



## Garden Party 2024



### Dave Charlwood mastering the Quiz

The weather forecast for Wednesday 17 July: a high of 21 degrees, sunny spells, medium UV, high pollen. Nonhayfever sufferers were cheering. It would be a perfect day for the u3a Garden Party at Breaks Manor. There would be no need for layers of heavy clothing or emergency waterproofs.

There were fewer picnickers this year as many u3a members were away in Norfolk, visiting historic houses and gardens. The grounds at Breaks Manor were looking particularly green and lovely after months of rain. The

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roses had been heavily pruned since last year, but there was still some lusciously sweet sniffing to be had.

The party began with the first set from our house band, WelHat Ukes. They were shaded from the worst of the sunny spells by their new pop-up gazebos (thanks committee!). Numbers included hits from the golden age of jazz, all the way up to songs that our grandchildren would consider acceptable and maybe slightly cool. Even cooler was the dancing by dedicated fans.

The music was followed by The Quiz. Tony Tutton was away in Norfolk being cultured, so Dave Charlwood took over his duties. There was a section on dates and two sections testing our musical knowledge. The bit with dates had a clever scoring system that challenged our opinion of ourselves as the intellectual cream of Mid-Herts. People were momentarily forgetting to eat. Congratulations to the winners who walked away with Smarties!



The quiz was followed by a second set from WelHat Ukes. Bandleader Dave was wearing his famous blingy shirt. When he stepped into full sunlight the glare might have dazzled pilots at 30,000 feet. The consensus was that the group had improved, but there were no requests for autographs and selfies, and no inquiries about when the album was coming out.

Then it was time to pack away the picnic things, fold up the camping chairs and go home. We should be proud of ourselves for the way we left the grounds looking immaculate. Only the indentations of chair legs in the damp ground suggested that there had been a lovely garden party. Thank you wonderful committee for organising it.

*Julie Grey*

## Dancing to Simply 60's



The Summer Term Dance on 27 April was a brilliant evening, with 130 people bopping to the sounds of Simply 60's band at the Ludwick Centre.

The band consisted of our brilliant one and only Tony Tutton on lead vocals, with four instrumentalists. There was Tony Hammond on bass guitar, lead guitarist Dave Page, Richard Ashby on drums, and Rebecca Turner on keyboard. All excellent musicians.

The music was from the 60's; most of us could remember the music, and some could even remember the words!

The particularly tasty Fish and Chip supper arrived midway through the evening, washed down with whatever beverage we had decided to bring.

Then the lighting was dimmed, and yet again we danced the night away (well, till 10.30-ish). Eventually we slowed down and the night was at an end. The gathering gradually drifted away, leaving many good souls to clear up.

It is the best bargain of the year at £15.00 a head including the F and C supper, but BYO nibbles and drinks.

If you want to do it all over again in November all you have to do is make sure you keep the date – 23 November, 1.30pm to 4.00pm; BUY your TICKET, and bring your nibbles and drinks. Make up your party, or come on your own; put on your dancing shoes, or just enjoy the “sounds”. It will feature “afternoon tea”.

We'll dim the lights and off we go!

*Leila Lockyer*

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### Notes from the Chair

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Suddenly Summer was upon us though it took a while to warm up. It seemed there were many activities for us to enjoy. We began with one of Tony's famous Dances soon after the beginning of term which set us rocking and rolling! Then a large party of us went off on a cruise to Amsterdam and Rotterdam, which was most worthwhile. We had a couple of theatre visits – to Operation Mincemeat (an award-winning musical) and The Glass Menagerie at Alexandra Palace. Garden Groups and Arts Appreciation Groups enjoyed a variety of visits and everything seemed to be thriving with the addition of new members. The New Members coffee morning was a friendly and social occasion at the Welwyn Garden Cricket Club. The committee had welcomed new members at the last AGM and they helped to share the load of tasks needing to be done.

A new Newsletter Editor will be taking over after this newsletter. His name is Geoffrey Hollis and we welcome him to the role. We are still hoping to secure the services of a new Groups Co-ordinator.

Weekly meetings continue to flourish and entertain us at our alternate venues and we are often in a position to be able to record them for members who are unable to attend the live sessions. I especially enjoyed the talks about the highest pub in England, the Changing Landscapes of Cumbria and the Royal Flying Doctor Service. But they are always interesting and often surprising.

