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HWu3a

hwu3a.org.uk

Magazine of the Harborough Welland u3a

Issue No. 56

It's Only a Game

August 2026

Welcome to the August edition (No. 56) of the HWu3a magazine. This month's theme is *'It's only a game'*. This is often the response from certain people when the World Cup is being discussed. But as the late, great Bill Shankley explained, "*Somebody said to me 'To you, football is a matter of life and death!' and I said 'Listen, it's more important than that'*. What are your views on sport and winning? *Ced Bufton and David Martin, Publishing team.*

Cover photo credits: Clockwise from Top Left; Top two Dave Martin AI, Pétanque Group, Alastair Willis, Sheila Caberwal.

Contents

Pages 2 Welcome, Committee Report
Pages 3-4 Pétanque and Game Play
Page 5 Motorsport
Page 6 Mahjong
Pages 7 Group Notice Board
Page 8-10 List of Group Details
Page 11 Speakers' Corner
Page 12 u3a memories and Backgammon
Page 13 Scrabble
Page 14 Love of Rugby
Page 15 Only a Game
Page 16 Committee details, upcoming events.

News from the Committee - July 2026

Recruitment Success: I'm pleased to report that HWu3a has co-opted two new non-Trustee members, Gerry Growney and Judy Rowley. The Committee welcomes their support and looks forward to working with them in the future.

Creative Event at The Symington Building, Saturday 19th September: A small but enthusiastic number of groups are taking part in this opportunity to celebrate our creative talents. It will be held in the Council Chambers (Room 219) on the fully accessible second floor from 10.30am - 12.30pm, and I would encourage you to come along and bring friends who are not HWu3a members. It's a free event with free refreshments! Check out the 'Creative Harborough' website for further details: creativeharborough.org

To ensure a good footfall, **HELPERS are needed in the morning to welcome visitors, hand out flyers, direct them to the exhibition and to serve refreshments**. Please contact me if you can lend a hand, even if it's only for an hour. The Committee cannot cover everything!

Online Calendar: We are looking at ways of setting up a shared calendar for some Group Coordinators to use for listing events to avoid clashes of interest. Not as easy as we originally thought, but it's in the pipeline.

Membership: My thanks go to Linda Reed and Clare Heaton for dealing with membership renewals and associated financial transactions during the past few months. It is an onerous task, but moving the renewal period to the summer months was the right decision. Thank you to all members who renewed promptly!

Louise Elsome, Chair, Harborough Welland u3a chair@hwu3a.org.uk

By the members, for the members

Petanque

It is the first Monday of the month (or it could be the 3rd) and you are on a morning stroll through Welland Park. Everyone is going about their business, dog walkers, cyclists, (grand)parents and children when you hear a **CLACK!** You look over towards the café area and notice a group of people having a laugh around that gravelled area, **CLACK!** (Metal ball hits metal ball). What's going on?

You wander over to hear someone saying "**It's Only a Game**" as one of the group picks up a small bent twig and bends down to measure the distance between a metal ball and a wooden jack (cochonnet). "This ball is 1 millimetre closer than the other one, its holding the point". Groans and laughter for such scientifically accurate measurement, but everyone carries on in good spirit as **It's Only a Game.**

You have just had a close encounter of the Petanque kind and found the U3A petanquers, a group of **over 50 regular players** who turn up in all weathers all year between 10 and 2 (12 people per hour) to try and master the game, but also to have a chat, a coffee, a laugh and a bit of competition.

We also have a thriving **ad-hoc group of over 30 members** who randomly organise pop-up games whenever the weather is good and the mood strikes.

If you've never played, petanque is incredibly easy to pick up but offers endless opportunity to master. It is probably one of the most inclusive sports in the world.

We carry the usual collection of life's aches and pains, arthritis of course, health issues, visual impairments—but on the piste (petanque pitch), none of that matters. The game is very adaptable to the player and we all manage fine in our own ways.

Cont...

It also does wonders for our overall **well-being**:

- **Gentle, Varied Exercise:** You are constantly moving, bending, throwing, and walking, all at a highly manageable and self-paced rate.
- **The "Green" Therapy:** Spending time in the fresh air of Welland Park is the perfect antidote to the winter blues or everyday stresses.
- **Mental Fitness:** Calculating angles, judging distances, and working out your next move keeps the mind sharp and focused. Not to mention all the banter!
- **The Social Tonic:** Above all, it is a very social game. The laughter, the chat, and the shared coffee are just as important as the score. Well, nearly (oops, **It Is Only a Game**).

Some of us took it a step forward recently when 13 of us decided to hone our skills further (hopefully). We attended a brilliant local coaching day run by the **East Midlands Petanque** organisation, returning with fresh tactics, improved techniques and the benefit of an enjoyable day out.

Yes, It Is Only A Game, but actually it is a whole lot more than that.

Why not join us? We've already extended the sessions to 2pm to enable more members to play and there's plenty more time in the day to accommodate more players!

If you're interested in having a go, please get in touch, have a chat, come down to watch us and take it from there. You don't need to come down every week we play, some of us do, others come along just once in a while. It's whatever suits you.

There's no obligation, you can borrow some boules and have a go to see if you like it.

You won't be on your own, you can be sure of that!

Contacts:

Graham Handsley, ghandsley@gmail.com

Kev Millard, kevinamillard@gmail.com

It's the Way You Play...

Barbara and I are new members and are both ex PE teachers so sport in its many guises has and still is functioning within our lives.

With reference to your investigation about sport I have the statement below in my mind at all times and have 'thrown" it out in a variety of social situations with both strong and dismissive responses!!

We would be interested in the response of U3A members.

"I would rather lose a good game than win a bad game."

Regards Philip and Barbara Arrandale.

