

H&F u3a NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER 2026

Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter. Many thanks to all who have contributed articles and photos. September is a time when things start up again after the long summer holidays and a time for our u3a to refresh the Groups and the Committee.

But first we must record with sadness that our excellent Chair, John Lavers, died on 23 July after a short illness. A number of members of our u3a attended his funeral at Mortlake. The chapel was bathed in sunlight as we remembered John, with tributes, poems and music that reflected some of his many interests. He will be very much missed in our u3a and we are very grateful for all his work in his time as Chair. His family have allowed us to reproduce the Eulogy read at the service and this appears later in this newsletter.

In this edition, we have poems about elephants in an item that John Lavers submitted in the early summer. His family have agreed that it should be included. We also have items on birdwatching, learning bridge, interesting exhibitions and a trip to Winchester as well as a 'Side by Side' initiative, a sports opportunity at Charing Cross, a Fire Station visit and finally the Food Group events for the Autumn.

Committee Report from Neville Rowden

The Committee became aware that, as well as needing to search for a new Chair, we also needed to search for replacements for the Secretary (currently Maureen Bouyahi), the Groups' Coordinator (currently Katrina Williams), and the Speaker Secretary (currently Sheila Knight) as they wanted to step down from the committee. They have all done an excellent job in their roles and will be difficult to replace.

Having put out an appeal to our members, we have had a good response. Liz Stoyel (tentatively Chair), KT Forster (tentatively Groups' Coordinator), John Dolan (tentatively Secretary) and Mila Warren have

shown an interest. Obviously, they need to understand what their roles entail and, if they are happy to continue, they will need to be voted in at November's AGM.

The committee is also happy to report that the Charity Commission had no further comments with respect to our submission and, as such, the process has now been completed.

Refreshing the Groups from Amanda Laman

We are always on the lookout for more Groups to add to our list. We used to have a Family History Group run by Barbara Speller but sadly this lapsed due to ill health. If any of you would like this to be resurrected, I would be happy to co-ordinate a group to meet at the National Archives Kew where we could look into records on their computers.

However, I did also wonder if any member has an expertise hidden from view which they might impart to the rest of the membership? Does anyone have an interest in local history, churches, museums, etc and be willing to form a group to investigate these? Meeting just once a month would be ideal. How about a group visiting various gardens or places of interest? Sadly, Kew Gardens no longer offer us a concession, but you might know of other enterprises we could visit. Just think about any day out or hobby you would like to explore and then perhaps a group can be formed. All suggestions would be most welcome.

Learning Bridge by Anna Williams

When I first retired, I made a list of what I wanted to do/learn.

Bridge was on that list. A friend mentioned a u3a Open Day which I went along to. There u3a member Sue Chinn was demonstrating a bridge session and was willing to teach new members. That was my introduction to bridge.

Many years later I regularly play with other u3a members on Wednesday mornings at Planetree Court. The group is very relaxed and social. One of the members, Derek Hodd, gives the occasional bridge update lesson.

I would encourage anyone to give bridge a go. It is very good to give your brain a workout, and you might enjoy it.

Bird Watching u3a **by Richard Hinchcliffe**

On retiring I joined the Richmond & Twickenham Bird watching group which had piqued my interest. There follow four instances of what has happened:

My friend Luca and I decided to explore Burnham Beeches, a beautiful stretch of woodland just North of Slough. We arrived at the visitors' centre to find a good coffee bar, so the journey started with a macchiato and a slice of Victoria sponge. A map of the area was also forthcoming, so the visit had started promisingly. Sure enough, we located the two ponds and, on the second one was a moorhen with a chick dabbling in the floating vegetation. Suddenly Luca hissed 'Look on the far shore there are two odd looking ducklings'. His eyesight is better than mine as he is 50 years younger than I am.

No, not ducklings but what? The two UFOs suddenly flew off together each radiating a beautiful blue. Yes, two kingfishers had been seen. The first time I have ever seen two together. Wonderful.

