

u3a

learn, laugh, live

WELWYN HATFIELD
SUMMER 2025 ISSUE 79

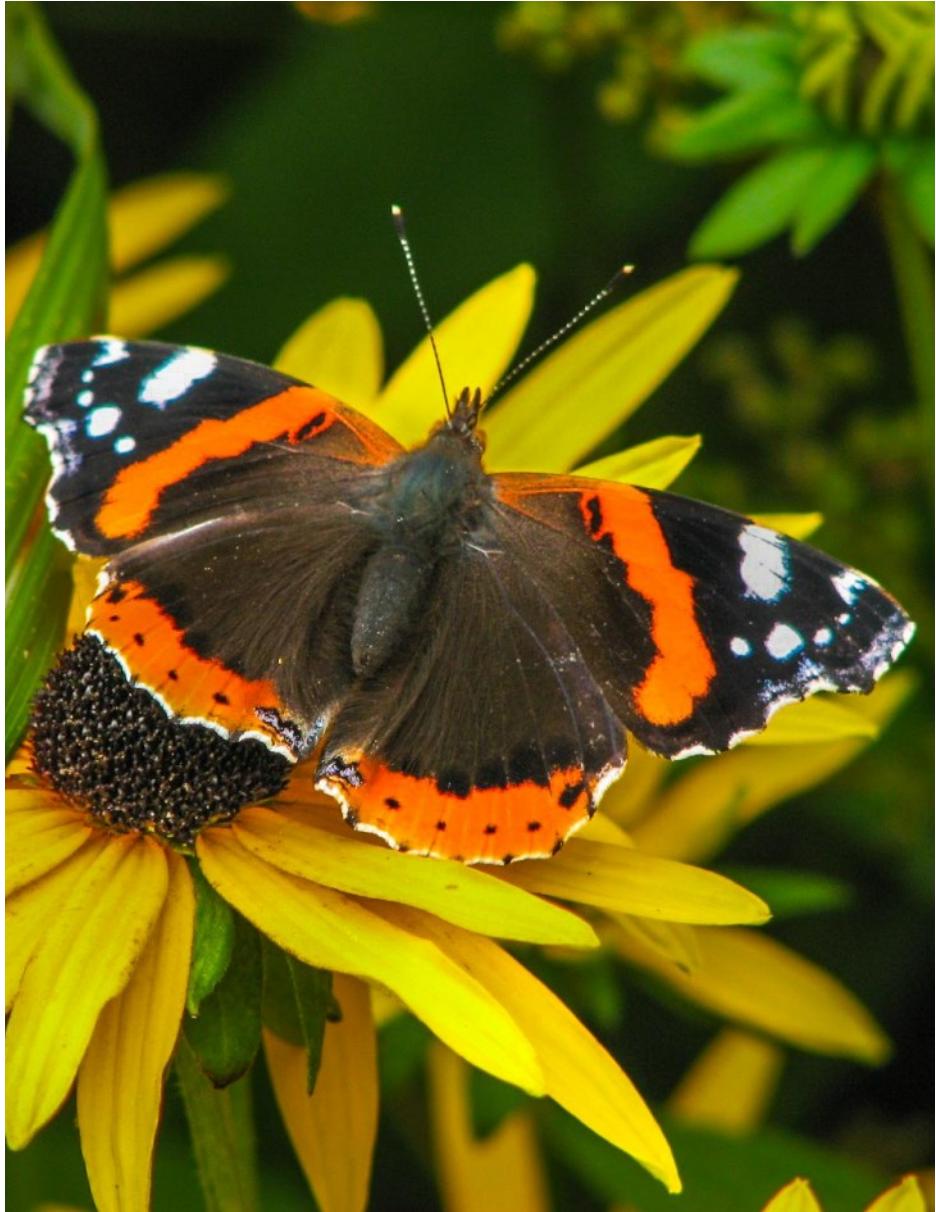


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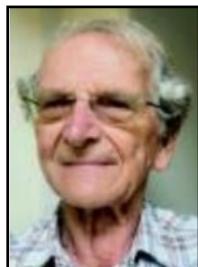
Front page picture by Mike Nicolas, Photographic Group
RED ADMIRAL

From the editor

This is my second issue, and it proved most enjoyable to put together. The Photographic Group provided some excellent pictures as candidates for the front cover, with the theme of summer; the one I chose impressed me because despite many efforts I have never managed to get a sharp photograph of a butterfly at rest.