There are myriad cases of cheating in motor sport. Leaving aside the rather depressing more recent cases in modern F1, notably 2007's "Spygate" scandal whereby McLaren acquired technical information from an ex-Ferrari employee or "Crashgate", when Renault driver Nelson Piquet Jr deliberately crashed during the 2008 Singapore Grand Prix to give his teammate, Fernando Alonso, an advantage. Here are six of my non-F1 favourites:

When Lotus first raced at Le Mans in the 1950s, the rules prohibited changing any gearbox components. The Lotus gearboxes were notorious for wearing out and the cogs had to be changed if they were to last – clearly against the rules. So, during pitstops, the gearbox would be removed, opened up and placed in a bucket of oil for "cleaning and lubrication". A set of replacement cogs was hidden in the bucket which were then taken out as the original "cleaned" components and put back into the gearbox.

At the 1969 Indianapolis 500, Mario Andretti was forced to drive his older backup car (a Brawner Hawk) in the race. The car habitually overheated, but officials refused an external oil cooler to be fitted. Overnight, the mechanics concealed a hidden radiator behind Andretti's seat, fed by special ducting. Although Andretti's back was badly blistered by the heat, he didn't care as he won the race.

The Group 2 Datsun Touring cars of the early 1970s were approved for racing with four-speed gearboxes but were fitted with five-speed 'boxes and four-speed gear-knobs. The ploy was never discovered.

NASCAR builder Garry Nelson filled the roll-cage of Darrell Waltrip's car with lead shot, so when it was weighed before a race it was legal; during the pace laps Waltrip pulled a hidden lever, releasing the shot which rolled harmlessly down the banking. With the car now weighing considerably less, he proceeded to blow away the field. The beauty of the system was that the hole where the shot came out was the point where the car was jacked up, so the stewards could never see it.

Competitors in the 1980s British Renault 5 Turbo Racing Cup found a neat way to circumvent the pop-off valves that limited turbo pressure. They filled the pop-off valve with water and froze it in the shut position; the car would start the race with maximum pressure, but by the time the race ended and was scrutineered the ice had melted and the pop-off valve worked just fine.

During the 1995 World Rally Championship season the Toyota rally team came up with a sneaky way to bypass the restrictor plate that limited the amount of air going into the engine. The act of screwing it into place compressed elastic washers that allowed air to pass around the plate and gave 50 extra horsepower; the real genius was that the very act of taking it apart to inspect it caused it to snap back into its original, legal position. The fiddle wasn't discovered until the end of the season, whereupon Toyota lost all its points and was excluded from the 1996 championship.

Mahjong. *Pamela Costall*

When Carole and I started running the Mahjong group, it was not a very happy group. To start with most of us had never played before and those that had argued like crazy because they'd learnt to play all over the world and every region plays differently. The main varieties of Mahjong are as follows:

- Chinese Classical Mahjong – this is the oldest version of Mahjong, and was the version introduced to America in the 1920s under various names. It has a small, loyal following in the West, although few play it in Asia nowadays.
- Hong Kong Mahjong or Cantonese Mahjong – this is now the most common form of Mahjong, differing in fairly minor scoring details from the Chinese Classical variety.

There are also:

- Japanese Mahjong,
- Western Classical Mahjong,
- American Mahjong
- Fujian Mahjong – played with Dadi Joker,
- Taiwanese Mahjong – with 16 tiles for each player,
- Vietnamese Mahjong – with 16 different kinds of joker

So we decided to adopt the British Mahjong Association rules and ever since peace and tranquillity has prevailed.

Mahjong is a game for 4 people, although you can happily play with 3. It is a game of skill and luck so sometimes you can start with what looks like a winning set of tiles only to never pick up the ones you need.

It's a very sociable game and there is of course plenty of time to chat. Most people who start to learn get hooked because as with all great games you continue learning.

Harborough Welland u3a

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VERY IMPORTANT. Please contact the relevant Group Coordinator if you wish to join a group. Please DO NOT simply turn up hoping to be allowed to join on the day.

The editors thank all group coordinators for their help in updating and checking the group details listings on the following pages. We hope that this makes it easier for members to join any of the 90+ groups.

Group Coordinators: have you considered asking if one of your group would be interested in writing a report of your activities? It could be quite factual. This could then feature in the magazine and the HWu3a website. D.M

The July Get-Together was well attended and we had a good response to the **Jigsaw Swap** table. The purpose is for anyone to bring a jigsaw that is no longer wanted and swap it for another that other members may bring. We have a few spare to get started. We will not accept any donations of jigsaws as there is no storage facility. Please ensure the pieces are in a secure bag and the box taped.

Thursday Pub Walks

This is the new name for the group previously branded as "Walking – Half Day Thursday" and the group is keen to recruit new members. As the new name suggests, the walks will start and end at a pub at which they then enjoy lunch after the walk although members who just want to walk are equally welcome.

It meets on the 4th Thursday of each month with walks between 4 and 5 miles, taking 2 hours or so, mainly on footpaths and lanes. There is no cost to join the group, you merely pay for any food or drink you consume at lunch.

If interested in joining the group, or for further information, please email Alan and Linda Reed at walking4.thursday@hwu3a.org.uk

The Scrabble group is able to accommodate a few more participants. It is a relaxed quiet friendly group session. Contact Toni Parsons on 01858 431944

The Architecture, On The Edge, Backgammon groups also welcome new participants.

Approaching seventy years old? Don't worry, in Celsius that's only a cool 21!