The next week found us in the Chess Valley, a beautiful spot just North of Rickmansworth. Again, it was Luca who froze and we diverted our gaze from the bank of the river towards a bin of silage at the bottom of the field. As we watched a beautiful red kite flew out and swooped over our heads. Its colour of red brown was sensational and its wingspan immense (about 5 feet, which checked out with my guidebook).

The bird group walk in Richmond Park the following week produced nothing of interest. Sometimes you win but other times you don't, said our leader.

Then yesterday I got a text from Luca saying he saw a green woodpecker on his jog around Leytonstone. Very good. As I was digesting this a red and black woodpecker flew into my garden and perched on a deck chair before flying off. This in Shepherd's Bush! Quite amazing that we saw two woodpeckers at opposite ends of London on the same day.

..... So, three great sightings (and one dud) in the last couple of weeks. Just fantastic!

A Coach Trip to Winchester by Anna Williams

On Thursday 21 May, members of the u3a came together for a day out in Winchester. We met at 10.00 am at the Hammersmith Apollo where our coach was waiting to be boarded. It was a very popular trip, and the 60-seater coach was pretty full. We left at 10.30 am sharp and the journey there was very pleasant and everyone was in good spirits.

We arrived at Winchester just before midday and, as it is a very historic place and also has good shops, there was something for everyone. Many people visited the wonderful cathedral, and we marvelled at the architecture round the city.



© Tourism South East 2003

Some people followed the Winchester Trail which is a great way to find out about Winchester's history. As it was such a beautiful day others went on the Water Meadows Walk which is delightful especially in the sunshine.

If others did not want to walk far, there were plenty of green spaces to sit and relax and maybe have a picnic. There were a wide variety of places to eat including some local pubs which served good food.



The Westgate and Great Hall



The Military Museum and 'Soldier's Rest' Memorial



River Itchen near Water Meadows

We planned to return to London at 4.00 pm, and the coach waited for everyone to board. Unfortunately, one person did not turn up, and we gave him plenty of time to get to us. He did have our phone number but there was no contact, so we had to leave without him.

Later we found out that he had returned by train. This was the only hiccup on this otherwise wonderful day out.

Side by Side - Research Event from Pamela Keep

I was invited last week to an interesting meeting, researching the possibilities for enhancing the experiences of Hammersmith and Fulham senior residents. The idea was to gather, on one database, information on various topics which may crop up for residents. From information to advice and physical assistance.

The idea was for a programmed AI to be able to offer advice and assistance and help in situations that arise for residents.

The programme would be called Side by Side, which would offer trusted Human support from local organisations, volunteers and professionals when they need a little extra help.

It is hoped this programme will create meaningful work for people who want it, creating a new kind of job that offers flexibility, purpose and genuine human connection for people looking for something that matters.

The idea is that the person contacting the programme would be able to state their situation or problem, and the programme would then find the best solution available. The service provided would be paid for by the person receiving the service.

This idea is in the very early stages and would need many more iterations of the programme before going live.

I am pleased to say, all four people who responded to the invitation were members of our u3a.

P.S. I ran this by the Manager of Side by Side; this is her input.

Side by Side is a platform that matches people in later life with vetted local Navigators - people who help them with the practical things that make independent life possible: accompanied outings, admin, finding activities, sorting the list that never gets done. Each user completes a simple "getting to know you" tool that generates a personalised action plan they own entirely and can share with family or professionals if they choose. Navigators are trained, reviewed, and supported through the platform, earning flexible income doing work that genuinely matters. The result is a service that fills the gap between full-time care and doing it all alone - and in the process, builds stronger, more connected communities.

Side by Side is in development stage and is affiliated with Kindred in Hammersmith. The team are looking to hear from people who'd be interested in supporting the project as potential advisors, users of the service, or navigators in the future. Please contact anna@wearekindred.com to find out more.

