



HAVERHILL & DISTRICT

u3a learn,
laugh,
live

News and Views

Supported by



HAVERHILL
TOWN COUNCIL

February 2023

From the Chair

A recent visit to Anglesey Abbey convinced me that spring is definitely on the way. The snowdrops were stunning. They were interspersed with aconites, hellebores, cyclamen and some daffodils to give a very colourful display.

I am very disappointed that we have not been able to find a u3a member who is prepared to check the accounts on an annual basis and I would ask you all to think again to see if you can help or maybe you have a friend who is not a u3a member who will be prepared to check the accounts for us.

Our A.G.M. is next month and you should all have received a copy of the Agenda together with the accounts, from the chair report, treasurer's report, a copy of the minutes from the A.G.M. last year and a copy of the constitution.

We have updated the Constitution to clarify the position regarding electronic meetings and amended the quorum figures for the A.G.M. in line with Central Office Guidance. If you have any questions please contact me on chair@haverhillu3a.com.

If you would like to join the committee and be elected at the A.G.M. please complete the attached nomination form and return it to vice-chair@haverhillu3a.com.

Taking Into account the financial pressures that we are all subject to at the moment and the past prudence of the committee together with support from Haverhill Council we are able to keep the membership fee the same as the last few years. Hire of the Arts Centre and

Speaker fees are all going up so it is quite possible the membership fee will need to increase next year to reflect this.

Barbara Lavender

Speaker's Corner

We enjoyed a busy meeting at the Arts Centre on the 31st January.

The Haverhill Town Mayor, Bruce Davidson, gave a ten minute talk about his role as the Mayor covering what he does and intends to do before he steps down from his term of office in mid-May 2023. His duties will include the weekend of celebrations to mark the Coronation of His Majesty the King and Her Majesty The Queen Consort. Bruce said that if anyone was having a street party and they let him know he will turn up if his diary allows.

His colleague, Claire Shirm from the Haverhill Town Twinning Association, gave a short talk about the history of the organisation, what it has achieved and current events. Before her talk, Claire told me that the HTTA has a Facebook page and there is a section in the Haverhill Town Council website which includes their events etc.

We were pleased to welcome David Green and Emilia Convertino representing Action for Children. David gave a very interesting talk about the history of Action for Children from its beginnings in 1869. The Reverend Dr. Thomas Bowman Stephenson saw some children living rough under the arches of Waterloo Station and instead of walking by he stopped to listen to their stories and worked out the most practical way to help.

Dr Stephenson was a Methodist minister from the North East of England. When he moved to London, he challenged the Methodist Church to take action to help children living on the streets. His work led to the creation of the National Children's Home (NCH). In 1994 it became NCH Action for Children and then Action for Children in 2008.

David also gave his (and his twin brother's) personal history of being placed in a home in Yorkshire at an early age following the death of their mother. They shared their personal experiences of the home and their education (supported by Maynards of wine gum fame) together with interesting and touching photographs.

David and Stephen are "Old Boys" and each year, the people who were cared for come together to talk about their childhoods, reminisce and remember.

Emilia, who is a fundraiser and campaigner, brought us up to date with the current activities of Action for Children. Today Action for Children supports 671,275 children, young people and their families in the UK every year. They do this through 447 services in local communities, in schools and online.

Next month, on the 28th February, Bryan Thurlow will be entertaining us with his story-telling and acting. He will be depicting the life of a retired butler from Yorkshire looking back on his lifetime of service in "Through the Baize Door".

Sue Dickinson
Assistant Speaker Secretary

Haverhill U3a Nature Group

On 26th January, 17 members of the nature group met up at Welney Wetland Centre with the aim of seeing the swan feeding at midday. The Centre lies between the artificial rivers New Bedford and Old Bedford, north of the A1101 road where it crosses the Ouse Washes.

The Ouse Washes cover an area between St Ives in Cambridgeshire and Downham Market in Norfolk and make up a flood storage area which is often under water in the winter. Welney is a small part of this.

As we approached the Centre on the A1101 we saw many swans feeding in the fields. We arrived at the visitor centre at 11am to meet and have a coffee in the café before attending the swan feeding event in the heated observatory accessed by a bridge over the river New Bedford.

Volunteer Tony Winchester gave us an overview of the Centre and its history. The Welney Wetland Centre is owned by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust which was set up by Peter Scott in 1946.

It is internationally significant for wintering and breeding wildfowl and waders. The site also has rich aquatic fauna and flora, and areas of unimproved grassland. Tony explained that the Ouse Washes are part of the system for controlling the flow of the Great Ouse when water levels in the river are high. Tony said that Mute swans are present at Welney all year round but Bewick's and Whooper swans are only winter migrants. It is estimated that there can be up to 7,000 Whooper swans and up to 2,000 Bewick's swans migrating to Welney each year. The Mute swans have distinctive orange beaks whereas the Bewick's and Whooper swans have yellow and black beaks.