My own journey within the u3a continues; I have learned a lot from watching the high calibre online talks provided by the Third Age Trust, particularly those on Artificial Intelligence. AI is developing

at a tremendous rate, and the u3a has expert members who are willing to share their knowledge.



Noting the u3a strap line of Learn, Laugh, Live I have introduced a few cartoons in this issue. If any member thinks they can do better, (not too difficult), do let me have your ideas.

Finally, I am looking forward to talking to you on June 4th; although Hatfield is the main topic Welwyn Garden City gets some important mentions.

Geoffrey Hollis

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

No fear of January blues last term as we began with a great programme of Wednesday speakers and the weather was not too unkind to us. In addition, we had plenty of exciting events to anticipate.

On the **entertainment front**, Tony organised two lunch events – a Turkish and an Italian – and a delightful brunch at Côte Brasserie. These prove to be very popular events and opportunities to socialise, so many thanks to Tony.

On 19 February we held a very successful **Arts and Photography Exhibition**; this is a good chance to see the many talents of some of our members and is always well attended.

On 12 March we held our **Annual General Meeting**, where the business of the meeting

was concluded satisfactorily and we were then entertained by a quiz from Tony, followed by a performance by the Ukes group with a sing-a-long. At the meeting, **Marie Scales** stepped down as **Deputy Chair** and **Dave Charlwood** was elected in her place. I have been very grateful for the support of Marie but I'm confident Dave will successfully fulfil the role.

On the horizon for next term many of us are looking forward to the **Travel Group's** visit to Puglia, Italy, in May and to the Peak District in July.

The **Theatre Visits Group** have three exciting and popular musicals in the pipeline; Cabaret in May; Just for One Day (about the Live Aid Concert) in June; and Fiddler on the Roof at The Barbican in July.



We have Tony's evening of rock'n'roll and fish'n'chips at the beginning of May. Then, before we know it, it will be time for the Garden Party and Picnic in July.

All this happens against the backdrop of our many Study Groups, who meet at various intervals. I note that the **Walkers Group** have been very active (!) and the **Gardening Group** have several interesting visits planned.

The **Wednesday speakers** have been particularly interesting this spring. We are fortunate that Jill

Longman and her team track down such consistently entertaining and informative speakers. Not forgetting Chris Savage and the volunteers who provide the coffee!

As I write the sun is shining, daffodils are out and I am peering at them through the branches of my magnolia stellata also just out. And apparently the cherry blossom is blooming on time in Japan this year. The early blooming in recent years is a significant indicator of climate change. So the news is not all bad, eh?

Pamela Williams



Group News

I am pleased to say that Alison Wingfield and I are now acting as the Groups Coordinator Team! We have been busy carrying out risk assessments of venues used by our Groups; Alison has been contacting Group Leaders to ensure our website is up to date.

We are pleased to announce two new Groups – **Music Appreciation**, run by Denis Smith, and **Mixed Media Painting**, led by Susan Cooper. The Music Appreciation Group is already full, so if you are interested contact Denis and he will add your name to the waiting list, or you may be able to start a second Group yourself?

The **Mixed Media Painting Group** meets on alternate Tuesday afternoons in a new venue, the Woolmer Green Village Hall. Please contact Susan if you are interested in joining; her Contact details



are on the website, and in the Wednesday meetings programme.

At the last two **Gardening Group** meetings, several of us have been busy selling tickets for outings, and those trips that are not sold out are being offered at Wednesday morning meetings.

The **Architecture Group** are organising a visit to Eltham Palace, on Monday 2nd June. If it is not sold out to Architecture Group members tickets will be offered to general u3a members.

The **Family History Group** meets on the 3rd Tuesday afternoon, at a member's home or on Zoom, and would welcome more members! Please contact Brian Bolton-Knight to find out more.

Joan Scales

AGM

These are the main points from the Annual General Meeting held on 12 March 2025, not covered elsewhere.

Membership

is up: currently 882 including 39 Associates and 37 Honorary Members.

25 new members have joined this year; 13 Members formally left, 3 of whom passed away.

Financial position

is sound; no need to increase membership fees from £20.

For financial year to end-December 2024, overall income including groups'

activities was £59,524; overall total expenditure was £58,166; resulting in a modest surplus of £1359 for the year.