Poems about Elephants

by John Lavers

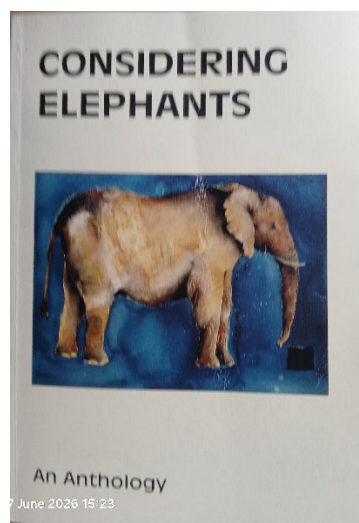
At one time, as I neared retirement, I found myself transferred to Wolverhampton following a corporate merger. It was not much fun during the week, staying in an hotel, separated from my family in a city where I knew no one. To pass the time after work, I got in the habit of browsing the poetry section of the local library. Haphazardly I stumbled on poems about elephants. My elder son, who was approaching his 21st birthday, had always been keen on elephants. So, having nothing better to do, I started collecting elephant poems, with the intention of giving him the collection as a birthday present. This I duly did, with a cover poem called "Something" which I wrote myself.

Something

This is not a poem about elephants.
There is no mention of inquisitive trunks,
Nor of enamel tusks rasping
On the bark of African thorn trees.
There are no startling images of massive grey bodies
Creating a wall of momentum in a circus parade.
There are no standing stones
Playing the part of the great beasts' legs.
Nor is there any attempt to apologise
For the sad, thin scrap of an elephant's tail.
There is no nonsensical fantasy
Concerning the elephant's ability
To play musical instruments,
Or to dance, or to take part in obscure theatrical events.
It probably seems pretty dull,
But it is something
And it's meant for you.

Of course, everything else was poems about Elephants!

The gift went down well and for a time I carried on collecting more poems, which subsequently I had printed in two separate anthologies.



This is one of the poems by a real poet. It was nominated for the best short poem prize in the annual Forward Book of Poetry awards.

Elephants by Gillian Stoneman

“Elephants”. He shouted
“elephants”
From the small spare room with the window open
on the second floor.
Shouted because
elephants were what he had most wanted
all his life to see.
Neighbours and people
in the opposite street, paused
in a rattle-tattle of washing-up and being busy,
to glance out of the summer-day window, paused
in their important
discussion of politics in the sitting-room and
their tending of potatoes in the back garden
and said, “That
is the old man shouting again!”
And his relatives
Interrupted their thoughts for just a moment
To sigh with resignation.
But no one attempted to go and look
In the small square room
Where the old man sat on the edge of his bed,
Smiling and satisfied,
As the elephants, ponderous but gentle
walked round and round, snuffing the air
with their curious trunks, and treading
ever so softly.

And here's another:

Considering Elephants by Adrian Mitchell

Turn, Turn, Turn
There is a time for considering elephants.
There is no time for not considering elephants.

Interesting Exhibitions by Maureen Bouyahi

The V & A South Kensington

The Rosalinde & Arthur Gilbert Collection gallery has recently reopened, and it is well worth a visit. Very varied collection of items ranging from beautifully decorated snuff boxes, mosaic pictures and jewellery to impressive gold and silver items. Free admission.

Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology

This museum that the Archaeology Group visited recently may be small, but it is packed to the brim with material collected by Flinders Petrie and others. The exhibits range from large blocks of stone covered with hieroglyphs to tiny pieces of jewellery. The majority of the items are meticulously labelled showing where they were found and when and indicating which dynasty they belonged to.

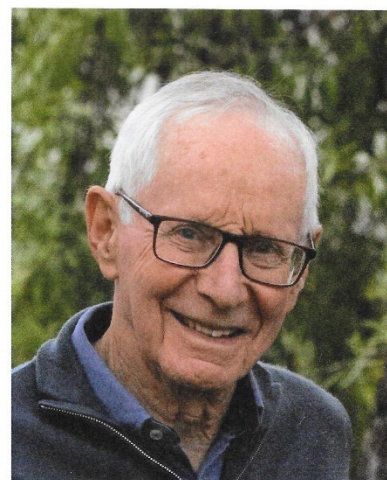
To see these amazing finds, many more than 4000 years old, is truly breathtaking and some photos give an idea of the conditions in which the archaeologists of that time had to work. Naturally, some of the exhibits are somewhat the worse for wear but others are beautifully preserved looking almost brand new and, in design and colour, would not be out of place in a modern home.

Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, UCL, Malet Place, WC1E 6BT
Open: Tues to Sat 1.00pm – 5.00pm Closed Sunday, Monday . Free admission.

Eulogy – In loving memory of Michael John Lavers

3 June 1943 to 23 July 2026

Michael John Lavers (“John”) was born on the 3rd of June 1943 in Husborne Crawley, Bedfordshire, the first son of Barbara and George Russell Lavers. He and his sister Elizabeth (“Liza”) carried with them fond childhood memories from Cranleigh, including carefree playtime and holidaymaking with cousins Ann and Mike and close family friends Sue and Howard and their parents, all of whom lived close by. He enjoyed many days watching cricket at Cranleigh Cricket Club, where his mum helped with teas and generally encouraged his sporting pursuits – they even played mixed doubles together in local tournaments between the ages of 12 and 14. As a child, he also loved board games, especially Monopoly and Cluedo, and passed on this passion to his grandchildren.



After primary school, he attended a prep school in Horsham from age 9 as a boarder, but changed to Cranleigh School when he turned 11, coming home to see his mother and sister on the weekends. Luckily for him, the school was just the other side of the village. He also obtained valuable work experience doing summer jobs – first at an ice cream shop in Hope Cove, Devon, and later working in a kitchen at a hotel in the Scottish Highlands where Liza also worked.

He excelled in his studies and from 1961 to 1964 attended Trinity College, Cambridge, where he initially read Economics but after a year transitioned to Law, positioning him for the career in finance that he would ultimately follow.

After his first job with Esso in the late 1960s, he spent two memorable years in Washington, DC in the 1970s, working for the International Finance Corporation (IFC). It was during this time that he met Sally, who at the time was working as an air hostess for British Airways. She brought him back to the UK in 1974.

John and Sally married in Hammersmith in March of 1975, welcoming their firstborn James in 1977 and Tom following a couple of years later. They started their married life in Nasmyth Street before moving to Binden Road, where they made a loving home for their young family, and later warmly welcomed their precious grandchildren, extended family and dear friends for holidays and visits, for the best part of the next fifty years.

Back in London, John continued his career in finance, distinguishing himself at various high-profile companies through the years. After his professional career slowed down, he turned his attention to the many volunteer activities that have benefitted from his skills and insights over the years. He served as a board member for social landlords and housing associations – a cause that was dear to his heart – and volunteered at the London Olympics, which he particularly enjoyed.

Never one to tolerate downtime, he also threw himself into lifelong learning and the arts. John was passionate about poetry and literature in general (he loved his poetry group and putting together anthologies); learning languages (he drew on his Latin for his Spanish study group); and visiting art museums and the theatre (he particularly enjoyed watching his granddaughter Alice perform in various plays).

John was also an avid sports fan throughout his life. His love for Newcastle United never faded, even at the roughest of times. He was especially happy to see them win a trophy last year after seventy dry years. And he loved golfing with friends, following (and previously playing) cricket and watching the tennis.

John adored his family. He was a kind and steadfast husband, a committed and doting father and grandfather, and a loving and supportive brother, brother-in-law, father-in-law and uncle. His beloved grandchildren, Alice, Arthur, Ziggy and Lyra, lit up his final years. He was the chief planner for cherished family holidays in Sienna, Shropshire and Somerset, and he and Sally took great joy in their regular visits to see their children and grandchildren in Wales, Geneva and Manchester and their and their extended family spread around the world.

An Invitation from Charing Cross Sports Club – via Mary Oliver and Mary Pillai

We are a friendly group who welcome new people.

