



Thorley

Registered Charity No: 1182852

Newsletter

August 2026



From our Chair

Hello Everyone

I hope you are coping with the heat and taking care of yourselves.

One main point to draw your attention to in this month's newsletter... Subscriptions for 2026-27. As you may well be aware, the committee has reduced the amount to £10. Full details below

and please make sure that if you pay by standing order to amend the amount payable. But if at all possible, please pay by direct transfer. May I apologise that there was some confusion at the last monthly meeting, and some people were expecting to get their new membership card.

The other thing to mention is that the leader of the History Group, Dave Parker, is needing some support in running the group. If you can offer a helping hand with maybe some of the administration or organisation this would be much appreciated by Dave.

I recently paid a visit to the Crossness Sewage Pumping Station on the south bank of the Thames near Erith. Built in 1865 it houses four huge steam-driven beam engines, built by James Watt and Co. The four pumping engines are thought to be the largest remaining rotative beam engines in the world. Each one has a 52-ton flywheel and a 47-ton beam. Only one has been fully restored and work on a second one is well under way. The engine house is Grade 1 listed and inside the wrought iron has been beautifully restored to its original colours. It is known locally as the Cathedral of Sewage!

Steam powered pumping stations with their rich decorated architecture and mighty beam engines are amongst some of the most distinctive and impressive buildings of the Victorian age. In my opinion it is well worth a visit. www.crossness.org.uk

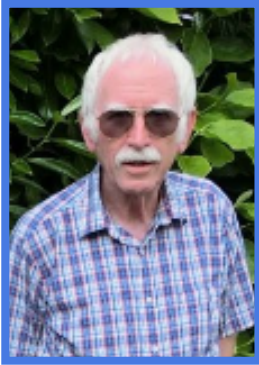
Best wishes to you all

Nigel

FUTURE EVENTS

Monthly Meeting – Monday August 3rd

Our August 3rd meeting will again be in our new venue – the United Reformed Church (URC) in Water Lane, Bishop's Stortford CM23 2JZ, which is next door to the Charis Centre.



OUR SPEAKER THIS MONTH will be **Ken McDonald** 'A Peek Inside Some Churches in the Hundred Parishes'

A look at some of the beautiful and historic churches in the Hundred Parishes, an area of around 450 square miles of northwest Essex, northeast Hertfordshire and southern Cambridge, which includes our very own St James Church in Thorley.

DOORS OPEN AT 1.30pm, with the Chair's welcome at 2.00pm, followed by the speaker at 2.10pm.

TEA & COFFEE service stops at 1.50pm. Please make sure you get your cuppa in good time!

HEARING AID LOOP For best results, sit in the centre of the hall.

Collecting Membership Cards & Making Payments at the Meeting

Our Membership Secretary, Barbara Jacobs, will be giving membership cards to those who have paid their subs at our August meeting. **To prevent queues blocking the entrance, Barbara will be stationed in front of the stage.**



Assistant Treasurer, Tony Clark, will also be there to take payments.



However, **please remember that our preferred method of payment is by bank transfer** – see full details of how to pay on the Subs page below.

Future Speakers



MONDAY SEPTEMBER 7th –

Damien O'Dell

Adventures of a Ghost Hunter

Damien's personal experiences of ghosts and haunted houses, spanning over 40 years of paranormal investigation. He leads a group called APIS (Anglia Paranormal Investigation Society) and may include some 'local haunts'.



MONDAY OCTOBER 5th –

Andy Stuart

Churchill's Intervention in the Russian Civil War

Officers' mutinies and volunteers for Churchill's North Russian Relief Force. Recruiting from the prisons.

What could possibly go wrong?

Exploring a forgotten period of British history and Churchill's involvement in it.