Peter Saunders – Groups Facilitator ***groups@hwu3a.org.uk***

Harborough Welland u3a - Group Activities

MONDAY					
Art History	Angela Deane	01858 431111	Congregation Ch	1st Monday	10.00 am
Book Talk	Andrew & Nita West	01858 461517	Lounge Room, Meth Church	1st Monday	2:00 PM
Backgammon	Peter Saunders	07341 528450	Youth Wing, Methodist Ch	1st & 3rd Mon	11am-1pm
Crafting for Charities	Helen Salisbury	07837 410575	Louisa's Place	3rd Monday	2.30 pm
Crafting for Charities 2	Judith Sampson	07724 807482	Louisa's Place	4th Monday	2-4 pm
French Refreshers	Rosemary Holden	07799 627145	Please call	Weekly	11.00 am
French Improvers	Julie Jarosz	01536 712119	Please call	Weekly	pm
Handbells	Helen Green	07840 543379	Various	Weekly	2-3 pm
Open Book	Judy Rowley open.books@hwu3a.org.uk		Methodist Church	2nd Monday	2 - 3.30pm
Pétanque	Kevin Millard	01858 468015	Welland Park, nr Café.	1st & 3rd Mon	10 to 2 pm
Quilty Pleasures	Diane Miles	01858 468357	Gt Bowden Village Hall	1st & 3rd Mon	2-4 pm
Sew 'n' Sew	Helen Salisbury	07837 410575	Louisa's Place	1st Monday	2-4pm
Songs of Leonard Cohen	Phil Aldridge ptaldridge@aol.com		Community Church	4th Monday	2:00 PM
Table Tennis 1	Keith Keeble	07795 434076	Please call	Weekly	11am-1pm
Ukuleles Introductory	David Evans	01858 463045	Community Church	1st & 3rd Mon	2-4pm
Ukuleles	David Evans	01858 463045	Community Church	2nd & 4th Mons	2-4 pm
Walking Football	Peter Prickett	07751 362857	Leisure Centre	Mondays	Afternoon
Wine Explorers	Louise Elsome	07740 572956	Please call	2nd Monday	7.30 pm
TUESDAY					
Architecture	Colin Cohen architecture@hwu3a.org.uk		Methodist Ch	4th Tuesday	2 pm
Art Appreciation	Hilary Bufton art.appreciation@hwu3a.org.uk		Congregational Ch: Ashley Room	4th Tuesday	2.30 -4pm
German Conversation	Liam Lomasley	07772 325594	Louisa's Place	Every Tuesday	2-3.30 pm
Bookworms	Louise Elsome	07740 572956	Baptist Church	2nd Tuesday	2.30 pm
Bridge – Social	Don Collins	01858 462409	Bowls Club, Little Bowden	Weekly	2:00 PM
Country Dancing	Sharon Webb	07886 855931	Congregation Ch	4th Tuesday	2-4 pm
French – Les Bavards	Sheridan New	07795 872496	Enigma Cafe	Weekly	10.30 am
Jamming Workshop	Bob Morris	07939 988595	Various	2nd & 4th Tues	11:15-13:15
Local History	Linda Swallow Local.history@hwu3a.org.uk		Congregational Church	1st Tuesday	2-3.30 pm
Music, Exploring	Kate Helm	07817 735784	Community Church	1st Tuesday	10:00 AM
Photography - Tuesday	Angela Lloyd photography.Tuesday@hwu3a.org.uk		Community Church	3rd Tuesday	2.30 pm
Choir - Ladies Choir	Liz Brett	07907 631529	Cong Church	2nd & 4th Tues	10.30 am
The Readers	Susan Trevorrow	07999 082657	Various	1st Tuesday	2.30-4.30
Tuesday Chat & Craft	Yvonne Starkey tarskey2015@gmail.com		Louisa's Café	Every Other Tues	10-11.30
Walking Half Day 2	Diana Baxter	01162 792947	Outside	1st Tuesday	Various
WEDNESDAY					
Badminton	Stuart Irons	07969 833342	Meadowdale School	Weekly	5-6:30 pm

Belleplates	Pru Normand belleplates@hwu3a.org.uk		Community Ch	Weds NOT 3rd	2-4 pm
Birding Wednesday	Linda Lawton birding.wednesday@hwu3a.org.uk		Outside	2nd Wed	Morning
Canasta	David Parsons	07796 816650	Little Bowden Bowls Club	Wednesday	2-4 pm
New Age Kurling	Ian Webb beacon@hwu3a.org.uk		Congregation Ch	1st Wed	2:00 PM
New Age Kurling 2	Pat Middleton Julia Granger	07703 399432 07909 330715	Congregation Ch	3rd Wed	2-3 pm
Movie Group	Dick van Aken, Jim Tyson moviegroup@hwu3a.org.uk		Community Ch	1st Wed	10:00 AM
On The Edge Biographies	James Hobson ontheedge@hwu3a.org.uk		The Activity Room, Methodist Church	4th Wed	2-4 pm
Quilting	Anne Parker quilting@hwu3a.org.uk		Community Ch	3rd Wed	10:00 AM
Railway Exploration	railway.exploration@hwu3a.org.uk		Bowls Club, Little Bowden	3rd Wed	10:00 AM
Scrabble for fun	Toni Parsons	01858 431944	Community Ch	2nd & 4th Wed	10 –12 am
Shakespeare	Anna Wilson	shakespeare@hwu3a.org.uk	Congregational Church	2nd Wednesday	10-12:00
Table Tennis 3	Jenny Acaster	07530 999850	MH Leisure Centre	Weekly	9:00 AM
Transport Group	Michael Milsom	01858 419874	Bowls Club, Little Bowden	1st Wed	10:00 AM
Walking Half Day 1	Bruce White walking1.wednesday@hwu3a.org.uk	07919 935496	Outside	2nd Wed	Morning
Walking Wed Strollers	Linda Reed Les Dodd	07986 460319 01858 462244	Various	2nd Wed	10.15 am
Wednesday Book Club	Jacqui Crowe wednesday.book@hwu3a.org.uk		Members' homes rota basis	2nd Wed	1.30-3pm
Wednesday Chat & Craft	Renske Stichbury wednesdaychatandcraft@hwu3a.org.uk		Louisa's Café	Every other Wed	10-11.30
Wine Tasting	Jonathan/Naomi Shaw	01858 682133	Please call	Every 3rd Wednesday	Various
THURSDAY					
Birding Thursday	Bruce White birding.thursday@hwu3a.org.uk	07919 935496	Outside	3rd Thursday	Morning
Cribbage	Colin Smith cribbage@hwu3a.org.uk		Little Bowden Bowls Club	Every Thursday	10-12 noon
Drawing & Painting	Elaine Scarlett	01858 432 029	Oxendon Village Hall	1st & 3rd Thu	Afternoon
Family History	Rob Green familyhistory@hwu3a.org.uk		Community Ch	3rd Thursday	10 – 12
French Conversation	Hilary Pollak	07854 120605	Please call	Weekly	2.30 pm
Garden Group	Stella Freeman	01536 760124	Meth Church (winter)	3rd Thurs	2:00 pm
History, Aspects of	Ernie Parsons	01536 760141	Desborough Town FC	Final Thurs	2:00 pm
Intermediate German	Frances Parsons	07910 029273	E-mail for venue	2nd and 4th	10-11.30
Listening to Jazz	Mike Goldsmith	01536 770122	Please call	Last Thursday	2.15-4.15
Mah Jong	Pamela Costall Carole Winfield	07803 204464 07966 442583	Baptist Church, Coventry Rd.	2nd & 4th Thurs	9.45 am
Play Reading 1	Alan Gurr	07967 566970	Methodist Ch	2nd Thursday	10-12
Play Reading 2	Alan Gurr	07967 566970	Community Ch	2nd Thursday	2-4