Come and enjoy Table Tennis, Short Tennis, Badminton, Pilates or Aqua Aerobics at The Charing Cross Sports Club, Aspenlea Road, London W6 8LH Telephone 020 8741 3654 We meet for:

Table Tennis – Mondays 10.00 am - Noon

Aqua Aerobics – Mondays 10:00 am - 11:00 am

Short Tennis – Tuesdays 10.00 am - Noon

Badminton – Thursdays 10.00 am - Noon

Pilates – Fridays 10.00 am - Noon

It is £5 a session for non-members. We hope you will come and try a session and look forward to meeting you.

Note: We do ask that badminton players are not true beginners but have some experience, as we are all intermediate to advanced players. Table Tennis restarts in September. All other sessions continue. We don't meet on Bank Holidays. (Those who are members of Charing Cross Sports Club may attend any of the activities at the Centre without paying anything extra.)

An Invitation to visit Hammersmith Fire Station – via Neville Rowden

u3a members have been invited to visit Hammersmith Fire Station on Shepherd's Bush Road on Thursday, 29 October starting at 10:30 am.

Every year, they try to put on a community event that involves local residents. Normally, they would be thinking about opening the doors and allowing us a tour of their fire station where they can put on displays and demonstrations of their equipment including having the chance to squirt the hoses and see the firefighters in action.

They give Home Fire Safety advice which covers subjects such as smoke alarms, what to do in the event of a fire, reducing your risk of having a fire in the home, and how to keep ourselves safe in our homes.

They would also like to listen to some of your experiences of living in the borough over the years. Tea and cake will be provided.

They can take groups of about 30 people. If you are interested in the visit, please contact Neville Rowden.

Food Group Events

September 2026

Brunch Group meets on Thursday 10 September at The Coffee Station, 167 King Street, London W6 9JT. We meet inside the café anytime from 10.30 am.

Pub Lunch Group meets on Monday 14 at The George IV, 185 Chiswick High Road, London W4 2DR. We meet inside anytime from 12.30 pm.

Supper Group meets on Thursday 17 at Raj of Kensington, 1 Abingdon Road, London W6 6AH. We meet inside anytime from 6.30 pm.

Afternoon Tea Group meets on Friday 25 at Bill's, 10 Hammersmith Grove, London W6 7AP. Meet inside the venue anytime from 2.30 pm,

Lunch Group meets on Wednesday 30 at Poppy IV, 270 King Street, London W6 0SP. Meet inside the venue anytime from Noon.

October 2026

Pub Lunch Group meets on Monday 12 October at the Blue Boat, Distillery Wharf, Parr's Way, London W6 9GD. Meet inside anytime from 12.30 pm.

Supper Group meets on Thursday 15 at Côte Brasserie, 50-54 Turnham Green Terrace, London W4 1QP. We meet inside anytime from 6.30 pm.

Brunch Group meets on Wednesday 21 at Green House Coffee, 121 Shepherds Bush Road London W6 7LP. We meet inside the café anytime from 10.30 am,

Afternoon Tea Group meets on Friday 23 at The Muffin Man, 12 Wrights Lane, London W8 6TA. Meet inside the café anytime from 2.30 pm.

Lunch Group meets on Wednesday 28 at Steak & Company, 152 Gloucester Road, London SW7 4TD. We meet inside the venue anytime from Noon.

November 2026

Pub Lunch Group meets on Monday 9 November at The Hand and Flower, 1 Hammersmith Rd., London W14 8XJ. We meet inside the venue anytime from 12.30 pm,

Brunch Group meets on Monday 23 at Vanston's Café, 2 Vanston Place, London SW6 1AY. Meet inside the café anytime from 10.30 am.

Lunch Group meets on Wednesday 25 at Potli, 319-321 King Street, London W6 9NH. We meet inside the venue anytime from Noon.

Afternoon Tea Group meets on Friday 27 at Bill's, 10 Hammersmith Grove, London W6 7AP. Meet inside the venue anytime from 2.30 pm.

December 2026

(included as before the December Monthly Meeting)

Pub Lunch Group meets on Monday 7 December at The Distillers, 64 Fulham Palace Road, London W6 9PH. We meet inside the venue anytime from 12.30 pm.