Dates for Your Diary

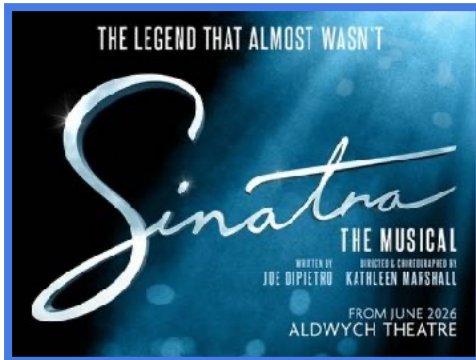
Although bookings are not yet open for the Quiz Night or Christmas Lunch, you might like to make a note in your diary.

Saturday October 24th – Quiz Night. More details nearer the time.

Tuesday December 1st – Christmas Lunch. More details nearer the time.

ONE SPACE Now Available for Sinatra the Musical

**LAST
CHANCE!**



Sylvia Poole now has one ticket available for her coach trip to see Sinatra the Musical on September 17th at the Aldwych Theatre, London.

Cost is £79, which includes the coach and driver's tip. Full details on our website.

The coach will leave from the bus stop at the rear of Sainsbury's Thorley at 10:00am on Thursday 17th September.

Contact Sylvia Poole at sylvia@sylviaanded.co.uk

CANCELLED - Coach Trip to Bletchley Park

Sadly Dave Willett has had to cancel the trip to Bletchley Park on Wednesday October 14th because of the low take-up.

Members who booked are being refunded.

Thorley u3a's 15th Anniversary

At the end of 2011 our u3a was established and by early 2012 it was up and running. Over the last 15 years, it has continued to grow and become more successful, with more than 40 groups.

Celebrations are being planned for our September meeting.

Meanwhile if you have any memories of anything you have been involved in since you joined, a short article, a photo, a funny incident, a poem, in fact anything, please send it to comms.thorleyu3a@gmail.com for inclusion in future newsletters.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Year's Subs to be Reduced to £10!

Following a review of our finances, your Committee has decided to reduce the 2026-27 annual subs from £15.00 to £10.00. What a fabulous bargain!

Annual subs for Thorley u3a cover the year from September 1st, and can be paid from July onwards. Membership cards can be collected at the August meeting onwards.

Bank transfer is our preferred method of payment. Please give a reference of your surname followed by your membership number. If paying for more than one person, please make a separate payment for each person.

Account 1 should be used for subs – our full bank details are shown in the table below.

If you have a **Standing Order** you will need to amend the amount to £10.

Cheque payments should be made payable to 'Thorley u3a' and please put your membership number on the back. You can pay by cheque or **cash** at our monthly meetings, but there may be a queue!

Renewals by post: please send your cheque to Barbara Jacobs, Membership Secretary, at the address below. Enclose a stamped, self addressed envelope if you wish your membership card to be posted to you.

Barbara Jacobs
180 Stansted Road
Bishop's Sortford
Herts CM23 2AR

The **co-operative** bank

Account 1

Account name: Thorley u3a

Sort Code: 08 - 92 -99

Account Number: 67274808

Payments: Annual membership subs only

Account 2

Account name: Thorley u3a

Sort Code: 08 - 92 -99

Account Number: 67274947

Payments: All other money - groups/trips/events

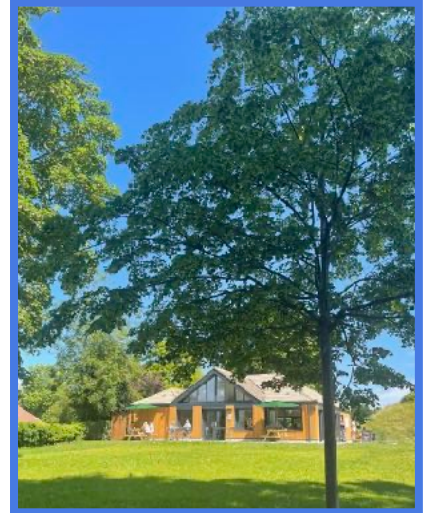
Members' Bargains in Bishop's Stortford

DISCOUNTS OF 15% FROM THREE LOCAL BUSINESSES



We are very grateful to three local businesses for their generous discounts of 15% for members.