Spanish – Basic	Peter Mothersole espanol1@hwu3a.org.uk		Community Ch	Weekly	2:00 pm
Spanish Improvers	Don Collins	01858 462409	Community Ch	Weekly	10:00 am
Table Tennis 2	Sheridan New sheridan.new1@gmail.com	07795 872496	MH Leisure Centre	Weekly	Midday
Tennis	Neil & Maggie	01858 431 665	Gt Bowden Tennis Courts	Weekly	10:00 AM
Thursday Ramblers	Helen Salisbury walking1.allday@hwu3a.org.uk	07837 410 575	Outside, various	Last Thursday	10:00 AM
Urban Thursday Walks	Gina & Graham Handsley urban.walks@hwu3a.org.uk		MH	1st Thursday	11:00 AM
Thursday Pub Walks	Alan & Linda Reed walking4.thursday@hwu3a.org.uk		Outside, various	4th Thursday	Morning
Wildlife	Diana Baxter	0116 279 2947	Outside, various	2nd Thursday	Morning
FRIDAY					
Creative Writing	Ann Eato/Nita West	01858 461517	MH Library	2nd Friday	2.15 pm
Cycling	Kevin Millard	01858 468015	Outside	1st & 3rd Fridays	10 am
Health & Wellbeing	Rob & Kathy Davison	07983 948392 07881 816909	Methodist Church	2nd Friday	10.30am
Photography Friday	Phil Aldridge	07734 903737	Welland Place	3rd Friday	Afternoon
Papercraft & More	Jan Collins	01858 462409	Please call	1st & 3rd Friday	Morning
Papercraft – Beginners	Jan Collins	01858 462409	Please call	2nd & 4th Fri	Morning
Discovering Poetry	Jill Hart	01858 469663	Meth Church, Upper Room	1st Friday	10:00 AM
Sequence Dance	Christine Morris and Julie Holmes sequence.dance@hwu3a.org.uk		Little Bowden Bowls Club	1st & 3rd Fridays	4–5.30pm
Singing for Fun	George Cashell	01858 467616	Methodist Church	2nd & 4th Fri	Afternoon
Society Today	Martin Gossage society.today@hwu3a.org.uk		Methodist Ch, Activity Room	3rd Friday	2-4 pm
Vegetarian & Vegan	Chris Hobson	01858 289784	Various	3rd Friday	12-2pm
Walking, Fri Strollers	Carol Harvey	07855 738706	Outside	2nd Friday	10.15 am
	Michael Parsons	07940 185429			
SUNDAY					
Singles Sunday Lunch	Vivienne Murphy	01536 771410	Various	1st, 3rd & 4th Sundays	Various
OTHER					
Do It Again Group	doitagaingroup@hwu3a.org.uk		Various	Various	Various
Drones & Photography	Terry Eato	07943 732841	Outside	Various	Various
Evening Activities	Yvonne Starkey evening.activities@hwu3a.org.uk		Various	Various	Various
Holiday Group	Maryan Richardson trips1@hwu3a.org.uk		Advertised to group	Normally 5 days	Various
Holiday Group 2	holiday.group2@hwu3a.org.uk		Advertised to group	Various	Various
New Experiences	Kevin Millard	01858 468015	Various	Various	Various
Trips	Maryan Richardson trips1@hwu3a.org.uk		See Events List	As advertised for each trip	
Walking – Evening	Linda Reed Louise Elsome	07986 460319 07740 572956	Outside, summer	Various	Various

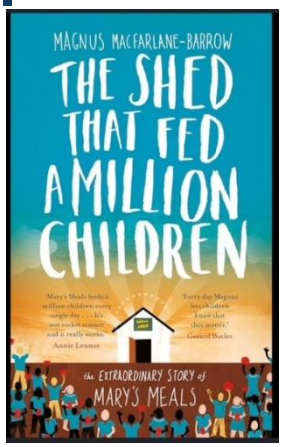
Speakers' Corner

What did you miss? - Review of presentation 13 July 2026

Our member Colin Ford, gave a presentation '*Pluto (not the dog) and Sundew*' covering the importance of the contribution of Stewart & Lloyds, Corby, to the support of vehicles and troops in WWII.

