

Newsletter

November 2022

u3a in Kennet

News Updates

The autumn has been a busy time for u3a in Kennet with our Annual General Meeting, Kennet Talk and Coffee Exchange sessions, along with our u3a Open Day event which was postponed to 9th November due to the timing clash with the state funeral on 19th September 2022. Thank you to all members of u3a in Kennet who have supported these events. Your help is invaluable in sustaining our varied programme of activities.

We have a new Chair now after our AGM as Jill Turner was elected to replace David Hammond after the completion of his three year term of office. Jill had been the Vice Chair and Jeff Hide was elected into this role in addition to his responsibilities as Groups Coordinator and organising our events.

October / November Coffee Exchanges:

The "October" session took place on the 2nd November and was our first at the Town Hall. The room on the ground floor proved to be excellent as a replacement for the Wesley Hall. It is larger and allows space for more members and potential members to take part.

60 plus members / potential members attended.

Sophia Bentley, a volunteer floor guide at Salisbury Cathedral gave an illustrated talk describing many aspects of the history and interesting features of the beautiful and historic building. Sophia traced the history of the cathedral from the original site in Old Sarum, the granting of papal permission in 1218 and the laying of the first stone in 1220. She outlined many fascinating features of the



Planned Events – details in main text

**24th November at 10:45:
Coffee Exchange**

**Spring 2023:
Special Interest Day**

Here are the links to our web page u3ainkennet.org.uk and Facebook page www.facebook.com/u3ainkennet

Please "control and click" on links to visit suggested webpages

building with its 4 foot foundations on gravel beds, the roof containing 2,800 tons of wood, the high quality sculpture and of course the 40 foot spire: the tallest in Britain. The cathedral has the oldest working clock in the world, the largest cathedral close and cloister in Britain, a copy of the original Magna Carta and the largest working font in Britain. Subsequent changes were made to the building notably during the Civil War in the 17th century and later by Christopher Wren, James Wyatt and Gilbert Scott and latterly various eco-friendly developments such as the installation of solar panels. If you missed the talk, you can see the recording at: u3ainkennet.org.uk/2nd-november-coffee-exchange-presentation.

The talk this month will be by Eileen Hill, a member of our Local History Group, and is about "the Wansdyke". It takes place on Thursday 24th November, again at the Town Hall. Eileen says: 'Many of us will be familiar with the distinctive feature of the Wiltshire



landscape known as the Wansdyke. Its origins are a bit of an enigma, but its impact as it snakes along the Downs between Devizes and Marlborough is undeniable.' She will talk us through a series of maps and photos taken along the length of the route in a virtual 'Walk along Wansdyke' and refer to the work that has been done by historians and archaeologists to understand its significance. A poster for the event is included at the end of the Newsletter.



Annual General Meeting and Kennet u3a Talk: Our second hybrid AGM and Kennet Talk was held on 26th October 2022 with eighty-five members at Kennet Valley Hall, a further twenty-one on zoom and nineteen apologies for absence with proxy votes. David Hammond presented the Trustees' report and the accounts for the year 2021-22. In addition he shared his reflections on completing his three-year term of office as Chairman spanning the Covid-19 pandemic and its associated challenges with national lockdowns and social distancing which limited our u3a activities. We said 'thank you' and good wishes to David who had joined the Executive Committee originally in 2014. Despite the difficulties associated with the pandemic David continued to lead us tirelessly and energetically as we adapted to using new technologies and our overall membership numbers are increasing once again now.



We also said 'good bye' to Jan Lillywhite who completed her term of office as our Social Secretary providing the refreshments for our Coffee Exchange sessions, our Kennet Talks and the new members' lunches. Jan had joined the Executive Committee in 2016 and we offer them both our grateful thanks and appreciation for their contributions and wish them all the best for the future.

Other committee changes included the elections of Jill Turner as Chair, Jeff Hide as Vice Chair and four new committee members: Jill Chambers, Alison Dewar, Geneviève Mapson and Georgie Neville. The committee now has eleven members following the untimely death of Tom Horwitz after his reelection. The committee will continue to support the functioning and further development of u3a in Kennet. More details are at the end of the Newsletter.

Following our Annual General Meeting Sibella Laing presented a fascinating Kennet u3a Talk on 'The Power behind the Veil'. Sibella and her husband Stuart, formerly a British Diplomat, had spent many decades in the Middle East living in Saudi Arabia, Oman and Brunei, and Kuwait and her insights into life for women



was particularly timely noting the recent protests in Iran. Sibella outlined the major social, cultural and economic changes in Saudi and the tensions between western influences and traditional Islamic practices as they developed over the years following the 1970ties oil boom. Particular examples included the increasing access to education for girls and women noting for example that while the use of CCTV enables females to study with male tutors, gender segregation persists too. The recent imprisonment without trial of some women for driving was highlighted along with some loosening of restrictions and religious practices

resulting in the adoption of brightly coloured abayas, more women working and studying and generally living independently of male permission. Nevertheless women need permission to marry although women cannot be disinherited and freedom of speech is not permitted. The Talk ended on a positive note with several examples of high profile women as CEOs of major companies and scientists. The talk can be seen here: u3ainkennet.org.uk/kennet-u3a-talk-presentation.