We don't usually mention all the variety of groups which offer great enjoyment and satisfaction to all the participants. We do get a chance to experience some of their work at the Meet the Groups days and to see on display the wonderful artwork, photography and other ventures. The walking groups continue to be popular as are the Exploring London Groups who have undertaken some exciting tours this term; including one about Spies, the Royal Courts of Justice and others. And I must mention all those lovely foodie adventures: to Terranova with the Italian Lunch Club, Breakfasts at Cote Brasserie and Indian food at the great Red Indian restaurant. There are also several lunch groups and an afternoon tea group – so plenty of opportunities to enjoy food in good company. We shouldn't ignore, of course, all those "study groups" for further learning. Indeed, I first got into U3a through a Latin language group. They are many and various and can be found in our termly leaflet and online.

And so onto the end of term and the annual garden party with entertainment by the ukes group and a quiz



**Geoffrey Hollis**

organized by Dave Charlwood. I was sorry to miss it – a small group were with the Travel Group in Norfolk. More of that in the next newsletter.

So many thanks to all the committee for your sterling work and to all the members for your continued support and enthusiasm. I hope you have had a good summer and are looking forward to an enjoyable and active Autumn Term.

*Pamela Williams*

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## Group News

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### **British Sign Language**

In February 2023, to cater for members who are interested in British Sign Language (BSL), two new Study Groups were set up. Each group meets for an hour on Friday mornings during school term time. BSL is the sign language used by the Deaf community in the UK.



***Left to right: Sally Woodward, Sue Brzeski, Jeff Palmer, Sue Dorrington, Joan Scales, Sue Talbot and Nicola Beynon signing: "U 3 A B S L perfect"!***

The meetings provide a relaxed, supportive environment where members can practise, share and improve their sign language skills by mastering and signing a range of useful conversational everyday phrases.

The aims of the Study Groups are:

- To experiment with a different way of communicating with other people using a purely visual language
- To increase each member's "Deaf Awareness" and discuss the barriers faced by the Deaf community
- To understand how you can help people with hearing impairments who are lipreading you
- To provide enjoyable fun sessions which stretch each member's "little grey cells"

Between meetings, members are encouraged to watch videos that have been created and made available online as free resources by Deaf Tutors and Universities. These cover BSL vocabulary and BSL grammar rules.

Both Study Groups are currently full, with ten members each, and attendance has been very good.

*Jeff Palmer*

## **Craftea**

Thanks to the generosity of u3a members and friends the craft items on the sales table last November/ December raised the following donations :

£113.50 to Isobel Hospice

£100.00 to The Food Bank , New Zion Church , Welwyn Garden City.

£110.00 to H'arts in Mind at The Galleria

The spectacle cases - painted by hand at H'arts in Mind - raised £80.00 for the charity .

*Marion Cleveland*



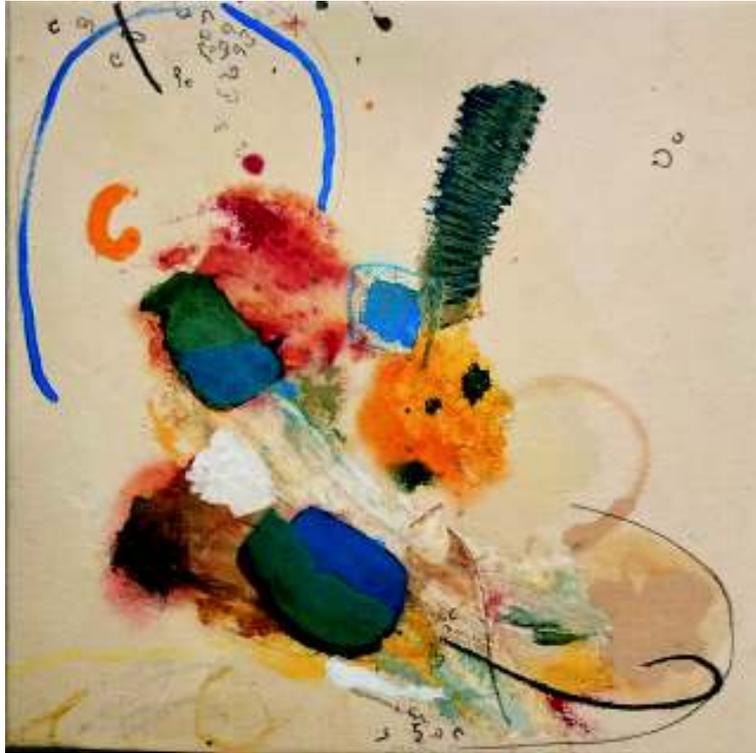
## **Painting**

Several years ago, retired architects and ex-colleagues Mashood Ahmed and Raúl Curiel decided to start a Painting Group in the Welwyn Hatfield U3A.

