



HAVERHILL & DISTRICT

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laugh,
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News and Views

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HAVERHILL
TOWN COUNCIL

May 2025

Dear Members

As we settled down to play Cribbage Wednesday afternoon, normally the 1st and 3rd in the month but because April had five Wednesdays this broke the pattern of playing every other week, it got me thinking about Calendars and bank holidays. This time of the year seems full of them. There's the two in May and Easter wandering about, sometimes in March, but mainly in April. Why is it not fixed?

The timing of Easter coincides with the Jewish festival of Passover. This is based on a combination of solar and lunar calendars. Let me explain. Easter Sunday occurs on the first Sunday following the first full moon on or after the vernal (spring) equinox. This means that Easter Sunday can be anywhere between March 22nd and April 25th.



On April 25th I took part in Maura's Short Walk around Horseheath. It was a nice sunny morning and the Skylarks were singing, but difficult to spot. We had the pleasure of seeing Bluebells and Cowslips in bloom. A herd of deer also crossed our

path at one point. A very pleasant morning was had by all.

If you are thinking of joining an existing group or looking to start something of your own. Contact the Groups Coordinator: groupscoordinator@haverhillu3a.com

Warm regards,

Tom Parker, Chair, Haverhill and District u3a

Speaker's Corner

Our April meeting was one to remember as we welcomed Amy from The Suffolk Owl Sanctuary & Nature Centre, based at Stonham Barns. With warmth, wit and an obvious love for her work, Amy gave us a fascinating insight into the care and rehabilitation of owls and other creatures in their care. The sanctuary isn't just a haven for owls, but also looks after an array of other animals – from raptors to curious meerkats, prickly hedgehogs, squirrels, not to mention the more unusual residents like armadillos and porcupines!

We were told of owl rescues and learned how vital the right type of nest box can be for different species. One particularly useful takeaway was what to do if you come across an injured bird – just remember the three B's: **Blanket** (to wrap it in), **Box** (with a lid to keep it safe), and **Bird sanctuary** (to get it the help it needs). Simple and potentially life-saving advice. There was plenty of curiosity in the room, with members eager to ask questions. We discovered that the familiar "twit twoo" isn't made by a single owl at all – it's actually a duet between two tawny owls - one calls "twit" and the other responds with "twoo". And forget the soothing call you might

expect from a barn owl – their cry is more of an eerie screech. If you're looking for a lovely day out, Stonham Barns is well worth a visit. Alongside the Owl Sanctuary, you'll find a host of other attractions – and yes, there's even shopping for those who fancy a browse.

Next month (**Tuesday 27th May**) we shall be inviting back to the Arts Centre **Neil Hanson** – you may remember him from last year when he gave us a talk about his time as Landlord at the Inn at the Top. Neil is also a successful author with 70 published books to his name. Neil will be talking about his work as a “ghost writer” whose clients include household names – an American showbiz legend, England's most famous cricketer, a celebrated actor, one of Britain's most decorated soldiers and an England football manager – but also many less celebrated men and women who have led extraordinary lives or achieved remarkable things. Among many others, they include SAS men, fast-jet pilots, explorers and adventurers, a treasure diver, a kidnap negotiator, a leading businessman, a notorious gangster, a professional forager, a leading surgeon and a spy.

Sue Dickinson – Speaker Secretary

Trip to Denny Abbey

On the first of May eleven members of the photographic group visited Denny Abbey and Farmland Museum which is near Waterbeach in Cambridgeshire and is run by English Heritage. Most met in the car park of East Town Park at 09.30 and using shared vehicles drove to Denny Abbey. The day was beautiful, the hottest of the year so far which made it excellent for taking photos



The abbey was founded in 1159 as a Benedictine monastery, in 1170 it was taken over by the Knights Templars and used as a home for aged and infirm members of the order. After the Templars' suppression for alleged heresy in 1308, it became a convent of Franciscan nuns known as the Poor Clares. Following the dissolution of the nunnery in 1539 by Henry VIII, it became a farm and was in use until the late 1960s. So, a very varied history and the abbey shows evidence of all the periods of ownership.