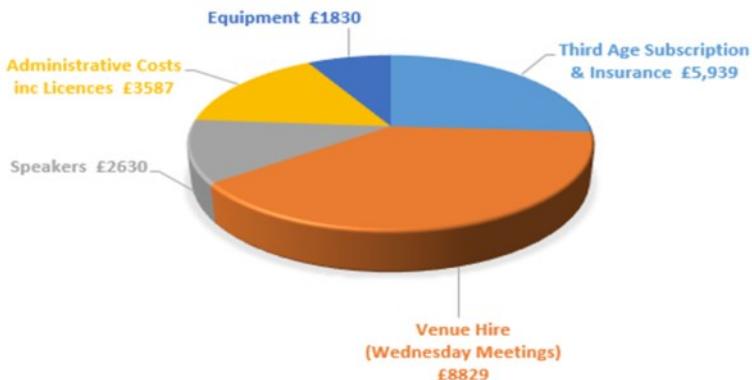
Excluding groups, income was £22,815, of which membership fees were £17,720, and Gift Aid repaid by HMRC was £2,661.

Core expenditure was £22,815; made up as shown in the chart opposite.

For the year ahead, Lloyds Bank are increasing their charges for handling cash and cheques; members are encouraged to pay by Bank transfers where possible to minimise these charges.



(EXCLUDING STUDY GROUP ACTIVITIES)



Are you looking to book a holiday with Riviera Travel? If so, do remember to book directly with Riviera rather than via a travel agent and mention u3a Welwyn Hatfield at the time of booking. **They will donate 10% of the holiday cost to us.** This does not cost you anything; the amount that would normally go to a travel agent comes to us.

It does help you though because it keeps your annual subscription lower than it would otherwise have been.



New Members

In Treasure Island if you were handed a black spot it was bad news. If you got a red one on the lanyard that was given to you at the welcome meeting for new members, on 31st March at Welwyn Garden City Cricket Club, it was quite the reverse.

Members of the Welcome Group eased up to you and did what they are best at—making you feel good about becoming a Member. I was

there as a newish Member (no red spot) and felt really at home.

Members of the Committee took turns in standing up to address the excellent turnout, introducing themselves and explaining what they did.

Pam our Chair set the tone by talking briefly about the history of the u3a, then describing the three Pillars on which it stood: **Wednesday Meetings**, and **Groups**. After she sat down I began to worry





that age was taking its toll, because I could not remember the third one. To my great relief she leapt back to her feet to add **Communications** (of course).

After the final presentation it was question time. One example: why were some Groups full? Answer: it depended on the size of the venue; those which met in a Member's home were obviously limited; at the other end of the scale the Gardening Group, which meets in the Cricket Club, has over 80 members.

There were pleas for an Activity Group, eg Keep Fit, Tai Chi, Line Dancing. Simon Turner from Welwyn wondered if there was any interest in a Chess Group, or a Group paying instruments such as Harmonicas.

I asked Simon and his wife Wendy (pictured above with Joan Scales) what they thought of the event. As one they said "fantastic".

My conclusion: £20 annual sub is a ridiculous bargain, given the great things on offer in Welhat u3a.

Geoffrey Hollis

Art Exhibition

What a fantastic turnout on February 19th from U3A members and our incredibly creative artists and photographers! This was despite the bitterly cold weather and the organisers were very grateful.

It was great to see everyone chatting to the study group members and having a good time.

The tables were chock-a-block with photos and paint-

ings, which were brilliant and inspirational.

There was a very strong vibe that anyone can try their hand, however new you may be to art and photography.

They are wonderful pastimes to relax; I speak from experience as a member of the Watercolour Group!

The following study groups took part: **Photography, Oil Painting, Craftea and Watercolours.**





At our next exhibition we will be welcoming **Mixed Media**. If you are interested in joining any of these groups please contact the Study Group Leader; their names, contact details and study days are listed on the inside pages of

the termly Wednesday programme and on our website. Thank you to all our artists and to everyone who visited, as they say 'we can't do it without you'!

Alison Wingfield
pictures Peter Fox



Talks

We were fortunate to welcome the **High Sheriff of Hertfordshire**, Annie Brewster JP in March.

We learned something of the history of the role, which dates back to Anglo-Saxon times, and heard about some of the hundreds of engagements Annie has carried out during her year in office. We were delighted to meet such an impressive and engaging person and she was very interested to find out a little about us, too.