The Group has evolved in many ways since its beginning, and at the moment it has twelve talented



**Landscape by Raúl Curiel**



**Pirouette by Lesley Smith**

members that have a large variety of painting techniques and philosophies. The principle of the Group is simply to have a venue for a weekly collective meeting, when each member can develop their works of art and if they wish can listen to informal comments by their Group colleagues. The Group has no specific style or approach: members can do what they wish.

The Group is very friendly and meets every Monday at 2pm at Birchwood Leisure Centre in Hatfield. We also do occasional exhibitions that are very helpful to assess our achievements.

*Raúl Curiel*

## Thursday Zoomers

### *Zooming wasn't just for lockdown*

In March 2020 when 'lockdown' happened most of us had never heard of Zoom – other than a Zoom lens on your camera or phone. Fairly quickly it dawned on us that we could be stuck at home for a long time without our regular u3a Wednesday meeting 'fix', so some of us decided to look into what this 'Zoom' was all about. Wind on a couple of months (and a lot of experimenting and frustration!) and we began to meet up again on Wednesdays – but virtually, via screens. One week we would have a talk, and the alternate one, a virtual coffee morning. We taught people how to log into Zoom and it kept us going until we could meet again in person.

There still were members who could not go out; they said they missed the feeling of belonging that we'd had. So I began to broadcast our weekly meetings via Zoom to them and anyone who had to miss the talk. I then



started to record the meeting on Zoom so people could watch the talk afterwards.

Members also missed the virtual coffee mornings we'd had where people replicated the chat we have before talks begin – so I started Thursday Zoomers. We log on at 10 on Thursday mornings and for an hour we chat about anything (and everything!); or do a fun quiz, or read something, or people tell us about their working life. The hour goes by very quickly and we laugh a lot.

Many members may not realise we still do this. All you need is a smart phone/tablet/laptop so you can access the internet. If you've not Zoomed before I will give you a couple of practice sessions. It would be lovely to have more people joining us on Thursday mornings. Please contact me to find out more. If you email me I'll give you my phone number (I don't really want it put here). Looking forward to hearing from you!

*Ann Davies*

[wednesdayzoom@u3awelhat.org.uk](mailto:wednesdayzoom@u3awelhat.org.uk)

## **Travel**

### *Dutch Tulips and Waterways – Five-Nights Cruise*

This was quite literally a new departure for the Travel Group as we had never undertaken a cruise before. What a success it turned out to be! We departed from Southampton on 2 May on board Fred Olsen Lines' Borealis – a very fine ship indeed. Instead of a diary account, I will deal with topics related to the cruise.

*The Ship* – Most of us had upgrades to our cabins which were very comfortable – even luxurious! The lounges and décor on board were most attractive and varied and provided spaces to relax, read, listen to music, partake in quizzes, listen to talks or demonstrations or to enjoy drinks. There were two large formal restaurants, one buffet-style and two smaller

themed restaurants. I have to say the food on board was exceptional and we enjoyed some very fine meals, including a gala night. The service too was highly efficient and staff were very friendly, both in the restaurants and elsewhere. The facilities included a small pool and jacuzzi – under a sunroof but uncovered when the weather was good. There was also a spa and fitness centre offering a variety of treatments and activities. On the top also a sun deck (where I spent much of the last day in glorious sunshine!). There were exercise classes and talks on most days.



**Ann Davies, Pamela Williams and Marion Cleveland  
at the Keukenhof Tulip Gardens**

*Entertainment* – As we had dinner at the earlier sitting, there was plenty of time to enjoy the entertainment in the Neptune Lounge, a very well-equipped and comfortable theatre space. I was not expecting the high standard of entertainment to which we were treated. On three nights the entertainers were a young troupe of highly-skilled singers and dancers – obviously with promising futures ahead of them. Each evening had a different theme. On another occasion we were entertained by the classical violinist Tom Suha – who played classical music with a rock style and rock music with a classical mood. I especially enjoyed this event. Then on another evening we were treated to comedy and magic by Martin Daniels (son of Paul).

