book, which aircrew completed themselves, returned to her by the Air Ministry. A friend, Rob Owen, an expert on the RAF, has helped me enormously by explaining it.

It showed that after considerable training he had flown 21 missions over Europe. All were hazardous, and most of long duration – typically seven or eight hours. His targets included Peenemunde, the development site for Hitler's v-weapons, carried out at low level and (seven times) heavily defended Berlin.

He belonged to 156 Squadron, Pathfinders who went in ahead of the main attacks to mark the target; they stood out alone on enemy radar which made them prime targets for flak. In January and February 1944 alone ten planes were lost from Warboys, including that of the Squadron Leader.

As I find out more about Bomber Command and the losses it suffered, my respect for its members grows and grows. Out of a total of its 125,000 aircrew, 55,573 were killed, a 44.4% death rate. A further 8,403 men were wounded in action, and 9,838 became prisoners of war. In the last ten days of his life my father flew four missions. He knew the risk he was running each time as he had adopted the habit of recording the number of planes lost in each of them, typically 30–40, but one was 79.

By incredible good fortune I possess tangible evidence of his last flight. In 2018 I made a pilgrimage to the crash site at Briey and the War Grave near Nancy where

my father was ultimately buried. While at Briey I took the opportunity to visit a nearby architecturally interesting post-war block of flats (designed by Le Corbusier). The lady who showed me round happened to live only 50 metres from the spot where his plane crashed; she knew why I was in Briey and fished out of her handbag a 60cm long piece of crumpled aluminium which her husband had dug up in their garden – a relic of JB721.

You can imagine my surprise and pleasure when she handed it to me. It is now in a presentation case, a small tribute to a very brave man.

Geoffrey Hollis



Book Review

Brewing in Hertfordshire, Martyn Cornell, Amberley Publishing, The Hill, Stroud, GL5 4EP, ISBN 978 1 3981 0844 8 (print), ISBN 978 1 3981 08455 (eBook).

Martyn Cornell grew up in Hertfordshire and is a prize-winning author of books on beer and brewing. This one is a guidebook – and a lot more – to the history of brewing throughout the county, showing much to discover and surprise the reader.

The book encompasses 43 Hertfordshire towns and villages and is packed with interesting information about the careers, businesses and family history of local brewers.

The trade goes back a long way. The earliest record of a brewery in the county is at St Albans Abbey in 1302. Hertford's Glove and Dolphin Inn was established in 1621 and the Old Barnet Brewery in 1694.

Some of the brewing families became highly prosperous, owning many tied houses. Benskins of Watford, for example, owned some 640 pubs from Brighton to Cambridge and also supplied the House of Commons.

On the other hand, the Temperance Movement of Victorian times gave rise to troubled consciences within some brewing families. This was the case with Joseph Clemson Benskin, a devout Christian, who in the 1890s renounced his interest in the business in favour of his half-brothers.

There was a tremendous variety in the types of beer sold. 'Old Nick' strong ale, for example, was sold in Hertford, 'Stingo' ale in St Albans. Such variety inevitably gave rise to a plethora of advertisements and decorative labels, and many of these are reproduced in the book. There are also numerous drawings of brewery buildings and photographs of drains, workers, and casks.

The history of brewing is long and not over yet; while many public houses have closed in recent years, the Appendix lists 47 new breweries. Brewing lives on!

Ruth Jeavens, *Hertfordshire Local History Society*



The Cherry Tree

The picture on the back cover was taken a few years ago, by a member of the Photography Group, when there still was a cherry tree in front of Waitrose. Supermarket. This store occupies an important position to the north of the town centre and the railway station.

The original Cherry Tree Restaurant on that site was a cornerstone of the town's social identity. Established in the 1920s as a modest wooden structure it was intended to be a "wet restaurant" that provided a sophisticated alternative to the traditional pubs of the era.



The City fathers made sure there were no other pubs in the town centre, which gave it a strong advantage.



.By 1935, it had evolved into a grand brick building featuring a restaurant and a dance hall. For decades, it was the heartbeat of the community, famously hosting iconic rock bands like Led Zeppelin, The Who, and The Small Faces during the 1960s.