If you missed the talk don't forget that we record most of



our talks. If you want to see them please contact video@u3awelhat.org.uk.





Later that month the speaker was Robin Mobbs, Lead Educator at the **National Space Centre**. As part of his hugely informative and engaging presentation about space travel he brought along a space suit. using it to talk us through some of the features required to protect astronauts in the hazardous environment of space. Stepping up to assist

in this challenge was our own Steve Hall, plucked from the front row of the audience to demonstrate the effort needed to don such an outfit!

One not-so-small step for a man, one great occasion for WHU3A!

Jill Longman

*Photos: page 12
Peter Fox,
page 13 Jill.*



Take a hike

Good company, fresh air, exercise: the many pleasures of walking with the U3A

Every two or three weeks throughout the year, people converge on a pub car park somewhere in Hertfordshire. They put their coats on, and groan as they bend down to put on their walking boots. Sticks and water bottles at the ready together with suncream/winter parkas/woolly hats/gloves/sunglasses as appropriate, they stride off to explore bits of our lovely county. They belong to the U3A walking group.

One Tuesday in March eighteen members took a 4-mile stroll from Tewin village, starting from the car park by the cricket pitch. Walking west towards Diggswell, through fields and woods, we suddenly found ourselves at the top of a very steep descent. At the bottom we turned left and left again, across some rolling farmland – only to find ourselves at a steep incline. Yes, we needed to climb up the other end of the escarpment we had only recently descended. Hey ho.

More open fields followed, with sheep and plenty of birdsong. we skirted St Peter's church at Tewin, with its pretty graveyard full of spring flowers, and lovely stained glass, before passing the piggery behind Tewinbury. At the easternmost point of the walk we came to Marden Hill House, a Grade II* listed late Georgian dwelling designed by architect Sir John Soane, surveyor of the Bank of England, now divided into apartments.



This was a typical walk. All are checked out in advance by the Leaders, so that we can avoid fallen trees, closed footpaths, floods and so on. The current leaders, John Horsford, Steph Horsford and Liz White, inherited the group from Mike Dorrington, who ran it very ably on his own for many years. Mike used his amazing knowledge of the Hertfordshire highways and byways to good effect, lovingly annotating many OS maps with

coloured highlighters, and keeping extensive records of all the walks he knew.

Now everyone has an app for that. So we use our phones, and hardly ever go astray. Although I do like to print out a map of the walk, just in case.

Another change over the years is that parking is increasingly a challenge, so we have become a walking/lunching group, mostly starting from the car park of one of the county's many rural pubs.

Walks give us a chance to appreciate the pleasures of nature – birdwatching, wild-flower and tree spotting, seeing the great outdoors. But they are multilayered: a chance to chat, to catch up with old friends.

We are a friendly bunch, with a solid core of perhaps twenty regular walkers, and many occasional ones to add spice to the mix. We are a mixed group, some quiet, some chatty, some enjoying the company, some just appreciating the simple pleasure of putting one foot in front of another. Why not come along and see for yourself? We are blessed with some beautiful locations to explore, right on our doorstep in wonderful Welwyn Garden City.

Oh, and we have good pub lunches, as eleven of us can attest, after trying out the menu at the Plume of Feathers in Tewin: a very satisfying end to a good morning's walk.

Liz White



CRAFTEA

Have you attended a u3a meeting and seen a lady selling hand crafted chickens and wondered what that was all about? I know I did, I could see the proceeds of the sale were for charity, but more than that I didn't know; now I know the back story and can share it.

Probably good to mention at this point that it isn't always chicks ready for sale, around Valentine's day she had red felt hearts and at Christmas there were Santa hats, Christmas puddings and snowmen all knitted in festive colours.



The knitted goods at Easter are crafted so that they can lay a crème egg and at Christmas they are hiding a chocolate orange.

Where do they come from, who makes them and where does the money go? All good questions. Well, the lady running this project is Nikki Beynon (shown in the photo) and the ladies making the goods are for the most part members of the u3a Craftea group. The ladies of Craftea use odd bits and pieces left over from other projects or donated to them for their crafty goods, so really the only thing that is bought is the chocolate. The money that is made from the sale, is

donated to local charities; for example we are about to donate £207.50 to Isabel Hospice from the sale of the chicks. At Christmas the money was shared between two charities: £100 to the Women's Refuge and £84.20 to Isabel Hospice. The sale of red hearts for Valentine's Day raised £108 for the British Heart Foundation.