Pluto was a pipeline manufactured by the company, which was used to lie beneath the level of the channel between England and France. It was rolled onto large "cotton" reels and traversed by barges dropping the line across, to be met in France by steam traction engines to link with pumping stations. Fuel was then piped across under the channel to reach the vehicles and troops.

Sundew was a massive excavator used locally in Harrington, Northamptonshire to dig the iron ore to transport to Corby to make the steel pipe used for the facility.



10th August 2026

Patricia Robinson

St Mary's Meals

I work for the charity Mary's Meals; our presentation tells the story of our charity's humble beginnings in a shed in Dalmally, Scotland to being a global charity feeding over 2.4 million children in some of the world's poorest countries. Members have often used the words – 'inspirational, moving, interesting and wonderful' to describe our presentations.

Next Month: 14 SEPTEMBER 2026

Dr Mike Pienkowski: "Why and how we restored Red Kites across Britain"

A 30-minute video plus a shorter illustrated talk on the main outcomes of the Red Kite restoration and a Q&A section.

Mike was the chair of the group who planned and executed the reintroduction of Red Kites into those parts of the UK from which it had been missing for at least a century and a half, and the author of the book *When the Kite builds... WHY and HOW we restored Red Kites across Britain*.

Future Talks

12 OCTOBER - Passports, assassins, traitors and spies - how passports played their role in history.

9th NOVEMBER - A policeman's lot - humourous anecdotes on 33 years with police service.

Memories of the Early Days of U3a - Ruth Burgess

Reading in the Market Harborough Area u3a Newsletter the article "A 25th Anniversary Celebration", it made me aware that I was one of the members when it was first formed.

This came about when all the Secretaries of all the Bowls Clubs in Market Harborough received leaflets to give out to Bowls members and spread the word. It was met with quite a reserved response, not knowing what it involved. But after a few couples decided to go along to the meeting, my husband and I also joined them, and eventually we all became members of the u3a. The choice of activities was different but interesting. As a committee was formed, day outings were organised and, eventually, 5 day holidays.

I like reading about all the activities in the current Newsletter and it's great to see all the choices today, like New Age Curling, and to see there are still many members.

Ruth Burgess, aged 98, June 2026

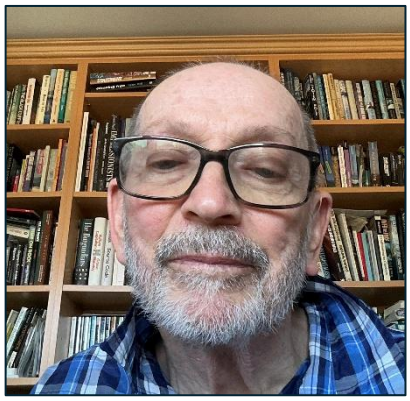
(I have to say that I remember hearing my mother talk about the u3a and how good it was and I didn't take much notice as it was "an old person's" thing. Little did I know that one day I'd be a very enthusiastic member myself!) Anna Burbidge

Backgammon – Peter Saunders

A year and a half ago, I was welcomed to our u3a having moved here. I immediately asked if I could run a Backgammon group. A resounding YES came back.

It wasn't long before 30+ members joined, some of whom had never played. Three of us began teaching them and they became quite proficient in no time.

Backgammon is really not difficult to learn. The objective is to move your pieces around the board clockwise and off, before your opponent, who moves their pieces anti-clockwise does the same, by the numbers of two dice thrown. However on the way, there are chances to capture pieces which have to be restarted from the beginning. Like all games involving tactics, you choose to play aggressively or defensively. Winning is all down to the dice numbers thrown and the pieces moved.



The group held its first 'Championship' competition in June and the winner, who didn't lose any of his games, was..... Bob Black. Well done Bob!

I so love the game and receive equal pleasure in teaching it and seeing improvement in those players.

If you want to try a session with us, contact me.

Peter Saunders Group Coordinator backgammon@hwu3a.org.uk

See website for details.

YES SIR , I DABBLE IN SCRABBLE - Sheila Caberwal

I play scrabble on a Wednesday morning. I thought it would keep me mentally alert. It has done that and entertained me too.

Scrabble combines flexibility of word play with random letter distribution. Sometimes you get a fair and balanced set of tiles. Letters which have a sense of decency and fair play and willingly help you make an appropriate word for the appropriate place. It's like watching sky divers jump out of a plane to form a word on the terrain below.

There is also a numeracy element as all the tiles are numbered and where you place them hugely impacts your score. I was so pleased when I put down a 7 letter word and gained 12 points. My opponent responded by putting 4 tiles down in a strategically important place and got 48 points. They then unhelpfully told me where I should have placed my word. Then they went on to thrash me.

The tiles themselves can be little devils. With a quirky sense of humour. Why oh Why oh Why does the letter Q think it is funny to come out without its partner in crime U? It's like meeting a cat without a tail – most odd.

Occasionally there is vowel language when no consonants can be bothered to come out of the comfortable green bag and play. I do confess we do giggle when a smutty word is placed.

Now and then we are sent new words which are acceptable from the scrabble gods. Thanks to this service I know the slang street word for both crack cocaine and methadone (oh my mother would be so proud). From the other players I am learning Australian slang and Navy commands. Our EFL players dissect the English language and then reassemble it.