*Excursions* – The unique aspect of this holiday is that we did not spend time together as a group, except at dinner; and even then our tables were scattered. Some people felt this was a disadvantage but I found it an interesting departure. We did, however, have a cocktail party together as a group before the gala night. Excursions were arranged by the tour company; there was a wide variety to choose from and sometimes we met up with our own party. The most popular one was to the Keukenhof Tulip Gardens. There were several options for this excursion across two days; it was a full day



**The Cube Houses of Rotterdam**

excursion. The one I opted for included a visit to a Tulip Farm in the morning with a talk by a grower, then on to the Keukenhof. The gardens were stunning and varied but very crowded. This did not detract from our enjoyment; it was a beautiful day, gradually growing warmer, which was a welcome change after the rain on Friday. Of course everyone's experience of excursions was different as we had many options to choose from, but I think most people included a trip to see the tulips.

We were in Rotterdam for two days. On Friday it rained; I had booked to go on a short amphibious tour of the highlights of the city and canal. This was cancelled so I teamed up with another party member and we took the shuttle bus into town and spent most of our time exploring the architecture of the iconic Cube Houses including a visit to the interior of one functioning as a museum. The architecture was indeed fascinating but they were very compact!! I believe some people opted to visit Delft – another attractive choice.



**The Group on the way home, at Fleet Services. *Photo by Stephen Hodges***

On Sunday we were in Amsterdam and I opted for the visit to the Van Gogh Museum. We had a charming and knowledgeable guide who gave us a detailed examination of selected paintings and insights into the life of the artist. Both the guides on the excursions I went on were very informative, giving a real sense of their pride in their country and knowledge of its history and culture and delivering their commentary with humour and enthusiasm. I did not have the stamina for further exploration of Amsterdam in the afternoon but I know many people did enjoy their explorations of all that Amsterdam has to offer!

Monday was a full day at sea. It was a glorious day and I chose to spend most of the day on the sun-deck, reading and being sociable, and enjoying a delicious lobster lunch in the buffet bar.

Tuesday was an early breakfast ready to disembark in Southampton to take our coach home. We all agreed this had been a most enjoyable holiday. Once again, many thanks for organising this trip to Jean Davis, Tony Bristow and, especially, Kathy Dugan, who was making her last trip as organiser.

*Text and photos by Pamela Williams*

*Note:* The plans of the Travel Group for 2025 are as follows:

8-15 May 2025 - Puglia & the Heel of Italy

14-18 July 2025 - Heritage & Historic Houses of the Peak District

28 September - 2 October 2025 - The Gardens and History of Cornwall & Plymouth

*The thirty-fourth in our series of profiles of distinguished Welwyn Hatfield u3a members features –*

**Mary Perren**



Mary Willington was born in 1931, in Morden Surrey. Her family moved in 1937 – Coronation year – to Kenton, a new outer London suburb. She was aged eight when World War II broke out and her father enlisted in the new RAF regiment and was posted to North Africa. She remembers sheltering from bombing raids in their

neighbour's Anderson shelter, and her very practical Mother letting their pet rabbits breed to become a supplement to their meagre meat ration.

A teenager when the war ended, in 1947 she attended the Regent Street Polytechnic, studying domestic science, fashion drawing and dress design. There she met John Perren, who was applying for a place at medical school. In 1949 Mary completed her college course and started working for Norman Hartnell (Queen's Couturier); then for Hardy Amies (Princess Elizabeth's couturier) in Savile Row. She was the link between the elegant 18th-century showroom Vendouse, the five workroom fitters and those placing orders from the higher echelons of life.

John and Mary married in 1954 at the end of his medical training; then deferred National Service caught up with him, and he became a Medical Officer in the RAF. He was posted to Cheltenham, then to Singapore, where their second child was born.

In 1958, when John was demobbed he became a partner in a General Practice in the New Town, Welwyn Garden City. Two more children were born; then in 1972 Mary undertook further studies at Richmond

Fellowship College, Kensington, in human relations, group psychotherapy, and individual therapy. She started working for St Albans Counselling Centre as a trainer and supervisor, then at the Magdalene Centre for group psychotherapy and Cruse in Welwyn Hatfield, alongside her private individual psychotherapy practice.

John retired in 1991, and died in 2015. Mary retired two years later, aged 86. Her eyesight had been failing due to age-related macular degeneration, and she says "though still able to 'hold in mind' I felt it was time!" Missing the stimulation of colleagues and [Continuing Professional Development](#), she joined several organisations, including Welwyn Hatfield u3a.