Coopers in Bridge Street, the Terrace Park Café and Caffelnn in Florence Walk all give the discounts. All you have to do is show your membership card.



FREE Nuffield Gym Access for 6 Months

Anyone who has joint pain (and let's face it, that includes many of us u3a members!) is eligible for six months' free membership of the Nuffield Health fitness and wellbeing gym in Anchor Street, thanks to its Joint Pain Management programme.



They ask you to commit to two special one-hour sessions a week for 10 weeks. You are then given six months' free membership, allowing you to use all the facilities, including the gym, swimming pool and classes at any time. They even reimburse you for two hours' parking in Jackson Square each time you go.

Nuffield Health, with its gyms and hospitals, is a trading charity so offers a number of community wellbeing programmes like this.

At the end of the six months they also give a massive discount for membership, which is normally £64 per month. Find out more and apply by Googling Nuffield Joint Pain or by clicking on this link <https://www.nuffieldhealth.com/about-us/our-impact/healthy-life/joint-pain-programme>

LAST MONTH'S SPEAKER

July: Duncan Bickley

A long-handled brush and pan were essential props for the presentation given by our speaker in July. And, no, Captain Duncan Bickley wasn't there to clean the venue, but to tell us all about his career as a helicopter pilot, instructor, examiner and trainer, with more than 7,500 hours of flying experience.

Duncan, a hugely entertaining presenter, gave us a lesson in how to fly a helicopter, using his brush and pan to demonstrate.

He also told us all about the helicopter routes across London. You can't just fly where you fancy, but have to follow specified corridors, typically flying at around 1,300 feet... which



doesn't leave much room for error when going over the 95-storey Shard at 1,016 feet, especially as the building's reflective glass tends to hide it from view on a dull day.

We learned that it costs £6,500 to park a helicopter at Heathrow Airport, but only £20-£30 at North Weald. We saw wonderful footage of flying above the Alps and Paris in the snow.

We also heard about Duncan's work to encourage people to give blood, flying right round Britain for the 'Pledge a Pint' campaign. And he told us about celebrity passengers like Ray Winstone and Katherine Jenkins, the only passenger to give him a kiss.

All in all, Duncan proved to be a real high-flyer.

Carmen Konopka



GROUP REPORTS

Sparkling Visit to Bailey Hills Vineyard



The Wine & Beer Appreciation Group enjoyed a very interesting visit to Bailey Hills vineyard. We had a stroll around the vines and an explanation of the three main types of grapes grown, which are the same as in Champagne.

We then had a tour of the winery, followed by a tasting. The most popular English sparkling wines were the 2022 vintage and the 2023 Rosé.

It was also interesting to hear that the soil is also similar to Champagne, because under the heavy clay of Bishop's Stortford is limestone.

Everyone left after a very enjoyable visit with very positive comments about the Bishop's Stortford sparkling wines.

Our next event is on 29th September at the Thorley Community Centre and this is a blind tasting of a red wine, which is a repeat of the event on 2nd June.

Alastair Curbun





Summer Choir Concert

The U3A Singers' Summer Concert in July hit just the right note with its theme of 'Folk, Football and Favourites'. It was a blisteringly hot evening, so for the first time the singers abandoned their uniform in favour of cool summer outfits.

The choir, which now has 27 members, sang a varied programme which included a medley of Andrew Lloyd Webber hits and Elvis Presley's 'Can't Help Falling in Love', as well as folk songs from Croatia and all parts of Britain

Gilbert and Sullivan songs added some comedy, with the gentlemen singers making everyone laugh with their rendition of 'The Policeman's Song' and the ladies



entertaining with 'Three Little Maids'.



And appropriately for the last week of the FIFA World Cup, the audience joined in with lots of songs that are

sung in the football stands to support teams.

New singers are always welcome! We meet on Thursday afternoons at Havers Community Centre, with rehearsals for our Christmas concert starting on August 20th.

Carmen Konopka

Strolling in Southern Country Park



Despite setting off early, 16 brave Strollers had to cope with 25 degrees for their walk in the Southern Country Park in July.

