



HAVERHILL & DISTRICT

u3a learn,
laugh,
live

News and Views

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HAVERHILL
TOWN COUNCIL

September 2025

From the Chair

Dear Members

As summer fades, autumn arrives with a quiet elegance—crisp air, golden leaves, and the scent of change. At its heart lies the autumnal equinox, a celestial event marking the moment when day and night share equal time. Occurring around September 22nd in the Northern Hemisphere, the equinox signals a shift: the sun crosses the celestial equator, tilting Earth's axis toward longer nights and cooler days.

This balance of light and dark has long inspired myths, harvest festivals, and reflections on transition. Trees shed their leaves in a blaze of colour, animals prepare for winter, and humans instinctively slow down, embracing warmth and introspection. It's a season of letting go and gathering—of nature's rhythm aligning with our own.

Whether you're crunching through leaves or sipping something spiced, autumn invites you to pause and appreciate the beauty of balance. The equinox reminds us: change can be graceful.

Don't forget to come to our Open Morning on the 30th of September, if you're able. Come and talk to the Group Leaders and sign up for a new Group or two. I shall be joining the Mahjong group.

Looking further ahead we will soon be turning our attention to the AGM and electing the next Committee. Finding new members for the Committee is becoming

an annual problem. According to our Constitution no member can hold a position for longer than 3 years and be on the committee for longer than 9 years in any combination of posts. Some of the existing members are about to exceed these. The committee is proposing the following changes to the constitution: 6 years in a post instead of 3 and a maximum of 12 years instead of 9 years. If you have any comments to make, please contact myself or any committee member. We will hold an exceptional meeting of the members at the beginning of the January 2026 monthly meeting to allow discussion and hopefully acceptance of the proposal. **Could you be a committee member?** If anyone is considering joining the committee then contact me chair@haverhillu3a.com or any of the committee members for details.

Tom Parker

Speaker's Corner

On 26th August, we were delighted to welcome our very own Charmian Thompson, who gave a fascinating talk entitled *Haverhill's Art and Artists*. Charmian opened with Samuel Ward, a Haverhill-born satirist and prolific Puritan pamphleteer, remembered for his engraving *The Double Deliverance*. An original portrait of him can still be seen at St Mary's Church today.

From there, Charmian guided us through a rich tapestry of artists connected with Haverhill – too many to list in full! Many, as she explained, were either born in the town or had ties with the Gurteen family. We also heard about Ben Sullivan, whose portrait of

the Queen (complete with her handbag at her feet) has become particularly well known.

And, bringing us right up to the present day, Charmian highlighted the contribution of Neil Field-Williams, Head of Art and Design at Samuel Ward Academy. Under his guidance, local children have created many of the artworks we pass every day, including *The Spirit of Enterprise*, the decorative gates at the end of Queen Street, and the colourful window displays in the grounds of St Mary's Church. It was a wonderful talk that really brought home how deeply art is woven into the life and history of Haverhill.

Next month, on Tuesday 30th September, there is no speaker meeting as it's our annual Open Morning, when you can renew your membership in the downstairs café with cash or card, bring along your friends to join the u3a, pick up your new lavender coloured membership card if you have renewed online, buy your Christmas Concert tickets, chat to the Group Leaders upstairs and pick up a free beverage and biscuit in the bar. 10 a.m. to 12 noon. See you there!

Sue Dickinson - Speaker Secretary

Nature Group

On what I have to say was a glorious morning, 20 Nature Group members visited Foxearth Meadows Nature Reserve for a guided walk, in search of dragonflies and damselflies, and we weren't disappointed!



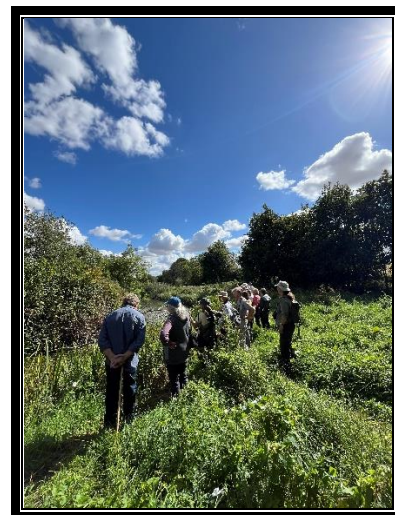
Foxearth is an eleven-acre site managed mainly by volunteers, part of A Rocha, an

international Christian organisation. The reserve is especially suited to dragonflies and damselflies, but it is also home to a wealth of other wildlife, including kingfishers, harvest mice, common lizards and grass snakes (we spotted one of these).