There, she writes, "I was encouraged to join the Poetry Group, which has been inspiring and widening to my thinking and knowledge. However, my eyesight has made it increasingly difficult to participate fully".

Meeting other members in occasional general meetings and at the Friday afternoon teas, Mary came to realise that the age-range of fellow members would mean that in a relatively short time those with memories of the Second World War would be few and far between. With the help of Joan Scales she set up, meeting in her home, the first two groups of those interested in the exploration of childhood experience (two small groups as Covid then prohibited more than six people meeting together face-to-face). They contrived to produce a booklet of those memories which was made available to members and distributed more widely.

Mary writes: "We are now thinking about our own personal experiences of ageing and unconscious attitudes that lead us to this stage of life. This is not a study group but one to explore and reflect experience and learn and share with each other – perhaps even to write about it?"

Mary's four children have presented her with eleven grandchildren, who brought her six great-grandchildren. When she organised a family gathering this year "because I won't be present at my funeral when no doubt all the family will turn up – I don't want to miss such an occasion!" a total of thirty-eight relatives (including partners and in-laws) congregated.

Partially sighted and a nonagenarian, Mary remains dauntless, continuing to lead the groups she has formed; and grateful to u3a for enabling to meet her coevals.

*Hazel Bell*

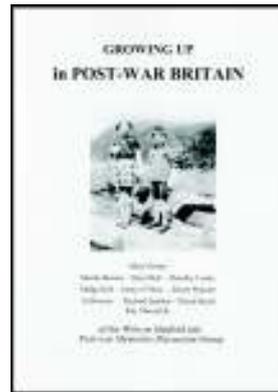
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## Book Reviews

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### *Growing up in Post-war Britain*

When our Wartime Memories group, led by Mary Perren, got into their stride with their recollections, they produced a very interesting booklet: *World War II: Childhood Memories - Adult Reflections*, and kindly made it available to any WHu3a members who wished to pick up a copy. Those of you who did so will be pleased to know that there is now a second booklet available, the result of the group's decision to move on in their reminiscing and concentrate on their memories of the post-war period.



The new booklet, *Growing Up in Post-War Britain* is a thought-provoking but ultimately uplifting collection of brief reminiscences penned by ten members of the group, plus a poem by Kay Macaulife (mother of group member Hazel Bell). Black-and-white illustrations on almost every page help to bring the memories to life.

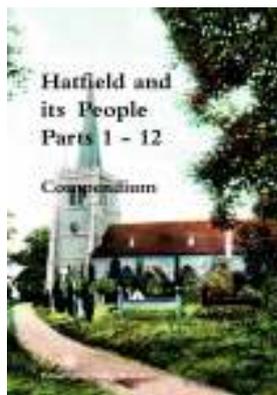
It is clear that the transition from war to peacetime was also a period of change in many aspects of the young lives that are recalled here, as childhood gave way to adulthood via, on the whole, not-too-turbulent teenage years. There are several mentions of the 11 Plus exam and the move to secondary and further education, all in the context of the various family situations still so influenced by the experiences of wartime.

There are fascinating reminiscences of Welwyn Garden City in those relatively early days, with some splendid photographs by the well-known local photographer Ken Wright. The final piece in the booklet recalls WGC in the 50s through the eyes of the late David Steed, a much-missed WHu3a member.

Throughout, we can also read of the big changes affecting the whole country – the eventual ending of rationing, the birth of the NHS, the excitement of the London Olympics in 1948 and the resurrection of the Proms in the same year, and the thrill of a trip to the Festival of Britain in 1951 – as the shadow of the hardships of war gave way to a brighter future.

*Jill Longman*

*Hatfield and its People: Parts 1 – 12: Compendium* Ed. G.



Philip Marris; Hatfield Local History Society, 2024. 588 pages, £17.50. Available from – [www.hatfieldhistory.uk/publications/](http://www.hatfieldhistory.uk/publications/)

This series of illustrated booklets about the history of Hatfield from its earliest recorded years was first produced by Hatfield W.E.A. in the 1960s, and recognised as an authoritative and informative

work. It was reissued by Hatfield Local History Society in 2014, with the addition of comprehensive indexes (and reviewed in our Newsletter 50, September 2015). Now it has been concatenated into a single volume with a cumulative index. Buying the complete set of booklets individually could be expensive, so it is hoped that this concatenation will attract more interest.

