



HAVERHILL & DISTRICT

u3a learn,
laugh,
live

News and Views

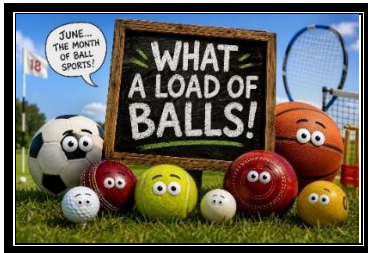
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HAVERHILL
TOWN COUNCIL

June 2026

From the Chair



June must surely be the month when the sporting world collectively decides that everything is better with a ball. Turn on the television and you'll find footballers chasing one around a pitch. Switch channels and cricketers are hitting one with a bat. Tennis players are whacking one over a net, golfers are searching for one in the rough, and bowlers are carefully rolling one across a village green.

It seems that wherever you look, someone is in hot pursuit of a spherical object. In fact, if an alien visitor arrived on Earth in June, they could be forgiven for thinking that our entire civilization revolves around balls. The variety is remarkable. Some balls are large, some are small. Some bounce; some don't. Some are kicked with great enthusiasm, while others are nudged with the utmost precision. Yet all of them inspire fierce competition, passionate support and endless discussion about who should have passed, bowled, served or putted better.

For spectators, June is a sporting feast. For those less interested, it can feel like a month-long invasion of balls into every corner of life. Still, whether you're cheering from the sidelines or hiding behind a good book, one thing is certain: June really is, quite literally, a load of balls!

With the threat of more hot weather, try to keep cool and keep hydrated.

With best wishes
Tom Parker

Speakers Corner

It was with great pleasure that on the 26th May 2026 at the speaker meeting we welcomed Bryan Thurlow. With just a handful of props and a flair for storytelling, Bryan transported us back to the early 20th century and into the shadowy corridors of one of England's most infamous buildings — the imposing Borley Rectory on the Suffolk–Essex border. His lively presentation brought to life not only the house itself but also the colourful and, at times, eccentric characters who once called it home.

The story begins in 1927, when the Reverend and Mrs Smith moved into the rectory and soon encountered the first signs of what would become a very modern haunting. Not long after their arrival, Mrs Smith discovered a young woman's skull tucked away in a cupboard — a macabre find said to have triggered a wave of supernatural disturbances. What followed was a catalogue of alleged paranormal events: mysterious lights flickering in empty rooms, unexplained footsteps echoing along deserted corridors, and even the ghostly apparition of a horse-drawn carriage passing silently by. These tales captured the public imagination and drew the attention of spiritualists and investigators, including the notorious Harry Price, whose involvement only added to the rectory's growing legend.

Yet, as Bryan explained with a twinkle of humour, many of these “hauntings” may have had far more earthly origins. Mischievous maids, nervous imaginations, and the enthusiastic embellishments of visiting spiritualists likely played their part in fuelling the rectory’s reputation. Over time, the line between fact and folklore blurred, leaving behind a story as intriguing as it is mysterious. Although the building itself is long gone, its legacy endures. Even today, curious youngsters, thrill-seekers and ghost-hunters still make their way to the village, hoping for a glimpse of something otherworldly. Thanks to Bryan’s engaging talk, we were able to step into that world for a morning — and enjoy a thoroughly entertaining journey through one of Britain’s most enduring ghost stories.

Our next Speaker Meeting is on Tuesday 30th June 2026 at the Arts Centre (doors open at 10.00, with the talk starting at 10.30 – and free beverages available in the bar!). Our speaker will be Helen, who will on behalf of The National Trust, give us a talk on the beautiful Anglesey Abbey, the Fairhaven family, the house, gardens, and their history.

Margaret Ross

Cycling Group - 9 Go-a-cycling.....

One of our best turnouts saw 9 cyclists toeing the start line outside the Sports Centre on Thursday 21st May.



It was dry, it was warm and it wasn’t windy - ideal weather in fact. Filled with enthusiasm, we headed off across town to the Hollands Road Estate and along Helions Bumpstead Road, quickly entering Helions Bumpstead and crossing Water Lane into Sages End Lane. We laboured a

bit up to the trig point which was bathed in sunshine and the views all round were extraordinary given the clear bright weather. A swift descent towards Camps End followed before we turned right past the Church and into the village centre, taking the road towards Nosterfield End by the school.

We enjoyed a tail wind as we made the climb up to Hazel Stub and then had a speedy descent along Camps Road to the Library and the Hospice Cafe. Tea, coffee and various types of cake were enjoyed by all and just after midday we departed to go our separate ways.