The only question remaining is how is this all possible? Well, it is with a big thank you to the ladies and gentlemen of the u3a who support our efforts and buy a chick, or a Christmas pudding for their nearest and dearest. One



gentleman told me last year that he often had to replace the chocolate before giving it to his granddaughter; seemingly it melted on the way home ... in December!

Rosy Holt



Computer Groups

The computer course was started in 1 Hatfield in 2003 by Peter Harrison; Ted Web took over later. I joined in 2012 and at Ted's request stepped up when he stood down in 2014.

The facilities at 1 Hatfield were not ideal; fortunately a friend who was captain of the WGC Bowls Club was looking for people to rent the clubhouse room and it proved perfect for our use (*picture opposite*).

The computer group is a self-help discussion group. It has 45 members, in two sets: “Microsoft Discussion Group” (Windows) meeting on the **first Thursday** of every month and “Apple Users Group” (iPad & iPhone) meeting on the **second Thursday**.

Members either email questions to me or bring them along to the meeting and we, as a group, endeavour to solve them, which in most cases we do!

As an example, one Microsoft Member's computer flashed up a message that it had been infected by a virus. We detected a scam; the cure was to turn off the machine, remove the battery, replace the battery and restart the machine. Everything then worked again.

Recently the iPad of a lady from our Apple group was stuck in dark mode. We showed her exactly where in Settings she could turn the dark mode on or off – which resolved her problem.

I run the groups in a light-hearted manner, and they are not at all “geeky”. Why not come along and see how we work?

tonytutton1@yahoo.co.uk or call me on 078875 28811 and I would be pleased to discuss details further with you.

Tony Tutton



*Computer Error messages are invariably curt. Hazel Bell has come across Haiku * which convey such errors poetically. (* Of Japanese origin, three lines often of 5-7-5 syllables respectively).*

The website you seek
cannot be located but
endless others exist.

With searching comes loss
and the presence of ab-
sence:
My Nove/not found.

Three things are certain:
Death, taxes, and lost data.
Guess which has occurred.

Windows has crashed.
I am the Blue Screen of
Death.
No one hears your screams.

Stay the patient course
Of little worth is your ire
The network is down.

Yesterday it worked
Today it is not working
Windows is like that.



Book Review

The Little Book of Hertfordshire by Ruth Herman; The History Press, 2024. ISBN 978 1 80399 545 8. Hardback, 192 pages. £14.99.

Not a particularly “little” book, this would have been better titled “The Jolly Book of Hertfordshire”, with its persistently personal, droll tone.

The first pages give a jocular account of the author’s career; the Introduction includes, “I presume you know where Hertfordshire is”, “I’m not sure about the slaves”, and “I admit that I have gone for the sensational rather than the worthy”. The first chapter begins: “Cast your mind back 6,000 years ... and have a peek at Hertfordshire Man and Woman. What were they up to, apart from wondering when the rain would stop?” Hatfield House as seen by Henry VIII “provided a useful place to store his daughters”.

There is a paragraph on “unconventional” names – Boggy Bottom, Cock Lane, Uranus Road ...

The proper historical information is accurately recorded: but, alas, untraceable. The book, with 43 (unnumbered) chapters, sources lists and a timeline, has no contents list.

The chapter headings are duly informative – The Normans are Coming!; Literary Hert-

THE
LITTLE
BOOK
OF
HERTFORDSHIRE



RUTH HERMAN

fordshire; Ghosts and Scams; Politics; Crime and Punishment; Coal Posts; and would have been usefully presented together.

Neither is there an index. Barbara Cartland's books and political career, Barnet Fair, the Datchworth ghosts, de Havilland, Elstree Studios, Knebworth Music Festivals, Hatfield House, highwaymen, Hill End Hospital, Ebenezar Howard, Henry Moore's sculpture, the Romans, Royston Cave, the Rye House Plot, witches and workhouses are all duly featured in the text – but the potential read-

er cannot tell where, or indeed whether, they appear.

Not a book for the earnest scholar, but entertaining light reading about our county.