The wild flowers were amazing, but the group only spotted one orchid.

Linda Ketteridge



Garden Group 1 Visits Upper Langley



A lovely visit at the end of June with our U3A Garden Group 1 to a private garden, in Upper Langley, in the rural countryside of Essex.

It was a really hot day, but the owners, Richard and Robin, had laid on refreshments and plenty of home-made cake for us, sitting in the shade after a walk around their extensive garden.

It not only contained beautiful flowers, but a pond with newts, dragonflies and coots, chickens and several vegetable beds. What a lot of work!

Thank you Barbara Jacobs for organising our visit.

Liz Happer



Garden Party for U3A Singers



The U3A Singers enjoyed a social afternoon with lots of teatime treats at their annual Garden Party.

Hosted by co-ordinator Carmen Konopka, nearly all the choir were able to attend, bringing with them cakes, sausage rolls, savoury nibbles, biscuits, wine... and proving that their second favourite activity after singing is chatting!

If you'd like to join this convivial singing group, contact carmen.konopka@btinternet.com

Carmen Konopka



Garden Group 2 Visit Hyde Hall

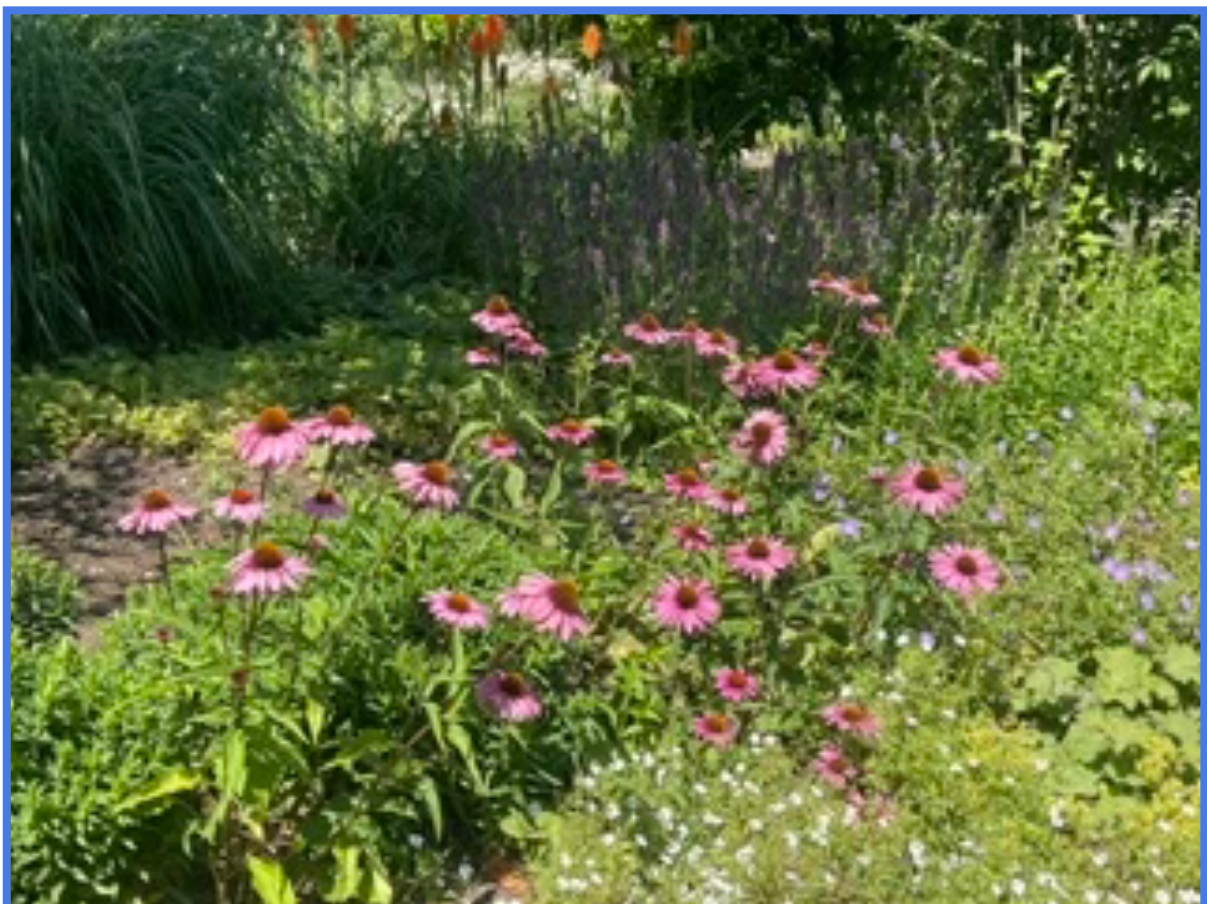
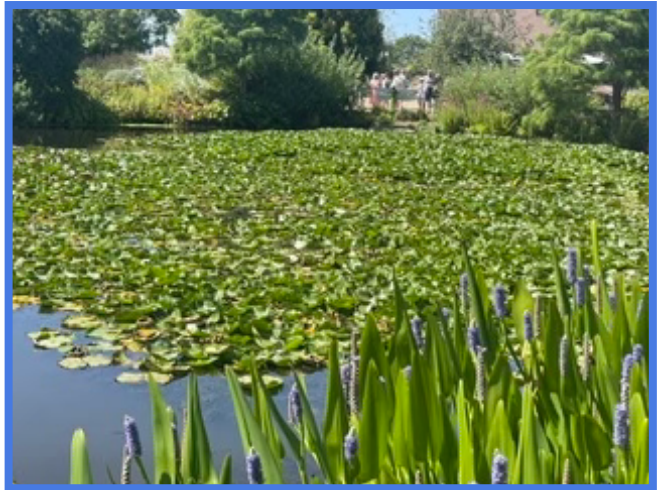
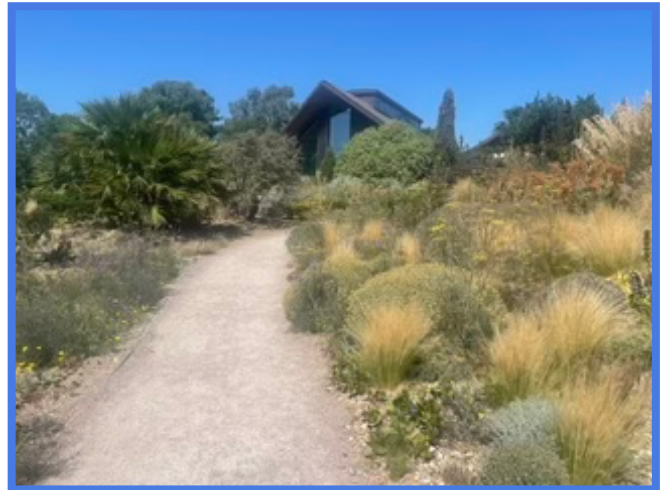
Garden Group 2's July outing was to RHS Hyde Hall.

Covering 365 acres with outstanding features like the Dry Garden, full of plants ideally suited for the current hot climate.

Other highlights include the Hilltop Garden, full of roses and herbaceous borders, together with a glorious lily pond.

We highly recommend Hyde Hall for a day's visit.

Roger Thear



THORLEY u3a COMMITTEE



Nigel Varnam
Chair



Linda Ketteridge
Vice Chair



Ryland Perrin
Treasurer



John Acklaw
Business
Secretary



Barbara Jacobs
Membership
Secretary



Barry Maxwell
Speaker Organiser
& Data Protection



Chrissy Thear
Events
Organiser



Tony Clark
Assistant
Treasurer



Carmen Konopka
Communications

Please send contributions to the Newsletter
to Carmen Konopka:
comms.thorleyu3a@gmail.com

Committee members can all be contacted via
the Contact tab on our website:
www.thorley.u3asite.uk