



# HAVERHILL & DISTRICT

**u3a** learn,  
laugh,  
live  
**News and Views**

Supported by



HAVERHILL  
TOWN COUNCIL

February 2025

## From the Chair

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 and a copy of the minutes from the A.G.M. last year. Some of the committee will be standing down or changing roles and new members will be joining.

Although costs are increasing, with 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. The committee will obviously have to consider this next year.

Unfortunately, the postage for the u3a Magazine, Third Age Matters has been increased by Central Office to £4.00. For anyone who has not seen a copy of this magazine, it is issued by Central Office five times a year and delivered to your home. The only cost is for the postage. The magazine is 80-90 pages with some very interesting articles. When you renew your membership why not try the magazine.

One way all our members who are U.K. tax payers can help is to subscribe to Gift Aid. This means that for your £10.00 membership fee the government will give us an extra £2.50, so if you do not already do this please consider doing so.



I took this picture on a cold but very sunny day during a walk in Kedington. It made me feel that spring is on its way.

**Barbara Lavender**

## Speaker's Corner

On 28th January, our guest speaker was Iestyn Edwards, whose talk was entitled "My Tutu Went AWOL – Entertaining HM Forces in War torn Iraq".

A true professional entertainer, Iestyn captivated the audience with his unique combination of humour, grace, and storytelling. Dressed in a tutu and performing pirouettes, he danced down the Arts Centre stage stairs in what he described as "drag on a shoestring".

Iestyn shared vivid and heartfelt accounts of his time in Basra and Afghanistan, recounting memorable moments with the Marines stationed there. Among his tales was the formation of a "sewing circle" and how this encouraged those servicemen to talk, and the witty description of his tutu by one of the commanding officers, who quipped that it was "a frock made of far too many doilies".

The morning concluded with an unexpected and moving performance. Iestyn surprised us all by singing "Myfanwy" in a powerful baritone voice, unaccompanied and in Welsh, showcasing yet another facet of his extraordinary talent.

Our next Speaker Meeting is on Tuesday 25th February at the Arts Centre (doors open at 10.00, with the talk starting at 10.30 – and free beverages available in the bar!).

The talk, titled "The Undertaker Entertains", may sound a little unusual at first, but it's sure to be a fascinating and memorable experience. With a blend of reflection, sensitivity, and good humour, the speaker will provide a unique insight into the role of the modern funeral director. It's an educational opportunity to dispel myths and better understand this important profession – all in an engaging and approachable way. We look forward to seeing you there for what promises to be an enlightening and enjoyable morning!

While I have your attention, I'd like to ask for your help with an important initiative. At our March speaker meeting, we've invited Reach to join us and update us on their vital work. Some of you may remember that they spoke to us a few years ago, and at that time, we organised a food bank collection. Thanks to your incredible generosity, we managed to fill several boxes with much-needed items.

This year, I'm confident we can surpass that effort. If you'd like to contribute, we're collecting the following items:

- Long-life milk
- Long-life juice
- Tinned vegetables
- Coffee
- Sugar

Feel free to set these items aside and bring them along to the March meeting. Your kindness will make a real difference to those in need, and I thank you in advance for your support.

**Sue Dickinson**

### **Sunday Strollers**

Our walk this month was a 3-mile circuit starting from the Great Meadow car park in Kedington.

Needless to say, it was a muddy walk along the Stour Valley path where our group of 19 walkers saw what looked like a murmuration of starlings. After some discussion it was decided that it was

murmuration of either pigeons or fieldfares, the jury is still out.

The Millenium Plantation at Calford Green was showing signs of spring with snowdrops, primroses and aconites in flower and daffodils not far behind. We eventually reached the crossing point of the main road back to our start, causing a small traffic jam as our muddy group straggled across and back to our cars.

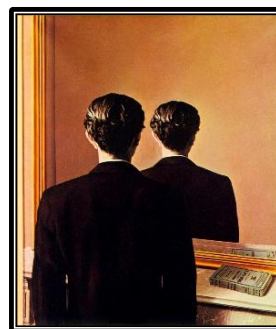
The next walk is on Sunday 9th March, meeting at station road in Linton for a 10.30am start and is 3 miles long. This walk will be led by David Green.

**David Jefferies**

### **Art Appreciation Group**

This January's meeting theme was Reflections and Mirrors. Plenty of artistic material to get stuck into with this topic and so it is to be continued into February.

However, by way of catching a glimpse into another art form, we started with a reading of a poem: 'Mirror' by Sylvia Plath. If you're not familiar with it, do search it out and be startled by Plath's observations of how a mirror is the impartial judge of identity. We looked at examples of how artists have used reflections in mirrors as simply an aid to self-portraiture and as



devices to exhibit their skill, reflecting in tiny detail what may be behind them and not exclusively what is before them, whilst literally getting in on the picture like a form of signature.

The surrealist images of Rene Magritte (1898-1967) are immediately familiar, but one such image shows the back of the head - twice - of a rich patron, Edward James.

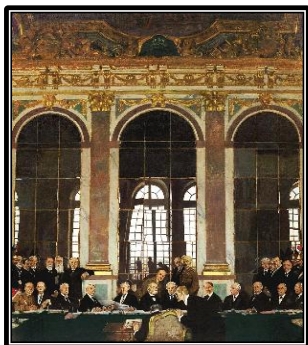
I always wondered who the man with such a good head of dark hair might have been.



Another favourite artist is the Mexican, Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) and we considered her painting 'The Two Fridas', a powerful double self-portrait which depicts the artist wearing European style clothing and traditional Mexican dress. The two Fridas hold hands whilst their hearts are exposed and linked; one broken and the other not, in reference to her, albeit temporary, split from her husband.