Just a reminder, we always like to see new members, and we never leave anyone behind! How about getting a dozen out one week?

Peter Thomas

London Originals

Fran Theobald had enthusiastically talked to our U3A last year about the Living Memorial at Rettendon, so we decided to visit.

She was equally enthusiastic about welcoming us with tea and cake in the commemorative pavilion, decked with mementoes from the forces and civilian services.



We drove to the first grouping of dedicated buildings each containing archives and memorabilia relating to particular wars, each set within small individual gardens,

where people could just sit and remember the fallen. The whole area was extensive with avenues of trees and open meadows, but a closer look showed each tree was a memorial. We drove to a further grouping of pavilions: one resembling a Victorian police station, another the Normandy Beachhead. Reading the individual dedications was a sobering experience, with stories of extreme bravery, intermingled with pathos. The serviceman in the first world war told by his sergeant "to run for your life, it's an ambush" only to be shot as a deserter, or the Sheffield firefighter killed falling from a tree whilst attempting to rescue a cat. We marvelled at the dedication of Fran and her family in the painstaking research and dedication in the creation of the gardens and their upkeep.

Ian Johnson

Walking Talking Munching

Alan and Gillian Alexander were the walk leaders for May, initially meeting in The Flying Shuttle car park.

The walk started by crossing the A1307 to the flood park, adopting an anticlockwise direction around it. The water gully running alongside the path was totally dry, a measure of how little rain there has been of late. The group were delighted to see a Gaggles of Geese with a dozen Goslings waddling with them.

Exiting the gate onto the Withersfield Road, the walkers took a footpath alongside the last of the houses to join another path emerging at the top end of Withersfield. A stroll down hill with a stop to greet another u3a member, who was creating a new flower bed in his garden, found the group at the Church of St Mary the Virgin. For those with an interest in cricket, this is where the Grandparents of Don Bradman the famous Australian Batsman are buried. Passing the White Horse pub the group turned left along a path hemmed with fields of barley. A Red Kite entertained us for some moments as it wheeled and circled, looking for prey.

The route emerged across from the

Epicentre and crossing the road the group made their way back to The Flying Shuttle for lunch.

Ken Hainsby

Morning Quilters

A new Patchwork & Quilting Group started this month, known as Morning Quilters. Nine ladies met at the Haverhill Bowls Club and made a pot stand. They enjoyed chatting to each other and learning a new skill. This group will meet on the 3rd Thursday of the month at 9.30am until 12.30. A great start.



Janet Berriman

Dolly Gosh! Robin enjoys trip of lifetime for his 80th

"If you hold your dreams together, keep your dreams, they might just come true."

Those are the words of one Haverhill musician who experienced the trip of a lifetime when his family flew him out to America for his 80th birthday – and even introduced him to Dolly Parton.

Robin Thompson has lived in the town for more than 50 years, and plays in the band Country Connection. When his wife, Gill, died in February 2022, his nephew David and his wife Patricia, flew out from Nashville to attend the funeral, and told Robin that they would bring him to the States soon for a holiday.

What followed was beyond his wildest dreams. David and Patricia threw surprise parties at him left right and centre, including

one at the Grand Ole Opry, VIP seats to an Eagles concert in Las Vegas, and a gift of a custom hand-made guitar from the biggest music shop in town.

“This whole holiday was amazing and they (David and Patricia) just did it out of love.”

A sit down with the '9 to 5' hit maker was a complete surprise. After a work discussion the group were informed they needed to head to the studio, where Dolly was lying in wait.

Robin said: “We walked across the lot and through these doors, and I heard her voice but couldn't see her. I just felt speechless.



“She walked out and said, 'this must be the birthday boy', gave me a big Dolly hug, got hold of my hand and said 'tell me about yourself'. She wanted to know about me – I just couldn't

speak; she was so lovely.”

We chatted for a while, spoke about music, and Dolly wanted to know more about my band. Before she left, she asked if the next time she came to the UK could she come and sing with my band. “This is Dolly Parton asking me, this is one of the biggest country stars in the world – again I couldn't speak.”

Robin Thompson

This is an abridged version of an article by Ross Waldren sent to us by Robin

Sunday Strollers Enjoy a Picture-Perfect Walk!

The u3a Sunday Strollers were treated to a glorious summer morning on Sunday 14th June as nine members gathered for a circular walk around the picturesque village of Steeple Bumpstead. The walk was led by Dominique, Wendy and Helga, whose carefully planned route showcased the

very best of the Essex countryside.