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### Autumn Term 2024 – Wednesday Meetings

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Doors open at 9.45am. Tea and coffee are served from 10.00am to 10.30am. The meetings start at 10.30am with notices, followed by the talks. Bring your own cup or mug for free tea or coffee.

If you can't attend the Wednesday talk you could watch from home on Zoom. For details contact:

[Wednesdayzoom@u3awelhat.org](mailto:Wednesdayzoom@u3awelhat.org)

We record most talks so you could also catch up after the event. To receive links to recordings contact:

[video@u3awelhat.org](mailto:video@u3awelhat.org)

### SEPTEMBER

*11, Ludwick Family Centre, Welwyn Garden City*

**Mike Ruff – “Songs and Stories from the Music Hall”**

Many of the famous songs of the Music Hall have a story behind them, whether it is how they came to be written, who the singers were or what we can learn about society at the time from the words. We will explore the history of this form of entertainment and how it spread across the world, interspersed with live performances of some of the songs and a chance for us to join in. Not a definitive history – much more fun than that!

*18, Breaks Manor, Hatfield*

**Mike Barbakoff –**

**“Codebreaking Against the Land of the Rising Sun”**

Mike is a volunteer guide at Bletchley Park and the National Museum of Computing. He spoke to us last summer about the World War II History of Bletchley Park and now returns to explore how codebreakers worked against the Japanese.

*25, WGC*

**Philip McKinder – “The Copped Hall Story – A Most Understated History”**

The saving of Copped Hall has been described as a miracle. In reality, it was achieved by a great deal of hard work against overwhelming odds.

## OCTOBER

*2, Hatfield* **MEET THE GROUPS – Open Meeting**

Displays and entertainment from some of our groups

*9, WGC*

**Andy Gibbs – “The Poor Child’s Friend:**

**Joseph Lancaster’s Educational Revolution”**

Discover how a poor boy from the slums of Southwark advanced the cause of universal elementary education throughout the world.

*16, Hatfield*

**James Higgs – “Adventures of an Estate Agent”**

We will hear about James’ initial introduction to the property world as an innocent trainee-negotiator in 1966 – to his eventual retirement as a Sales Director 49 years later, including his appearance on TV in the mid-1980’s in a live outside-broadcast, representing the profession, and some of his encounters with home-seeking celebrities and quirky personalities from around the North London area.

23, WGC

**Mike Beech – “History of the Postal Service”**

A look at how postal services developed from Henry VIII's secret communication channel to the national service we know today. We learn how the service overcame, or fell foul of, the daily threats from criminals. We hear of major expansion during the Victorian years, with telecommunications added in 1870, and how the 20th century brought the challenge of the 'digital revolution'.

30, Hatfield

**Tim Perkins – “Search and Rescue”**

Tim is the Midshires Search & Rescue Organisation's Team Membership Officer. As a qualified operational search technician he has taken part in many searches for missing persons across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

**NOVEMBER**

6, WGC

**Tony Eaton – “The Rudolf Hess Coverup”**

Tony has a special interest in unravelling some of the hitherto unresolved air mysteries of WWII. Back in November 2022 he enthralled us with new details about the disappearance of famous bandleader Glenn Miller; now he will share his insights into the flight to Britain of Hitler's Deputy, Rudolf Hess.

13, Hatfield

**Richard Thomas – “From Flanders Field to the Tower”**

The story behind the origin of the Remembrance Poppy and the founding and history of the Poppy Factory at Richmond. We will also hear about the creation of “Blood Swept Fields and Seas of Red” at the Tower of London in 2014, the commemoration of the centenary of the start of The Great War.

20, WGC

**Sara Grey – History of Pantomime”**

Here at WH u3a our pantomime history is very short!  
But Sara will take us back to the roots of this popular art form – “Oh yes she will!”

27, Hatfield

**Gill Hodgekinson – “Women in the Police Force”**

Gill has informed and entertained us before, most recently telling us about her time as part of the security operations at the Palace of Westminster. This time, she focusses on the role of women in the police force.

**DECEMBER**

4, **WGC CHRISTMAS PARTY & ENTERTAINMENT**

11, **CHRISTMAS LUNCH – Homestead Court Hotel**

*Tickets on sale from September*

*Spring term starts on 8 January 2025 at WGCity.  
Welwyn Hatfield U3A does not endorse any products  
or services offered by speakers.*

**u3a Welwyn–Hatfield NEWSLETTER**

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