The outbuildings and surrounding area are full of old farm machinery which the free hand out describes. Several small barns are each fitted out to illustrate life in the fens such as a dairy, willow weaving, wildfowling etc.

The café, or Docky Barn, served excellent simple home cooked food and cakes which we took advantage of before setting off home during the afternoon.

Our thanks go to the staff of English Heritage who made the day enjoyable by always being available to answer questions and give advice.

Peter Tatam, Group Leader

How to get a Yoga Body:
Have a body
Do yoga!

The new u3a Yoga sessions have got off to a great start with 6 members meeting every other Tuesday afternoon at Sally's home studio in Little Wratting.

Our 3 absolute beginners have taken to the practice like ducks to water and have shown an impressive aptitude and a wonderful willingness to learn. The 3 experienced Yogis report an enjoyable class set at the right level for them too.

Yoga has been practiced in various forms, for thousands of years to bring stillness of mind, and health & vitality to the body.

A regular practice of the Asana (physical postures) will improve mobility, balance and strength, and the focus of the mind we experience throughout the practice, can really help to bring a sense of calm and peacefulness within.

At our u3a sessions, you will find a slow-paced class with a focus on stretching and strengthening the body, which is suitable for all.

We incorporate pranayama (breath control) and mindfulness to promote and support emotional wellness. Yoga is a beautiful practice of self-discovery and enquiry, where each person starts their journey on the mat from where they are, on any given day. If you choose to practice with us, you'll be joining a group of like-minded individuals with a wide range of abilities and intentions, in a non-competitive and supportive space.

New members may contact Alan groupscoordinator@haverhillu3a.com to join the waiting list and when enough people are interested, we plan to move to

a different venue to accommodate offering a larger, weekly class.

Sally Russo

Ely-Stained Glass Museum Visit

Our Strollers group enjoyed a day in Ely at the Stain Glass Museum within Ely Cathedral. Well worth a look, the glass on show dates from circa 1015 to present day, nice little gift shop too.



Lunch at a local pub and then a wander along by the river and an ice-cream to end the day.

Gilly Johns

Sunday Strollers enjoy Fly Past

The Sunday Strollers enjoyed their own personal fly-past, as a skein of two dozen geese in v formation swooped down over their heads to land in the nearby lake. It was every bit as spectacular as the Red

Arrows due to their close proximity. The lake provided a beautiful foreground to Denston Hall, looking very attractive in the bright warm sunshine. The ten strong group were enjoying the parkland, after having walked through a new vineyard planted since our last walk there in the autumn of 2022.



The next walk will be at Clare on Sunday 8th June, organised by Barbara. Meet at 10.30am in the Harp Lane car park by the playing fields off Cavendish Road.

Ian Johnson

Patchwork and Quilting

This is a photo showing the Patchwork Quilting group creations from our April meeting.



We all made a 13" block called "Sparkle Motion," which can be transformed into a cushion cover or, when combined with other blocks, into a quilt. Each month, a

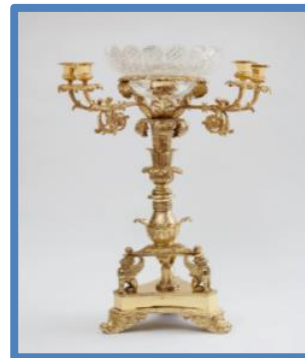
different member proposes, researches, and provides instructions for a new block or project - whether it's employing fresh techniques or experimenting with different materials for projects like bags. This way, we continually learn new skills while each member contributes their unique style.

Sue Dickinson (Group Member)

Janet Berriman (Group Leader)

Art Appreciation

For a bit of a change, a few members of the Group made our way to the National Trust's property of Anglesey Abbey to view a display of artworks created by a number of women artists. Whilst numbering only about nine different items, most were quite small and rather lost in a place the size of Anglesey Abbey. A rather unhelpful leaflet for a suggested voluntary fee of £1 was available, but in the end, the volunteer guides proved to be the most helpful and informative. Different group members probably had their own favoured items, but generally, a dainty silver-gilt candelabrum perhaps received the greatest overall admiration. This was dated 1818 and had been designed by Rebecca Eames.