Whooper swans come down from Iceland to overwinter in the UK, arriving in October and leaving in March. They get their name from the loud sound they make. They use the feeding at Welney as an extra to the food they get in the day from nearby fields where they feed on beet tops, winter wheat shoots and spilt grain. They return to the wetlands at night.

Bewick's swans fly down from Arctic Russia to overwinter here but with global warming fewer are coming to the UK, preferring instead to stop in Poland or Germany en route. These migrants spend most of the day in the fields. Bewick's swans are about two thirds the size of Whooper swans or about the size of a Canada goose.

Many other birds come to Welney at different times of the year. When we visited there were a lot of were Pochards. We were told that 95% of these were males with only 5% females. The females

are smaller and stop off in France and Spain. As well as the swans and large numbers of pochards, we saw wigeon, tufted duck, coot, pintail, moorhens and mallards which are migratory birds from Europe.

After giving all this information, Tony donned his waders and pushed his wheelbarrow full of grain along the edge of the water of the reserve. He was immediately mobbed by the birds.

After a tasty lunch at the centre we gathered again into two groups to go on a Hare walk. Tony told us that hares, except for the mountain hare, are not native to Britain, and possibly came over with the Romans. Unlike rabbits they do not have burrows but stay hidden during the day in depressions known as forms. They rely on effective camouflage and speed if disturbed. They can run up to 45 mph if chased by predators. They feed at night. Our two groups each managed to spot two hares – a successful hare walk.



After thanking Tony and Emilie we set off speedily in order to be home before dark.

Keith and Frances Armes

The Mud 'n' Grub walking group

On the 7th February the group started out on a foggy and frosty morning hoping the sun would shine during our walk around the Long Melford countryside. After a bumpy car journey over to Long Melford, trying to avoid the many winter potholes, we assembled at The Hare pub car park.

We were given an update of conditions and obstacles that we would encounter along the five and half mile route by the leader for the walk David Jefferies.

Setting off across the green in front of the church we soon found ourselves immersed in the countryside walking along field edges and pathways, encountering our first obstacle, a rickety stile that had seen better days. With members assisting those a bit unsure, we all managed a safe passage over the stile. Unfortunately, the fog was still hanging about and we had no lovely views across the Suffolk countryside but we were optimistic it would get better.

At one point David lost the trail as he could not see across the field to pick up the farmer's marked trail, however an eagle-eyed scout (Helen) saw we were a few yards off course, pointing out the colour change in the field and so we found the track again.

Passing through Parsonage Farm we encountered a mass of snowdrops just about to open, a magical sight to lift our spirits. As we approached the rear entrance to Kentwell Hall the sun did appear for a short while and we took the opportunity to admire the profusion of snowdrops and aconites in the grounds.

After posing for our group photo we continued along the avenue of trees adorned with mistletoe, like baubles on Christmas trees.



Continuing on our way across a meadow with grass-munching sheep, who didn't bat an eye-lid at the group of well-wrapped-up walkers, we were on the homeward stretch of our walk and it wasn't long before we arrived back at The Hare pub.

Our ordered meals arrived not long after we had bought our drinks from the bar and we made ourselves comfortable in the dining area the landlord had reserved for us. After a delicious repast with entertaining conversation we made our farewells, with everyone looking forward to the next walk, thanking David for all his efforts in organising the adventure.

And would you believe it? The sky was blue and sun shining as we left Long Melford. You can't have it all!

Except lots of fog.
Alan and Jill Smith

Sunday Strollers

Fourteen Strollers enjoyed a 3.25 mile walk from Kedington on Sunday 12th February on a circular route via Calford Green.

Our next walk is on Sunday 12th March parking at East Town Park. The walk is approx. 3.25 miles and will leave at 10.30am.

David Jefferies

The Cycle Group

The Famous Five set out for Clare Country Park on a grey morning for the first of the February rides. There was no sign of the recent frosts on the ground so the route was deemed safe.

By the time the team had peddled through Sturmer and wound its way across the road bridge to enter the approach to Wixoe, the sky had cleared and a welcoming winter sun lifted everybody's spirits.

There was little chance to chat on the narrow climb to Stoke by Clare so the group paused on reaching the college.

Built for priests in 1415 the college survived till the dissolution after which it was bought by the Elwes family in 1660. By 1897 the 1st Baron Loch resided there and had the famous Edwin Lutyens build an arts and crafts style wing to the property. It was in 1954 that it finally opened as an independent school and one that operates as such to this day.

Entering Clare Country Park across the iron bridge the group dismounted at the Platform 1 cafe and enjoyed coffee and bread pudding, in a back-in-time setting. The homeward journey took in the Hundon Plough, under new management apparently, although the group forewent the pleasure of sampling its wares. The Hill of Death in Kedington tested everyone before the welcome sight of Haverhill and home came into view.