I go to Scrabble with high hopes planning to win both my games and then go on to world domination. I invariably get thrashed and am shown no mercy with a score lower than my IQ. Sometimes I go, having swotted by reviewing my scientific terminology, but get thrashed by my elders and betters. Sometimes I prepare by looking up Latin and Punjabi words. I still get thrashed by my elders and betters.

While I initially joined Scrabble Group to keep me mentally alert I have found a lovely group of people (who thrash me) and I am humbled.

Sheila Caberwal.

Comments from the Scrabble group:

It's Scrabble again, Hurray. Nice to see who is coming to play. It's good to win, but sometimes I have to admit to defeat. With excitement I look forward to playing with the friendly crowd.

Scrabble is one of my favourite board games. As English is not my first language it has helped me learn new English words. I have really enjoyed meeting new people and playing different standards. I really recommend to all to try it.

The Scrabble morning is very fulfilling and enjoyable. Well organised and pleasant- the morning passes too quickly. I shall continue to enjoy scrabble during the winter.

Scrabble keeps the mind active and the language alive and this is a great group. I don't care if I get beaten as long as I can make a word.

I have enjoyed coming to Scrabble and hope we shall have sufficient numbers to continue. Sometimes it is a bit of a rush to make 10am and I wonder if we could just start it a little later. Pleasant company and well organised.

A lovely group of people with wide and contrasting experiences so the natter while we play is most refreshing. The game keeps my mind alert.

A Love of Rugby by Pamela Costall

I came to rugby late in life. I had a dear friend who was wheelchair bound and had a season ticket and since he was disabled he was allowed to take a 'carer'. I was one of the fortunate ones to be taken twice during the season and I fell in love with rugby union. Let me say proudly that I support Northampton Saints and glory every time we stuff Leicester Tigers.

I suggested to my mum that she might enjoy rugby and boy was I right. After just of few matches we became season ticket holders and whilst we were still playing catchup with the rules we loved everything about rugby. The strict rules, the politeness of the players, unlike football only the team captain speaks to the referee, so no mobbing the referee when the players are unhappy with a decision. Yellow cards, we would yell enthusiastically when one of the opposition were sent to the sin bin for 10 minutes and grumble when one of our angels was wrongly accused.

We loved the power of the packs, the speed and agility of the backs. The fact that whatever size or shape of a player there is always a position they can play. We went for many years, including to Twickenham to see them lift the championship cup and cheered until we were hoarse when they won. We even went to cheer their tour of the town centre a few days later. Fabulous.

Eventually mum was confined to a wheelchair and we managed to secure seats in one of the wonderful areas for the disabled, but sadly we had to stop going as mum found it all a bit of a struggle. She continued to be an avid supporter reading everything she could about the teams and the match reports.

When mum died David & I decided to purchase season tickets and carried on the tradition, despite moving to Leicestershire. Sadly we gave up our season tickets because we felt there were too many evening kick offs when we would be sitting outside at 10.00pm on a cold winter evening.We still avidly watch all the televised matches and have been to Twickenham a couple more times to celebrate Northampton Saints successes. Come on you Saints!

Only a Game? Tell That to the Man Shouting at His Television – Steven Kim

Bill Shankly, it is often claimed, once said that football is not a matter of life and death - it is much more important than that. Shankly was, of course, joking. Probably. But sixty years and one particularly eventful summer later, I am no longer entirely sure he was wrong.

For those who spent June and July doing something sensible with their lives - gardening, sketch club, actually finishing the crossword - a brief recap. The 2026 World Cup, staged across the United States, Canada and Mexico, delivered England fans a now-traditional emotional arc: unwarranted optimism, brief transcendence, and a gut-punch delivered by Argentina at the exact moment hope had been declared officially permissible. Thomas Tuchel's side arrived unbeaten in six matches, saw off Croatia, Ghana, Panama, DR Congo, Mexico (in the Azteca, a man light, which is the football equivalent of climbing Kilimanjaro with one boot) and Norway, before Argentina ended the dream in the semi-final. England then responded in the only sensible English way - by playing the most deranged match of the entire tournament, a ten-goal third-place shootout against France that finished 6-4 and answered, at last, the question of what happens when a team with nothing left to prove simply decides to have fun.

This is where St George comes in. Readers of a certain vintage will remember being told, quite firmly, that the dragon didn't stand a chance because George had faith. Faith, as any England supporter will tell you, is a wonderful thing right up until the 87th minute, at which point it becomes indistinguishable from denial. And yet we keep doing it. Every tournament, some part of the English soul quietly decides that this is the one, and every tournament the dragon wins on penalties, or in this case, comes third having thoroughly enjoyed itself. There may be a metaphor here about the Quaker virtue of hope without expectation. There may also just be a lot of us shouting at the television.

Read more of what Steven has to say on page 17.

Coming Up

UPCOMING EVENTS 2026

10th August 2026 Speaker: Patricia Robinson talk on St Marys Meals

24th August: Get Together

14th September: Dr Mike Pienkowski: "Why and how we restored Red Kites across Britain"

28th September: Get Together

Theme for September edition: *Creative Harborough* We're joining with the Creative Harborough team and have an event on 19th September in the Symington Building. We'd love to hear from you about your creative exploits, not necessarily u3a related, with photos if you have them.

Please send your contributions to newsletter@hwu3a.org.uk**, not marketing as this only goes** to Ced Bufton and he then has to forward them to me. *Dave M*

You can read many more articles and see more photos in the online edition. Go to hwu3a.org.uk then click on 'What's on' and 'Newsletters'. We would welcome your comments and your contributions for this online version. *David Martin & Ced Bufton*.

Copy Deadline for September edition - Wednesday 26th August.

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Online Supplement

WELCOME TO THE ONLINE VERSION of the August 2026 Issue of the Magazine.