Hazel Bell

About the author: "Ruth enjoys writing to make history engaging and accessible to the general reader. Her first book, *The Incredibly Biased Beer Guide*, won a Guild of British Beer Writers Bronze prize. Her most recent book was *Grub Street: The Origins of the British Press*. She lives in Hertfordshire.

AUDIO BOOK GROUP?

Do you suffer from sight loss, and miss reading and enjoying novels, biographies and the like in hard print? After a lifetime of reading, loss of vision leaves one turning to the vast library of audiobooks. It occurs to me that because of a fellow feeling with those similarly afflicted, a group to discuss reading by listening could offer shared stimulation and enjoyment.

Are you interested? If so, please get in touch with **Mary Perren** by email: maryperren@icloud.com

SUMMER TERM SPEAKERS

Spring term starts 23 April. Doors open at 9.45; refreshments from 10-10.30 (bring your own cup for free tea or coffee). 10.30 start. To watch from home on zoom, contact: zoom@u3awelhat.org. To receive links to recordings contact: video@u3awelhat.org.

23 Apr HAT Malcolm Ward – “An Actor’s Life for Me”

A realistic account of what it's like to be an actor who isn't a "name" – i.e. the vast majority of professional actors.

30 Apr WGC Howard Slater – “Audrey Hepburn – Her Life Story and War Years”

Hepburn grew up during the Nazi occupation of Holland. We will hear about this and her career after WWII.

7 May HAT Roger Wotton – "Ships and Mythical Animals"

Seafarers have made many observations of strange sea creatures, some of which have gained mythical status. Examples are the kraken, the fish that stops ships, sea serpents, and mermen and mermaids. We can provide rational explanations for most of these creatures, but their mythical status remains in stories and fairytales.

14 May WGC Martin Orkin – “Bridge Over Troubled Water – the Simon & Garfunkel Story”

Learn of the amazing story and timeless music of Simon & Garfunkel. We will hear snippets of some of their great records, such as 'The Sound Of Silence', 'Homeward Bound', 'Scarborough Fair' and 'Mrs. Robinson' as well as the all-time classic, 'Bridge Over Troubled Water'. Martin may also test our musical memories of the era.

21 May HAT Roy Tyzack – “A Story on Every Street Corner”

A virtual stroll with Roy, a retired police detective, taking us from Stratford to Whitechapel to discover just how much we don't know about this historic area – home of Captain Cook, the clubs run by the Kray twins, the Whitechapel bell foundry, the formation of the Salvation Army, the battle of Cable Street and the siege of Sidney Street. It's all here, interspersed with more recent events including a 1970's murder that brought about a cultural change in the area.

28 May WGC Steve Hall – “30 Years of Playing Soldiers”

Steve will tell us about his part-time connection with the British Army in a number of different roles which lasted for 30 years. He will also bring along some of the kit he wore during this period.

4 June HAT Geoffrey Hollis – “Architecture of Hatfield New Town – Success or Failure?” Hatfield New Town was set up after WW2 with high aspirations. Its architects, all from the first rank, wanted to create a community that was well-housed, happy and productive. Has it achieved its objectives?

11 Jun WGC Elizabeth Gowing – “The Rubbish Picker’s Wife”

In 2016 the President of Kosovo awarded Elizabeth the Mother Teresa medal for her humanitarian work; in 2018 the new Kosovan President conferred Kosovan citizenship on her. In 2021 she was appointed adviser on community affairs to the Kosovan PM.

18 Jun HAT Pauline Martindale – “Sights and Sounds of India”

Her travels in India, starting in Delhi and exploring the Golden Triangle through to Amritsar, the holiest city of the Sikh religion.

25 Jun WGC Charlotte Foley – “A Physiotherapist’s View on the Importance of Strength & Balance Exercises”

This talk will focus on the importance of strength and balance, emphasizing how maintaining these physical abilities can enhance overall health, prevent falls, and improve quality of life.

2 Jul HAT Kate Harwood – “Historic Landscape of Panshanger”

Kate describes the ups and downs of the Panshanger Country estate, from its founding in 1694 through its development into a grand family seat by Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton, to its demolition in the 1950's

9 Jul WGC Keith Baldwin – “All the King’s Horses & All the King’s Men” A lighthearted look at Keith’s years as a soldier in the Household Cavalry and at the Brigade of Guards in general...

16 Jul HAT GARDEN PARTY

Welwyn Hatfield U3A does not endorse any products or services offered by speakers



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