



HAVERHILL & DISTRICT

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laugh,
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News and Views

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HAVERHILL
TOWN COUNCIL

April 2026

From the Chair

April has arrived with brighter mornings, lighter evenings, and the slightly uncomfortable realisation that winter layers no longer disguise everything quite as well as they once did. Still, there's a definite spring in the air, and it's been great to see our u3a buzzing with activity once again.

Our groups continue to thrive, with lively discussions, well-attended meetings, and the reassuring knowledge that learning at u3a comes with no exams, no marking, and no gold stars – unless you count the approval gained by bringing particularly good biscuits.

This month it was also encouraging to hear that Essex County Council have reversed their decision to withdraw funding for the 320 and 321 bus routes. For many of our members, reliable local transport is vital, not just for shopping and appointments but for staying connected with friends, activities, and of course u3a events. It's a reminder that collective voices do get heard – and that buses are far more popular than roadworks.

Looking ahead, I'm delighted to highlight our visit to Sandringham in August. This promises to be a wonderful day out, combining history, beautiful gardens, and the chance to enjoy good company while perfecting our most dignified "casually royal" walk. Whether you're there for the heritage or the horticulture, it should be a real highlight of the summer. If you have not yet put your name down, please contact me.

As always, thank you to our volunteers and group leaders who keep everything running

so smoothly. If you have an idea for a group or outing, do let us know. With best wishes.

Tom Parker

Speakers Corner

It was with great pleasure on the 31st of March 2026 at the speaker meeting to welcome back Linda Scoles.

'Help! I Need a Lifestyle Advisor' was the title to this talk, and from her previous visit, our members knew they were in for an interesting and quite hilarious morning. Linda explained her New Year Millenium resolutions which concentrated on her image and conduct. Each was described in turn; whilst hoping to keep the resolutions, things didn't turn out that way as we were to discover. One was to make compromises, this resulted in her and her husband changing the way the toilet roll was pulled, each one turning it round when being used. 'Judge not others' involved a trip to meet her husband at an airport wearing a red hat and very little under her coat. This resulted in being stared at by men passing by. 'Accept beauty as nature intended', Linda had used depilatory cream on her top lip which burnt her skin leaving quite a mark causing extreme embarrassment as she was reading a lesson in church. 'Think before you act' involved organising a choir to sing on tiered staging with lighted candles. With no risk assessment there was a very real risk that the lighted candles the choir carried could set light to the heavily lacquered hair of the ladies standing below. 'Behave in an appropriate manner at all times' she was persuaded by her husband to go and see an x-rated film in Bury St Edmunds and was seen by her neighbours going into the

cinema. Having related each resolution with suitable anecdotes Linda decided never to make another New Year or Millennium resolution.

Linda's ability to make you laugh is a gift. And it all stems from making fun of herself and her day-to-day actions.

Our next Speaker Meeting is on Tuesday 28th April at the Arts Centre (doors open at 10.00, with the talk starting at 10.30 – and free beverages available in the bar!).

Our April speaker was to be Rob Goldstone on behalf of The Alzheimer's Society. Unfortunately, due to new work commitments, he is unable to make it.

We are now fortunate to welcome Duncan Bickley, a commercial helicopter pilot who is going to tell us about his various trips and adventures whilst flying customers about the UK and many parts of Europe. His personal experiences, visuals and humour will hopefully engage everyone at the meeting.

Margaret Ross – Speaker Secretary

City Walkers

As Winnie the Pooh would say "On a cold wet blustery day," we set forth to Stamford Lincolnshire. Described as a Georgian town on a closer look it has more history than you first believe. Our guide for the day was Nicola of the Stamford Town Guided Tours. She was exceptionally good, being both funny and knowledgeable.

The Romans established a significant presence to build the Roman Road to the west of the modern town. The Anglo Saxons moved in followed by the Danes in the 9th Century turning the town into one of the Five Boroughs of Danelaw along with Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, and Nottingham. At this time Stamford became a centre of trade for textile (wool and cloth) and pottery.

After the Battle of Hastings Stamford became a Royal Borough under the Normans. The Domesday Book describes Stamford as a prosperous town with a population of around 3,000, among the 10 largest towns in England. Norman building

influence included some of the medieval housing and churches remaining today.

After the Normans, the wool trade declined as did the town. The Dissolution of the Monasteries destroyed many of Stamford's churches, impacting prosperity and sources of charity that ran hospitals and alms-houses.

In the 15th Century a local wool merchant, William Browne, Alderman of Stamford, funded the building of All Saints Church. He also paid for the building of a hospital (Browne's Hospital Old Bead House) and Alms-houses, both standing today.