The most profound take-away impression is the fact that in previous times, women were so often disregarded as likely to be skilled artists capable of producing serious art. This seemed particularly so of Harriet Goodhue Hosmer, an American sculptor living between 1830 and 1908.

Outside the main house, a quite large marble entitled Sleeping Faun was a beautifully crafted example of her work. At the time, some critics are alleged to have claimed it was too good to be of her creation!

For children enjoying the Easter break from school, often accompanied by grandparents of course, there was a Shawn the Sheep trail in the grounds where large colourful models of the much-loved animated character could be found and guaranteed to bring a smile to the face of children of all ages.



Sue Dickinson

Strollers Dorset Spring Trip

We had a wonderful 5-day break in Dorset our first for a while. We stayed in Bournemouth, in a good hotel, good food, good evening entertainment and day trips out to Poole, Weymouth, Swanage and The New Forest. The weather was very kind to us, a great week spent with a great bunch of friends.



Gilly Johns

Nature Group

Our April outing saw us visiting Kingfisher Bridge Nature Reserve in Wicken, which since 1995 has transformed 250 acres of farmland into a variety of wetland habitats. The morning started off quite chilly but eventually the sun broke through for us. Views were stunning and afforded us the sight of Ely Cathedral in the distance.



We saw small herds of grazing animals, water buffalo and Konak ponies. Longhorn Cattle will be introduced in the summer months to graze on coarser grasses.

Astoundingly between us we observed by sight and/or sound 50 different bird species! This was also the first time this year that many of us had heard a cuckoo and seen a swift. The photo is of a fungus called Chicken of the Woods which grows on tree trunks in broadleaf woodland.



Unfortunately, the Wren Café on site was closed so many of us ate lunch in a nearby hostelry called Five Miles From Anywhere No Hurry Inn – what a great name.

Jan Marrone

History Group May 2025

In May, twenty-four members of the History Group enjoyed a talk by Jackie Tatam based on the life of Mollie Montgomery who married August Courtauld and later Rab Butler and who lived at Spencers, a large house in Great Yeldham. When Jackie and I lived in Yeldham Mollie opened the house and gardens every year for the village residents.

The talk was a condensed version of the book *Mollie, August & Rab*, a memoir by Mollie, a fascinating story of love, adventure, privilege and politics. August being part of the Courtauld dynasty spent his life going on Artic expeditions, exploring and sailing. Mollie married him at the third time of asking and gave him six children. He joined the Special Operations Executive during WWII working with Ian Fleming, and the book tells of other SOE members visiting Spencers, one who slept with a pistol under his pillow! At the age of forty nine August was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis which for such an active

man was a tragedy. He died aged 56 and Mollie married Rab Butler after six months. RAB as he was always known was a career politician and had been married to a cousin of August's until she also died. He was said to have been 'The Greatest Prime Minister We Never Had', but the details of his time as MP for Saffron Walden show a man of great compassion, introducing the Education Act in 1944. But a tendency to be too liberal, or 'Wet' as many Tories call it, prevented his acceptance as a leader. After his first wife died, he married Mollie and was the true love of her life. She admired the fact that he always looked smart even when concealing a bottle of wine in his trouser pocket!

In later life he became Master of the Lodge at Trinity College enjoying thirteen successful years in the role.

Peter Tatam, History Group Leader

Contributions Welcome!!

News and Views only exists if articles are received by members. It does not have to be directly related to U3A activities. Have you travelled to the moon... written a best-selling book... climbed Mount Everest... won a Guinness world record for haggis throwing... or just experienced something special in your life? Send it in and we will publish if we have space.

**Alice, Barbara, Jan and Tony
Editorial Team**

Next Meetings: Tuesday 27th May
Tuesday 24th June

Deadline for the Rolling Screen
Tuesday 17th June

e-mail to: chair@haverhillu3a.com

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