This building was demolished in 1991 to make way for the Waitrose supermarket, but the original façade was retained, including a large stylized tree highlighted in green. This can still be seen in our picture. Today this has been painted over in white which is a shame because it was really an attractive image.

A few years ago Wetherspoons sought permission to convert a large detached house on Parkway into one of their pubs and to christen it as *The Cherry Tree*. After much debate their application was refused.

RIP The Cherry Tree.

GH

SPRING TERM SPEAKERS

Term starts **7th January**. Doors open at 9.45; refreshments from 10-10.30 (bring your own cup for free tea or coffee). 10.30 start.

To watch from home on zoom, contact: zoom@u3awelhat.org.

To receive links to recordings contact: video@u3awelhat.org.

7 Jan WGC Lucy Lewis – “Lighting the Fuse”

Lucy was the UK's first female bomb disposal expert. Her eye-opening memoir reveals the world of being a successful woman in the military and how she made history – not just once, but twice.

14 Jan HAT Sarah Kerrison – “Fever”

This illustrated talk explores the many diseases that have gripped the country from the 1300s to the end of the 19th century. We will be tracing the first steps in preventing and managing disease and taking the long view on the Covid-19 pandemic.

21 Jan WGC Iestyn Edwards – “My Tutu went AWOL!”

Iestyn Edwards is an Olivier Award winning, Guildhall trained opera singer, who accidentally toured military bases raising troop morale in Iraq and Afghanistan with his cabaret act in a tutu.

28 Jan HAT Janet Brewer – “Tutankhamun’s Egypt”

Tutankhamun was born and brought up in the city of Akhetaten, founded by his father. What was Tutankhamun's life like as a child and later as a King? Using evidence from his tomb, we will try and decide.

4 Feb WGC Alex Mair – “Crime Scene Search”

Historical facts surrounding forensics at a crime scene and the physical hands-on approach to crime scene search. Case studies with added humour of Alex's personal experience.

11 Feb WGC Gary Sutcliffe – “Resolve: Stories, Stigma, Success and Searching” ([a late change to the printed programme](#)) Resolve, a local charity, supports people recovering from the grip of drug and alcohol abuse. Its Fundraising Manager, Gary Sutcliffe, will give a powerful insight into their work, sharing their successes in helping local residents, literally saving lives, while battling the stigma attached.

18 Feb WGC Art & Photography Exhibition

Displays from our artistically talented groups (page 18).

25 Feb HAT Craig Angus – “Seeking Servants at Knebworth House”

Country houses and estates relied on a large staff to keep things running smoothly. In this talk, Craig Angus from the Knebworth House Archive discusses the types of records that can be found when tracing ancestors who were in service, focusing on Knebworth House and sharing the stories of some of its longest serving staff.

4 Mar WGC Guy Thomas – “London Colney Airfield in WWI – RFC and US Army Corps”

In late 1915 the government requisitioned 212 acres of farmland near London Colney to establish a training site for the Royal Flying Corp. The airfield became a leading facility, producing famous Flying Corp Aces Captain Albert Ball and Mick Mannock.

11 Mar HAT AGM

A brief business meeting followed by entertainment—do come!

18 Mar WGC Gary Fisher – “The Life of Elizabeth I”

Gary is well known to us. This time he will talk about some of the main events in the life of Elizabeth I before she came to the throne.

25 Mar HAT Bill Lindsay – “William Schaw Lindsay, Victorian Entrepreneur”

A rags to riches story of Bill's great-great-grandfather, an orphan who ran away to sea and became the owner of a large Shipping Company during the 1850s.

1 April WGC Graham Harrison – “Moll Cutpurse”

Tudor and Stuart London was the home of many real-life rogues. One of the most memorable of these was Mary Frith, also known as Moll Cutpurse, who flouted convention at every turn. Moll took to the streets and the stage, making a spectacle of herself that earned official condemnation and public admiration.

Welwyn Hatfield U3A does not endorse any products or services offered by speakers



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