We were guided by three extremely knowledgeable volunteers who led us to a pond area where we were immediately amazed at the number of dragonflies and damselflies - I think the volunteers were also surprised, they mentioned there were more there at that time than on a previously organised counting session - so we were very lucky. To list a few, we saw Ruddy Darters, Willow Emeralds and huge Brown Hawker dragonflies.

Walking along a path between woodland and a wonderful collection of wild plants, we spotted more Common Darter damselflies which the guides thought had not long hatched as they appeared to be drying out their wings and getting their blood pumping, they didn't have their full colouration.

We completed our walk via the 'Big Pond' where a well-maintained Boardwalk allows for disabled access. Here we identified a Hobby swooping in the skies above us.



A packed lunch in the sunshine was a welcome end to the visit.

Jan Marrone

London Originals

The Icení village, much loved by our children at Cockley Cley can no longer be visited, but the nearby Gooderstone gardens suited the London Originals in hot dry August. The original planned programme visit fell through, so when in drought, visit some water gardens! Our first stop enroute was the cafe at Thetford Garden Centre, delightful, extensive and highly recommended. Our three-car convoy became badly separated, at one stage eight miles apart on three different roads, but resourcefully we came together again at Gooderstone.



The water gardens, created by farmer Billy Knights in 1970 alongside the River Gadder, have four lakes joined by 13 bridges, with colourful borders and mature trees. The tea rooms, normally closed on Tuesdays, opened specially for our small party. We then enjoyed a late lunch at the George Hotel overlooking the crossroads at Swaffham marketplace. Thank you Sandra for arranging a most enjoyable day!
Ian Johnson

Country Casuals

Thirteen members of the Country Casuals walking group met at The Lion pub in Stoke by Clare for our August walk. Starting from the village green we took the railway walk, following this until we crossed the River Stour and turned onto the Stour Valley Path. This involved crossing two fields that had been ploughed but reinstated - requiring good balance. We emerged onto Hollow Lane which leads to Ashen. Along the hedges were ripe blackberries to eat, which slowed the pace somewhat. The traffic was surprisingly busy, even including

three aeroplanes flying over in a V formation!

At the junction with Lower Stoke Road some of the group chose a shorter route while others climbed up to a footpath leading back to the Lion in Stoke by Clare. We followed the road to a footpath alongside the River Stour where two majestic swans swam past us. Back over the Stour, back to Stoke and into our cars for lunch at The Swan in Clare.



Pam Gilchrist

Holkham Hall

Tuesday 12th August - 41 members joined the **2nd Annual Haverhill and District u3a Outing**, this year to Holkham Hall. It was arranged for a Tuesday when the Hall is only open for private group tours. We set off by coach from Haverhill Bus Station arriving at Holkham Hall to be shown to the Facilities and Reception Area for refreshment of Morning Coffee amongst other Beverages etc.



Upon entry to the Hall we were split into two groups each with a knowledgeable guide for a fascinating and interesting insight into the history of both the Neo-Palladian Hall and the Earls of Leicester - Coke Family (*pronounced Cook*). With an added highlight a group member having the privilege of remotely activating the magnificent St George and Dragon Fountains, a treat for Day Visitors as it is usually dormant mid-week.

Following lunch there was time at leisure to wander or join the 2.30 pm Tractor Trailer with light-hearted commentary on a 40-minute shake rattle and roll around the Deer Park. At 3.30, using the coach we headed for our included visit of the Walled Garden and a welcome Ice Cream. Biding a fond farewell to David our watchful Holkham Guardian a two and quarter hour journey back to Haverhill and the end to a Grand Day Out.

So now where to next year??
Alan Alexander

Walking Talking Munching

On a bright blustery day, eleven members of the WTM group met at All Saints Church Ashdon, for their September walk.

Skirting the small, but beautiful church, the route emerged onto a green in front of the impressive old Guild Hall (pic). Erected first in the 15th century, it was then converted into 3 dwellings for poor people in the 17th century, before being restored once again to one building in the 20th century.



The route continued out into the surrounding countryside where a glimpse of the Brags Hall windmill could be seen on the horizon. Entering a wooded path that ran alongside the River Bourn, a tributary to the Granta and Cam, riverbank erosion was evident after the hot dry weather. The Bourn has been the source of historic flooding in Ashdon, hard to believe when viewing the trickle it was on this day.

After following a bridal path for some way, which included a fitness test of getting over a metal bar on a river bridge, the group

headed uphill to The Old Rectory. Built originally in the 16th century, it has had many upgrades in later centuries. Crossing a field opposite the Old Rectory the group headed back towards the church but not before arriving at the village museum. Closed on this day, but worth a visit, according to group members who had previously visited.