In the 16th Century William Cecil, Queen Elizabeth 1's chief advisor, had close ties with Stamford and built Burghley House near Stamford. On his death he was laid to rest in St Martins Church in Stamford. His family were local landowners with his paternal grandfather owning the George Hotel that still stands today. The Cecil family provided local relief for the town's people of Stamford by way of housing.

The Georgians found Stamford on their way to York using the Great North Road (A1) that originally ran through the town. This occasioned in the town becoming a coaching hub. The town prospered leading to a building boom with Stamford becoming the Georgian town we know today.

The town has been used as a filming location for many productions. Probably, the one most would remember is the 2005 Pride and Prejudice film with Kiera Knightley that used the Stamford Assembly Rooms.

Much of Stamford's buildings remain due to the advantage the town took in the change of law (Conservation) in the 1990's.



Our tour ended and so off to lunch at the Tobie Norris a pub housed in one of Stamford's oldest buildings dating back to the 13th Century. The Norris' original owners were bell founders and used the building to make bells. Some of building's artifacts as its time as a foundry are on display in the pub. After lunch we made our way back home.

Robert Connolly

Nature Group

The first frosty morning for many weeks saw the early risers of the Nature Group scraping the ice off our car windscreens. We were bound for Walnut Farm in Hellions Bumsted, for a dawn chorus walk. Ok, so we were a little late for dawn, but the 06.45 start at the farm was early enough! While we were waiting on arrivals, we saw three magnificent red kites circling around together in the sky above us.



Sixteen members and Mark, an incredibly knowledgeable RSPB ranger who came all the way from Ipswich to lead us, walked into the coppiced woods and accustomed our hearing to the bird song.

As we walked further on, we were met by Walnut Farm's cattle who were confused by the number of humans near their pasture and walked alongside us, on their side of the fence. Not for company, they were anticipating their breakfast of sugar beet, which we were able to help provide when we arrived at the feeding station.

During the course of the morning, we were able to record an amazing thirty-five species of birds (seen and/or heard) including, fieldfare, woodpecker, yellow hammer, sky lark and stock dove.



A Red Kite

We rounded off our morning with our own breakfast, bacon or mushroom butties, tea and coffee, and hot pastries, all enjoyed sitting in the sun under a gloriously blue sky. What a way to start the day. A huge thank you to everyone involved in the organisation.

Jan Marrone

Mud and Grub

Finchingfield to Great Bardfield was a circular walk in fine weather. The four-mile walk concluded with some of the lesser-known footpaths in the village itself.



Highlights were the mill pond at Great Bardfield where the group were photographed, an egret in the Bardfield Brook, Easter bunnies at the foot of the windmill, and a miniature duckboard for ducks to navigate from the pond and over the weir to the stream.



Ian Johnson

Patchwork & Quilting Group

Our lovely ladies have been hard at it once again producing a lovely quilt for Quilts for Care Leavers. This charity is aimed at young people who are living independently after their time in local authority care. Each member of the group produced a "block" which Yvonne kindly put together to produce a very attractive quilt top. This was then sent off to Quilts for Care Leavers who will finish it off and donate it to a lucky young person.



The group have also been busy making bags which attach to a walking frame or trolley. These we donated to Cleaves Place for their residents to use to carry their personal items.



Our group enjoy completing projects and are happiest when the results of their labours can be enjoyed by others less fortunate than us. We will continue to support local and national charities.

Janet Berriman

Sunday Strollers

A fine day for a Finchingfield stroll. The group is pictured by the duck pond before a three mile walk in the Essex countryside.

The circuit went out to Spain's Hall (Jamie Oliver's house) then crossing beyond the

beaver enclosure, to Wincey Chase, and back to the community centre.



Some of the group spotted a herd of deer, and the spring flowers were in profusion including early bluebells and wood anemones. We had an accompaniment of morning birdsong, including blackcaps, chiffchaffs and skylarks.

The walk on the 10th May will be led by Jean and David. Please meet at Radwinter Village Hall, Water Lane, Radwinter CB10 2TX in the car park at the rear (for Recreation Ground). for a 10.30am start. It is a circular walk to Wimbish Church. Approximately 3 miles long.

Ian Johnson

Next Meetings:

Tuesday 28th April

Please note change of speaker who will be Duncan Bickley, a commercial helicopter pilot.

Tuesday 26th May

An account of the ghostly goings on at the Essex Rectory, which is brought to life by Bryan Thurlow, covering the period from 1840s to the 1940s.

Deadline for the Rolling Screen

Tuesday 19th May

e-mail using landscape format to:

chair@haverhillu3a.com

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