Thanks again to all members who have contributed to this edition. Reports from the groups and more games!

Dave Martin and Ced Bufton. Co-editors.

Contents

Pages 17 Steven Kim continued

Page 18 Health and Wellbeing Group

Page 19 Group reports

Page 20 Bookworms report

Page 21 Where was VAR? Dave Martin

Page 22 Photography Tuesday Group Gallery

Page 23 Wednesday Strollers and Working Wonders

Steven Kim's Article, Continued

Gamesmanship, or: How to Lose Gracefully by Not Losing Gracefully at All

Which brings us neatly to the newsletter's other question - sportsmanship versus gamesmanship, and whether it is all about winning.

The final, Spain against Argentina, rather answered that for us. Spain won 1-0, which is the sort of scoreline that suggests a tense, tidy affair. It was not. Argentina spent large stretches of the tournament being accused of theatrical collapsing, surrounding referees, and what one pundit memorably called "blatant cheating" - the honourable art of falling over as though shot, springing up unharmed the moment the free kick is given, and repeating as necessary. It came to a head in the dying minutes of the final itself, when a reckless late challenge earned a red card, and full time arrived with players and coaching staff from both sides embroiled in a proper touchline melee, now under formal investigation.

Former England goalkeeper Joe Hart, watching from a safe and presumably astonished distance, called it disgraceful. He was not wrong, though it must be said with some English self-awareness: we have never let a bit of moral high ground go to waste, whatever our own historical relationship with feigned injury, appeals for penalties that weren't, and the sacred art of time-wasting by full-back.

Gamesmanship, in other words, is not new, and it is not going anywhere. Stephen Potter coined the very term in 1947 to describe "the art of winning games without actually cheating" - a definition so beautifully English it could have been carved above the pavilion door at Lord's. The line between the two has always been suspiciously thin: is it cheating, or merely "using the rules to their fullest advantage"? Ask any bowls player who has quietly re-measured a close one at the U3A green, or any bridge partner who has developed a curious cough at exactly the wrong moment.

Cont...

So - Is It All About Winning?

Here, in the interests of balance, a modest defence of sport against its own worst tendencies. For every red card and touchline scuffle this summer, there were rather more moments of the other kind: opposing players helping each other up, an entire stadium applauding a losing side off the pitch, the quiet dignity of players who had just had the worst night of their careers shaking hands anyway. Sportsmanship rarely makes the highlights reel, because it is, by definition, undramatic. It is the dog that didn't bark.

Perhaps the honest answer is that sport was never really about winning at all - it was about caring enormously about something that, when you say it out loud to a Martian, is a group of people trying to kick a ball into a net more often than another group of people. Shankly knew this better than anyone, and so, I suspect, did George, dragon notwithstanding. It is only a game. It is also, clearly, everything. Both things are true, and that, dear reader, is rather the point of it.

Health and Wellbeing - July 2026

The July meeting of HWB saw the welcome return of Mr Chris Stankiewicz, founder of The Injury Clinic in Market Harborough. His talk centred on the theme of 'How to stay strong, active and independent for longer.'

He opened his talk with the question 'Who wants to live to be 110?' Very few positive responses. Asking the question 'Who wants to live to be 110 if you could walk, be free of pain, be active and live independently?' saw everyone respond positively. He had made the distinction between 'lifespan' and 'healthspan'. On average, females will live about ¼ of their lives in ill-health or declining health. The figure for men is slightly less depressing at 1/5.

The NHS is a reactive health system, rather than a system which is actively working to prevent illness. It is up to each individual to take a proactive approach to their own health. Chris discussed the attitude to ageing. Ageing is inevitable, frailty is not. Normal ageing includes grey hair, slower recovery, stiffness, especially in the morning or after long periods of sitting. What is not inevitable is loss of independence, fear of falling, struggling to get out of a chair. Rather than ask 'How old are you?' why not ask 'How physically capable are you?'

Lifestyle can help tremendously with health. This includes diet, sleep (try to get 7-9 hours quality sleep), relaxation, community involvement, and movement. The 4 pillars of health are mobility, strength, balance and skeletal health (strong bones and joints). The positive message is that lifestyle changes at any age can improve health and this has been proven in clinical trials.

Chris concluded his talk with 10 'Health Snacks' – 10 items that will improve health, that we can do almost anywhere and they only take 60 seconds.

Rob

July Evening Walk Report

A dozen keen walkers set off from The Stag at Maidwell. Although we didn't seem to be walking at a particularly fast pace, we were soon back in the bar having completed 4 miles in just over an hour and a quarter. Maybe the fact that there were no stiles contributed to this fast time. Longer time to enjoy well earned drinks in the beer garden as a result. Next walk will be in August, details tbc.

Dave Martin

Friday Strollers

On Friday 11th September we meet at 10.15am at the

OLD WHITE HART

LYDDINGTON

LE15 9LR

To order lunches meet at the pub beforehand.

If you will be joining us contact Julia and Colin on 01858 463129 before Tuesday 8th September .

There is a large car park at the venue.

Thursday Pub Walks report

A dozen of us set off from The George at Great Oxendon, a venue the group had not previously visited.

In view of the forecast temperatures, Fiona kindly varied the proposed route and we stuck primarily to the shade of the Brampton Valley Way, although returning through Waterloo Farm whose tea room was unfortunately closed for a period. We then enjoyed a high quality lunch back at The George. Our thanks to Fiona and Paul for organising this walk.

Our August walk is planned to be from Swinford, previously postponed due to high temperatures in June. Full details will be emailed to group members in due course.

We have space for a few new members, for further information about the group, please contact Alan and Linda Reed at walking4.thursday@hwu3a.org.uk

Linda

Bookworms July 2026

Thank you to Jenny Hirst for the following review of '**Stanley and Elsie**' by **Nicola Upson**.