Such marital infidelities featured in the life of another artist, William Orpen (1878-1931), a very successful society portraitist who used his connections to become an official war artist during the Great War. Perhaps his best-known work is, nevertheless, his image of the Signing of the Peace Treaty in 1919 in the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles. The defeated German signatories are almost unnoticed in the foreground appearing as they sign, to cower before the victors, yet the mirrors in the background reflect a broken image; the implication being of the now broken world.

We looked at the ancient myth of Narcissus with his disregard of Echo's adoration and how it has featured in a number of artworks over time, where Narcissus only has eyes for his own reflection in a pool. Poor Echo; no man so self-besotted is worth the curse she bore. Sylvia Plath knew far more deeply what the mirror shows.



**Neil Dickinson**

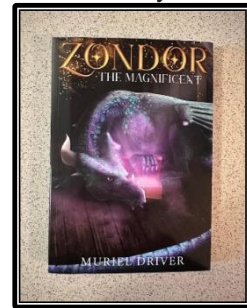
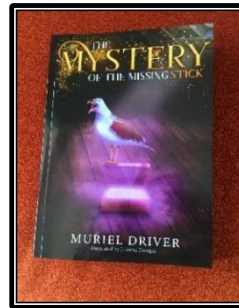
### **Zondor the Magnificent**

I'm a u3a member and a local author of a fantasy adventure series, suitable for 7 - 107 year olds.

I've published two books and am currently writing the third.

Each story sees collie dog Meg accompany friends as they travel through a portal to the land of Flondellior. They have been called because someone needs their help. But who? And why? Along the way, they meet many mystical creatures, some, but not all, of whom are friendly. Adventures abound in Flondellior, and the friends must complete their quest if they are to return home to Earth.

The first book, Zondor the Magnificent, was released in May 2023; and the second book, The Mystery of the Missing Stick, was released in July 2024.



Both books are available to borrow from all Suffolk libraries, including Haverhill, or can be purchased from Harris and Harris Bookshop at Clare, or directly from the author, Muriel Driver.

**Muriel Driver**

### **VE-DAY CELEBRATION**

Just thought to let readers know that on MONDAY AFTERNOON 9TH JUNE the ARTS CENTRE are hosting Neil Sands Productions presenting a celebration performance for VE-Day as it will be 80 years since the end of Victory in Europe.

He announced this at his recent production of his Christmas Memories programme which was enjoyed by a packed audience at the Art Centre. Hoping members might be interested in this forthcoming programme which will have many nostalgic and war songs; so plenty to have a good old Sing-A-Long to.

**Aldine Horrigan**

### **The Man who Tested Parachutes**

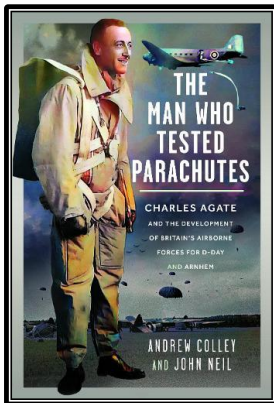
New u3a Haverhill member and author, Andrew Colley, has recently completed The Man who Tested Parachutes – Charles Agate and the development of



Britain's Airborne Forces for D-Day and Arnhem, which he has co-authored with John Neil.

Charles Agate left a reserved profession in 1941 to join a small group of mavericks and daredevils required to take incalculable risks to test parachutes and equipment at RAF Ringway in Cheshire. Agate jumped a record 1601 times during the war years not only to test new and experimental equipment and techniques, but also in training thousands of troops for D-Day and Arnhem. Many lost their lives in training.

The book tells Agate's unique story in uncompromising detail, including his 'lost' post-war years when he struggled with what would now be diagnosed as PTSD before becoming the unconventional head teacher at a village primary school.



The book also charts his final years running an ice cream parlour on Shoreham Beach up to his shocking and still unexplained death in 1986. The book will be published by Pen and Sword Books on March 30th,

2025, and there is going to be a launch event at Tatton Park in Cheshire, where Agate was based during the war, on April 16th, 2025.

There will also be book signings on April 19th, 2025 at Waterstones in Bury St Edmunds and on April 30th, 2025, at Harris and Harris Books, Clare, Suffolk.

**Andrew Colley**

### **Snowdrops and Aconites**

We all look forward to the snowdrops  
The harbinger of spring  
In many shades of white  
Ofttimes tinged with green  
Beautiful, oh so beautiful  
Sweeping swathes of green tinged white  
But they shrink into nothingness  
Against the aconite  
Aconite of deepest gold  
Brighter than the sun

Aconite the first to show  
Amid deep winters gloom  
When the aconite first does show  
Bluetits start to flit and sing  
You see it's not the snowdrop  
Who is the harbinger of spring



**Joe Cole poem written March 2015**

### **News and Views**

Our monthly magazine is full of articles contributed by our members, sharing accounts of the many informative, entertaining and enjoyable activities they get up to at their group sessions and meetings, plus anything else they think might be of interest to fellow members. Please do continue to send us your articles as without them we obviously cannot produce it.

It is normally distributed by email as a PDF file. If you do not provide an email address, you can collect a copy at any of our monthly meetings at Haverhill Arts Centre on the last Tuesday of every month from 10am until noon. Copies of the latest edition are available during office hours at the receptions of Haverhill Arts Centre and Haverhill Library.

If you know a member who doesn't use an email address, please pass on this message so they do not miss our wonderful magazine.

**David Campos**

Next Meetings: Tues 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025  
A.G.M. Tues 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Deadline for the Rolling Screen  
Tues 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025

e-mail to: [chair@haverhillu3a.com](mailto:chair@haverhillu3a.com)

Deadline for next edition:  
Friday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025

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