Ken Hainsby

Walking for Health

Walking is one of the best exercises for both our physical and mental health. Walking as part of a group in green spaces has been shown to be especially beneficial.

You may not know that, as well as the U3a walking groups, there are two "walking for health" walks every week in the Haverhill area.

On Monday afternoon there is a short walk from the sports centre and on Thursday morning a longer walk alternating between a town walk and a country walk.

These walks, organised by Onelife Suffolk, are free and you can just turn up.

For further details and a list of current walks please visit onelifesuffolk.co.uk and click on well-being walks.

You will be sure of a friendly reception and probably find you recognise some of the leaders and walkers. We are also always looking for new walk leaders, training, equipment and support are all provided.

Maura Green

Great Escape

A somewhat different 'Great Escape' put together by Anne Sherwood.

Destination Haverhill Arts Centre!!

An extremely interesting Virtual Reality Historic Tour of Haverhill presented in the warmth of the Studio by Charmian Thompson - Haverhill History Society.

Whilst covering Haverhill's development the basic theme was the Town Centre. Starting around Cangle School and

continuing along Queen Street, High Street, Hamlet Road to Sturmer Arches, with deviations to the Recreation Ground and the (open air) Swimming Pool.

In addition, the History Room was made available to Escapees throughout the morning.

From the Arts Centre it was just the short walk down Jubilee Walk across Ehringshausen Way to Anatolia's for our Post Festive Season Lunch. Anne had obviously 'Hit the Mark' as the lunch conversation was continuous with complimentary comments and many personal memories revived and shared.

Alan Alexander

Art Appreciation Group

In January the New Year continued with contributions on the theme of "The Future".

We firstly looked at the sequence of six mid-18th Century paintings by William Hogarth entitled Marriage A-la-Mode submitted as an example of what the future held in store for the characters shown, particularly the young couple brought together in an arranged marriage.

There was so much detail in the paintings that were darkly humorous, but the overall message was one of human failings and to be careful what you wish for!

We then, rather appropriately, considered the work of the so-called Futurists, an early 20th Century artistic and social movement originating in Italy.

The movement emphasised dynamism, speed, technology, youth and violence; maybe not your typical U3A mantra! Nevertheless, some of the works of this sadly half-forgotten and dismissed movement are quite astounding.



How does one depict speed and sensation in a painting?

One of the younger, and therefore later artists associated with this otherwise rather misogynistic group of mainly men, was Benedetta Cappa (later marrying the group's founder, Filippo Marinetti). Her work is today still fresh and fascinating, as typified by her Speeding Motorboat. Finally, we looked at images generated by artificial intelligence. By putting a few key words such as "Madonna and child in a Cubist style" into a phone app such as DALL-E, any number of unique images can be generated in an instant.



These can be remarkable, even appealing, but are they only a pastiche? Also, the concept of "style" is difficult for a machine to convincingly capture ... thus far.

Nevertheless, one has to wonder if we will see more machine generated images in future, particularly in the world of commercial art and design.

Neo-Luddism isn't an art movement!

Neil Dickinson

The Spanish Conversation Group

The Spanish Conversation group met twice in January at members' homes.



As always, we started with greetings and icebreakers, such as "How are you?" and "Where do you live?"

We then shared prepared sentences using words for personal appearance such as "My brother is short and fat."

We finished with the Michel Thomas audio Starting Spanish CDs. It's encouraging that the members are very enthusiastic and asking for more to study at home.

David Campos

The Beauty of Friendship

Why do I have a variety of friends who are all so different in character?

How is it possible that I can get along with them all?

I think that each one helps to bring out a "different" part of me.

With one of them I am polite.

With another I joke.

With another I can be a bit naughty.

I can sit down and talk about serious matters with one, be on the same wavelength with another.

With another I laugh a lot.

I listen to one friend's problems.

Then I listen to another one's advice for me.

My friends are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. When completed, they form a treasure box. A treasure of friends! They are my friends who understand me better than I understand myself.

They're friends who support me through good days and bad.

Real Age doctors tell us that friends are good for our health.

Dr. Oz calls them Vitamin F (for Friends) and counts the benefits of friends as essential to our well being.

Research shows that people in strong social circles have less risk of depression and terminal strokes.

If you enjoy Vitamin F constantly you can be up to 30 years younger than your real age.

The warmth of friendship stops stress and even in your most intense moments it decreases the chance of a cardiac arrest or stroke by 50%.

I'm so happy that I have a stock of Vitamin F (Friendship)!

We should value our friends and keep in touch with them.

We should try to see the funny side of things and laugh together and pray for each other in the tough moments.

I know I am part of their lives because their names appear on my mobile screen every day and I feel blessed that they care as much for me as I care for them.

Thank you for being my Vitamin Fs

Anon

Next Meetings: Tuesday 28th February
Tuesday 28th March

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Tuesday 21st March
e-mail to chair@haverhillu3a.com

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