This is a book which tells the story of the family life of the painter, Stanley Spencer, his wife, Hilda, their daughters, Shirin and Unity, Patricia Preece, Stanley's muse and then lover, and her lifelong partner Dorothy Hepworth, both accomplished painters. Their lives were turbulent and intense, shaped by the selfishness and desires of Stanley, a WW1 veteran, who exorcised his wartime memories and experiences by painting the walls of a chapel in Burghclere during the late 1920s and early 1930s, with huge murals depicting the more mundane aspects of soldiers' daily lives.

Elsie Munday was their young housekeeper who did her best to hold the family together, becoming more than a servant as she was a listening ear for Hilda and Stanley. She remained a loyal, sensitive and feisty employee trying to meet the children's needs, and those of the family, throughout her life with them.

The author develops the characters with beautiful descriptions of their lives, their art and where they lived. At all times, everything revolved around Stanley.

What the reading group discovered was that every character was a real person living through genuine events in real settings. An internet search of names and places in the book opened up a gallery of paintings by each artist, photographs of their lives and BBC interviews with the daughters who recalled that 'our family life was a tragedy'. Several group members enjoyed researching the Spencers and plans are afoot to visit Cookham and some of the other key places featured.

Most of the group thoroughly enjoyed reading about the bohemian lives of the Spencers, their creative obsessions and unusual attitudes to relationships. One or two didn't find Elsie's status in the family hierarchy authentic; however, this was no ordinary household and research showed that there was some truth in the portrayal. Stanley's misogynistic attitude was infuriating at times, but a softer side to him was shown at the end.

Nicola Upson began writing in 2008 and to date has written a 12 book series of murder mystery novels with another real person, Josephine Tey, the Scottish author, as the central character. She clearly likes to create a story from a mixture of fiction and real life.

Louise Elsome Bookworms Group Coordinator

Where was VAR when we needed it? By Dave Martin

If you are of a certain vintage, you will probably remember this event from the 1986 World Cup. I was livid then and I'm livid now. Not least because the perpetrator in the No. 10 shirt referred to it as 'the Hand of God'. Unbelievable!

Cheating at its most blatant.

But I am aware of other tricks of the trade although modern technology and intense TV scrutiny is making it harder to get away with some of these ruses.

In Rugby Union, prior to the advent of the TMO, Television Match Official, a referee would have to decide if a try should be awarded even when he was unsighted by a bunch of players.

To 'help' him in his decision to award the try, attacking players would raise their arms and salute the 'try' which might well influence the referee in his decision.

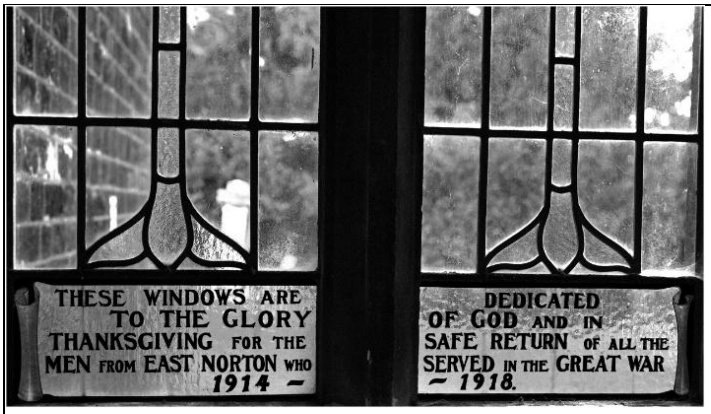
In cricket, which has its fair share of controversy, often surrounding 'the art of ball tampering', I am still delighted to see a shining light of good sportsmanship which may seem dreadfully old fashioned.

Modern day cricket umpires have all sorts of gadgets and gizmos to help them make the correct decision in terms of whether a batsman is out, 'caught behind'. The 'snicko' will show clearly if the ball struck the bat before being taken by the wicket keeper or slip fielder. A batsman is fully entitled to 'stand his ground' and wait for the decision to be made. But even in this day and age of ultra-competitive Test matches, it is still possible to see a batsman make his way to the pavilion before being given out.

After all, who knows best if the ball actually hit his bat?

Dave M

Photography Tuesday Group - Picture Gallery



John Dyson

Alastair Willis

Alisoun MacDermid

Fiona Barnaby

Phil Aldridge

Steph Goodway

Wednesday Strollers report - Wednesday July 8th

The hot weather (aka a heat wave) meant some late cancellations so we were a lower number than of late.

The group welcomed Paul Bennett on his first visit and we were indeed indebted to both Martin and Gaynor for leading this walk.

We left South Kilworth Golf club walking along a shaded lane and then reached North Kilworth. We explored the local area and were impressed with a green amenity conservation space location and even a stream with a flow of water!

Our return to the Golf Club was preceded by a “pit stop” in Dag Lane where our leaders provided welcome refreshing drinks or ” pick me ups” depending on the degree of thirst and or fatigue. We then returned safely to eat at a venue we know well!

Linda Reed

Working Wonders

Harborough District Council's Youth Council has launched Working Wonders, a new community initiative developed after young people in Harborough District asked for more help to prepare for their futures.

Working Wonders is designed to be a flexible and inclusive alternative to traditional one-week work experience. It connects local businesses, professionals, sole traders, community members and retired people with secondary schools to help young people learn more about jobs, careers and the world of work.

We're hoping to build a network of local people who are willing to share their skills and experience. Support can be as little as one hour a year and could include careers talks, mock interviews, workplace visits, virtual careers chats, "Guess My Job" activities or practical workplace challenges.

Find out more and register your interest: https://investinharborough.com/working-wonders