A drive to Linton for lunch in The Crown followed, as Ashdon's haunted pub, The Rose and Crown, is closed on Mondays.
Ken Hainsby

Sunday Strollers

Thirteen enthusiastic walkers set off from East Town Park Haverhill, following a circular walk along the old railway line. The walk was varied meandering past Haverhill's sewage plant, across the old brick railway bridge providing a canvas for local graffiti artists, Banksy has yet to add a contribution. Then alongside industrial units quiet today, it being a Sunday.

I had been assured the walk gets better and it did. Crossing over the Haverhill bypass the walk opens up to reveal open fields recently harvested and ploughed. The hedgerows were covered in Hawthorn berries, blackberries, rose hips and sloes. In the distance was Greatly Wood a remnant of ancient woodland.

Passing a small lake next to Sturmer Hall, a father was supervising his two sons in the art of fishing. A silvery tiddler was caught while we passed the time of day. A few paces away we passed an impressive landslip, the field edge disappearing into the ditch. It looked very recent, perhaps the result of the rain the previous day.

We were soon back on the railway track for the final stretch. A few bird feeders hanging in the trees were attracting Great Tits. A slight detour through the Nature Reserve, Sturmer Meadow, it was noted that the conkers were small this year perhaps due to low rainfall this summer. The weather remained dry, mild and slightly overcast. Hopefully all thirteen of us made it back as I forgot the head count.



The group were predominantly people from Haverhill and surrounding villages who know Haverhill well as the group gave their thanks and dispersed a number mentioned they had never walked parts of the walk before. Helga and I found leading the walk very satisfying. We were all delighted that David Jefferies was able to join us.

The walk on October the 12th will be led by Ken and starts at 10.30am. Parking at Church View, Wixoe CO10 8UH, which not surprisingly is a road across from the church. There are parking places right at the top end of the road but anywhere on the road is fine. The walk is just over 3 miles and includes some walking on very quiet roads. No stiles, just a few uneven bits of ground on route.

Wendy and Helga

History Group Trip to Kings Lynn

On Friday 5th September fifteen members of the history group visited Kings Lynn for an escorted tour by one of the Kings Lynn Town Guides. In this instance the guide was a member of Kings Lynn u3a which meant we had much in common.

We left East Town Park in shared cars and drove to Babraham P & R to catch the bus to Cambridge station. We had time for a quick coffee before purchasing our group travel tickets and boarding the 10.35 train to Kings Lynn arriving an hour later. Lunch was at Marriot's Warehouse on the quayside after which we met our guide outside the Information Bureau. Beginning at The Minster, which is an amazing building dating from the 12th century with two different towers at the front with one showing an unusual clock depicting the

moon and telling the tides. At the base are inscriptions showing the height of the floods over the last century. Originally the church had a large lantern on the central roof which collapsed during a severe storm in 1741 destroying the nave, meaning that the body of the church was reconstructed shortly afterwards. The earth the town is built upon is largely reclaimed marsh and is unstable, so one of the original towers has a pronounced lean that is obvious from the inside.



We meandered around the central part of the town with the guide explaining notable buildings, many of which stem from the town's seafaring past and its trade with the Hanseatic League in Europe. Lynn was founded by the Bishop of Norfolk and was called Bishops Lynn until Henry VIII removed the power of the Bishops and changed the name to Kings Lynn.



Our last visit was to the Old Guildhall, which is undergoing restoration and the original flooring has been uncovered revealing the large oak planks that it has been proved William Shakespeare trod when part of a travelling theatre company during the time of the plague.

Another coffee/tea and we headed back to the station for the trip home. A long and tiring day, but the great weather and good company were enjoyed by all.

Peter Tatam, Group Leader

Photography for Pleasure

The group visited Cambridge on Thursday 4th September to take photos for an upcoming slide show. Despite the changeable weather, (it was pouring early on!) ten members made the trip and whilst dodging a few showers were able to take plenty of pictures. Cambridge is great for exploring away from the tourist hotspots. A stroll down the side streets offers the chance to see untouched parts of the city where the tourists never venture.



Dales
Brewery



Indian
Temple



Cambridge Blue
in the Rain

We met up for lunch at The Prince Regent in Hills Road and by the time we left we enjoyed brilliant sunshine. Typical of our weather!

Peter Tatam, Group Leader

A Smile to Finish With

Grandma texted Grandpa on a cold winter morning saying: Windows frozen. Won't open.

Grandpa: Gently pour some lukewarm water over it and then gently tap the edges with hammer.

Grandma later: Computer really messed up now!!

David Campos

Next Meetings: **Open Morning**
Tuesday 30th September

Come and meet Group Leaders and members of the committee 10.00am-12.00

Tuesday 28th October

For Better or Far Worse!

A light-hearted and quirky look at marriage and relationships through the eyes of the Victorians by Toni Neobard and Kate Broad

Deadline for the Rolling Screen
Tuesday 21st October

e-mail to: chair@haverhillu3a.com

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