The weather could not have been better, with warm sunshine and soft, fluffy grey and white clouds drifting across the blue sky.

Nature was in full view. Red Admiral butterflies swiftly flew in the hedgerows, while a cheerful song of a Grey Wagtail accompanied walkers along the paths. The countryside was alive with colour, from fields of flourishing Pea crops to an abundance of wildflowers. White Daisies and Common Mallow lined the paths, providing valuable habitats for pollinators such as bees and butterflies, adding both beauty and biodiversity to the walk.

One of the day's most memorable sights was a breathtaking landscape of vibrant Cornfield Poppies glowing beneath a dramatic sky of soft grey and white clouds contrasting with lush green trees and hedges. It was a scene that prompted many to pause and admire the view.



The route also passed charming country cottages nestled among Green Wheat fields, creating picture-postcard scenes. Rustic wooden bridges carried the group across still water from field to field, adding to the peaceful charm of this countryside walk.

With beautiful scenery, perfect walking conditions, and friendly company, the Sunday Strollers once again enjoyed a memorable outing.

Walks such as these are a reminder of the simple pleasures to be found in exploring our local countryside together and our thanks go to Dominique, Wendy and Helga for organizing and leading the walk.



The walk on 12th July will be at Helions Bumpstead starting at 10.30. Parking at Helions Bumpstead Village Hall postcode CB9 7AH. It is about 3- 3.5 miles mostly on field paths with a bit of road walking. With the unpredictable weather we are having this summer please wear suitable footwear and a walking pole may be useful.

Barbara Lavender

Bridge Group

Each year the Bridge Group holds a competition for the Summer Cup on the first day of every month from January to June. The winners are the pair with the average of their four best scores from the six results. In the photo below are the winners Maura Green and Sylvia Martinelli with their trophy presented by the Group Leader David Stewart.



The Group continues to thrive, attracting up to 30 regular members to its Thursday afternoon sessions in the Withersfield village hall.

We welcome new members with some experience of playing bridge who are invited to contact the Group Leader through the u3a website.

David Stewart, Group Leader

London Originals

On 16th June, 11 London Originals members set off for a truly memorable day from Maldon on "The Thistle" sailing barge cruise.

Having stopped at The Jolly Sailor for refreshments, we then had time to stroll along the quay to explore.



At 1pm it was time to embark on this majestic barge for our 2-hour trip passing Osea Island, Tollesbury Creek with sites of Bradwell power station and Radio Caroline in the distance. Sadly, there wasn't enough wind for the sails to go up which would have completed our memory. However, we did have delicious afternoon tea on board.



After disembarking, those still hungry had a delicious meal in The Queen's Head along the quay side of the Blackwater River.

Linda and John Steff

Country Casuals, walk at Babraham 19 May 2026

The walk at Babraham today was organised by Anthea and Sue, thank you ladies for organising the walk and our lunch at The George.

A slightly smaller group of just seven of us met at The George in the High Street, Babraham at 10.15 where we were able to park and use the facilities before starting the walk. There were menus available and they asked us to order our lunches before starting the walk so that it would be ready for us on our return.

The walk covered a good countryside area near the Babraham Institute. The footpath was really good to walk on, no mud or slush today! It entailed walking through beautiful, wooded areas and followed a lovely stream. Very pleasant and everyone enjoyed the three miles we covered.



Despite a really poor weather forecast on Monday evening, we had a good and dry walk - until the last fifteen minutes when there was a bit of a shower!

We arrived back at The George around 12.30 and our delicious lunches were ready and waiting for us.

Another lovely walk to follow on 16th June at Thaxted, with lunch at The Maypole. If anyone would like to join our group please get in touch, new members are always welcome!

Joy Murrell

Next Open Meetings:

Tuesday 30th June 2026

One Place, One Time, One Life

This talk by the National Trust takes a look at some of the history of the buildings at Anglesey Abbey, between the years 1236 and 1956.

Tuesday 28th July 2026

The Fens and Fenmen

A talk by Peter Tatam. The Fens were once a flat, watery and marshy stretch of land running from north Cambridgeshire to Lincolnshire. Life there followed its own rhythms, shaped by the landscape and lived out by hardy souls whom outsiders jokingly claimed had webbed feet. Steeped in history and folklore, the region has inspired countless strange and wonderful tales — many of which Peter will be sharing with the audience.

Deadline for the Rolling Screen

Tuesday 21st July

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chair@haverhillu3a.com

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