

u3a
in Kennet

Thirty Years of u3a in Kennet

May 2022

First edition

Written by Allan Skipper

25th March 1992

On the 25th March 1992 Aldershot FC resigned from the Football league. This was the first club to do so since 1962. Also on this day in the Wesley Hall in Marlborough u3a in Kennet met for the first time. This followed a meeting arranged by Derek Robbins from the Swindon U3A in Marlborough Town Hall in February 1992 where 200 attended . This was 10 years after the National U3A was established in the UK following its first appearance in France in the 1970s.

It was in the middle of our Election Campaign where John Major was hoping to maintain a Tory majority in a contest with Neil Kinnock's Labour Party. Meanwhile in the Wesley Hall Derek Robbins became the first Chairman of our u3a. A committee was formed which included his wife, Beryl, and Graham Francis, Tessa Davies, Don Greaves, Mel Lowry, Alan Rix and Hilda Simpson.

29th April 1992

At the next meeting on the 29th April, 47 members turned up and 13 groups were established. These included Walking, Table Tennis, History and Travel. There were also 14 new groups waiting for coordinators . After only one year membership grew to 178.

Some six months later Bill Hawes took over the Chairmanship. Bill was instrumental in helping to establish both the Devizes (in 1996) and the Pewsey u3a (in 2008). Bill also served on the National Executive Committee. Both Bill and his wife, Rosemary, became Honorary members of u3a in Kennet in 2007. This was also the year that Val Clowes established our website.



THE
THIRD AGE TRUST
Certificate of Membership

This is to certify that the

U3A IN KENNET

University of the Third Age
is a member of the
THIRD AGE TRUST

Date 15.5.92

No. 186.173.92

Registered Charity No. 288007
National Representative body
of U3As in the U.K.



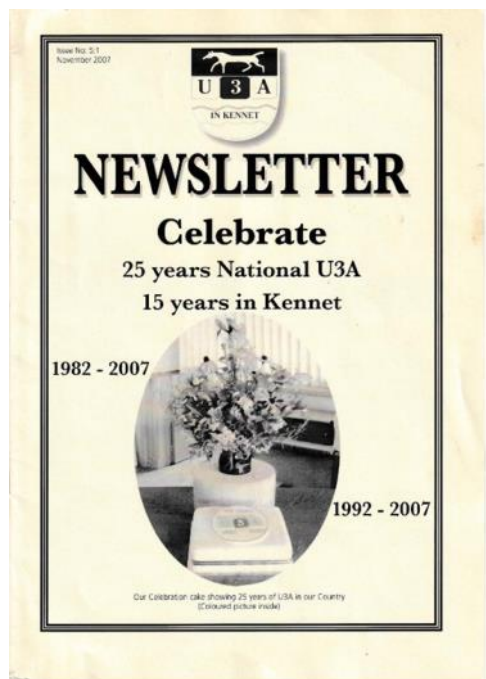
First Newsletter

Back in 1992 when petrol was 40p per litre (£1.83 a gallon) the first U3A in Kennet Newsletter was produced in September. Some new groups were established: French Cookery led by Jacques Petit; Photography, with Mark Gilbertson; Folk and Square Dancing with Audrey Greaves; Family History and Singing for Pleasure with Mollie Attwell. The Family History group was looking for a volunteer to lead it.

The Newsletter also contained some snippets of useful information :

Free Rail tickets were available if you spent £5 or more at Boots. This was a buy one and get one free offer though medicine purchases didn't count! Also in the Newsletter there was advice about being a Carer and a helpline for Arthritis sufferers. In addition a warning to be careful at home, to learn that the old 10p coin would no longer be legal tender from 1993 and bronze 1p and 2p coins were soon be replaced by copper coated ones were included .

In those early days The Shell Community fund donated £300 to help the purchase of a new PC and printer.



2007

Fifteen years later on the 13th September 2007 our u3a was enjoying a celebratory lunch and a cake in the Kennet Village Hall. Jean Tomlin, Beryl Jessop, Lexi Bray and others helped to organize this. Brenda Davies entertained the diners with her impressions of Joyce Grenville and Pam Ayes. We also had a choir to sing to us.



2017

In 2017 there was another celebration—this time for the 25th Anniversary.

Derek Robbins, the founder of u3a in Kennet and Pam Jones, the national Chairman, cut a cake to mark the occasion.



Growth in membership

There have been 14 members in the Chair. The term of office for the Chair was extended to three years rather than two in 2008.

From 13 Activity Groups in 1992 the number has grown steadily. In 2007 48 groups, 64 groups in 2017 and 65 groups today.

Our current Membership Secretary, Mike Morison, says we don't have any specific records on membership numbers over the years going back to the early days. But in 2009, the 1000th member was enrolled.

U3A CHAIRMEN AND VICE CHAIRMEN SINCE 1992

CHAIRMAN	YEAR	VICE CHAIRMAN
Derek Robbins	1992 - 1993	Brian James
Bill Hawes	1993 - 1995	Margaret Wright
Margaret Petit	1995 - 1997	Bill Hawes
Bill Hawes	1997 - 1998	Brian Staines
Brian Staines	1998 - 2000	Terry McGee
Terry McGee	2000 - 2002	Michael Pearce
Michael Pearce	2002 - 2004	Val Clowes
Val Clowes	2004 - 2006	Carole Faunch
Carole Faunch	2006 - 2008	Gerald Long
Gerald Long	2008 - 2011	Trevor Kearley
Bill Nimmo Scott	2011 - 2014	Peter Noble
Peter Noble	2014 - 2017	Graham Barnes
Graham Barnes	2017 - 2020	David Hammond
David Hammond	2020	Jill Turner

There was a peak of about 640 current members at the start of the pandemic lockdown and we lost a bit over 12% over the lockdown period. Numbers are now rising again and we have recently enrolled member number 2041 (2000th in October last year) and we are now back up to 590 members.

There have been Coffee mornings, Bimonthly Talks, Newsletters, Magazines, A support system called the Really Usefuls, Celebratory dinners, New members and Group leaders dinners, AGMs and National Representatives.

Talks have been wide ranging from: "Behind the Scenes at No 10" to "Ladies of Greenham Common", from "Avebury-The Story so Far" to "The Larkhill Aerodrome". One of the early talks from 1992 was given on the theme "Its Never Too Late". The speaker described "how the invention of the VIDEO meant that learning could be at home and at your own pace". and how important it was "for married couples to have their own interests."

The Future

What will our u3a look like for our Golden Anniversary in 2042? Just over 20% of the UK population is now over 60. There are now around 16 million in this cohort. The National u3a membership is around 450,000. We are living longer and generally healthier lives. Will the groups still include ... Walking, Table Tennis, Art History, Controversial Discussion and Wine Tasting? It's only 20 years away! Or will there be groups on the Metaverse, Driverless Cars, Lunar Visits, and Activities for 100 year olds?