u3a Day and 30th Anniversary of u3a in Kennet: The 30th birthday and Open Day event was held on 9th November 2022 at the Town Hall after being postponed from September. The Day began at 10.00am and was well attended until we closed at 3pm. The Hall was filled with poster boards with details about our groups and other displays including music and painting. Thank you to the many Group Leaders who were present to respond to queries and provide more information to potential new members. Town Crier Mike Tupman opened the proceedings, and we were joined by the Mayor Lisa Farrell who cut the splendid 30th birthday cake. She was introduced to the former u3a in Kennet chairmen and Len Street, former national U3A Chairman. We were also pleased to welcome Karen Gardner from BBC



Radio Wiltshire and the link to the recording can be found at u3ainkennet.org.uk/u3a-in-kennet-bbc-wiltshire-radio (BBC Radio Wiltshire Morning Show 09 Nov 22). The Marlborough News article is here: marlborough.news/news/u3a-30th-anniversary. An important aim was to encourage people to join u3a in Kennet and we were delighted to recruit 40 new members on the Day: a splendid achievement and thanks to everyone who made the event a success.



L to R back row: Peter Noble, David Hammond, Gerald Long, Len Street and Graham Barnes; L to R front row: Mayor Lisa Farrell, Val Clowes and Jill Turner
Photo courtesy of Marlborough News

Special Interest Day: The subject will still be "*The Future of the Media*". More information is to follow once plans are confirmed. We will let you know the new date as soon as we can.

Meanwhile, on the subject of truth ... If we had to choose one special thing about our country, what might it be? The NHS? Our English language? Shakespeare? Perhaps the UK's universities or democracy? Central to democracy is communication. The idea is to make decisions for ourselves. But, how do we know that 'facts' in the media are true – and hence how far can we trust our own judgements? Donald Trump, for example, is reported as being 'angry' about 'fake narratives' and a 'corrupt media'. He has described himself as a "Stable Genius". What is true here?

1. Did he say these things? Probably yes
2. Was he angry? Who knows?
3. Is he a 'stable genius'? No.

The press can write this, because it is true that Trump said it. The fact that what he said is untrue is immaterial. However, once an untruth is written, it leaves an impression, particularly with his followers. What in the media is true? How do we know?"

Technical help required: Following the sad loss of Tom Horwitz we are pleased to report that Hamzah has been co-opted to the Executive Committee to provide some technical support. We are grateful for his contribution however we will need some additional assistance with the management of our website, Facebook and other systems. We would like to hear from any members who may have relevant skills or are familiar with 'Wordpress' which we use for our website. If you think you may be able to help please contact chair@u3ainkennet.org.uk .

Help New Member: We have a new member who has asked if she could have a lift from Aldbourne to the Coffee Exchange on 24th November as she will not have her car on that day. If anyone would be willing to offer a lift please contact chair@u3ainkennet.org.uk . Thank you.

Group News

It was in 1964 that Bob Dylan wrote the classic song, "*The Times They Are a-Changin'*", fifty-eight years ago and they haven't stopped doing so. Governments, the world weather with threatening climate change, our monarchy and locally our new executive committee and chair retirements and appointments. People come and go – groups do likewise. Our precious resources must be aimed at the needs that require them and so, here in u3a in Kennet, group leaders, a precious resource, will now have a Groups Liaison Team to whom they can depend for the support they need. The email address will remain the same, groups@u3ainkennet.org.uk and three new committee members will be the contact. Jeff Hide will, of course, still assist if required and having been elected as Vice Chair can be reached on vicechair@u3ainkennet.org.uk

Family History: This is a group that we do not have but we have an offer to lead one, so if it may interest you, let groups liaison mentioned above know that you would join. When there are enough members to start such a group, it will happen. Dates, times and venue are usually set once there is a meaningful group formed.

Mahjong 2: The Group folded at one time but, like Family History, there has arisen a request to resurrect it. This is your chance to join because the current Mahjong 1 and 3 have reached their limit in available spaces.

Qigong: Arising from our u3a Day has come the offer to lead an interesting fitness group. Qigong is an ancient Chinese exercise and healing technique that combines movement, mental concentration and breathing to increase and balance your vital energy, or 'Qi'. Pronounced '*chee-gong*', it loosely translates as 'vital energy cultivation' or 'mastery of your energy'. It is not physically demanding like some activities such as Tai chi or Pilates. Let the Groups Liaison Team know if it interests you.

Theatre Group: As November leads us to Christmas and beyond, Theatre Group group leaders felt that by February a visit to the ever-reliable Watermill would be welcome. Tickets have been booked for the matinee performance of *Notes from a Small Island* on Thursday 16th February. Based on Bill Bryson's memoir of his travels through Britain, this promises to be a thoroughly entertaining production. Tickets, including coach travel, are £42 pp. Please note that you need to book by 20th November. Those of you who have been with the Group before know that the theatres ask for very early payment in order to reserve our block booking. For a booking form or more information please contact theatre@u3ainkennet.org.uk or ring Jenny Oakshott 01793 731165 or Sarah Foxall 01264 850316

Day Trip Group: In order to brighten up a gloomy month, the Day Trip Group is going to South Kensington on Friday 24th February 2023. The cost will be £18 per person. South Kensington offers several indoor venues. The coach will drop us off at the Natural History Museum in Cromwell Road. The Science Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum are a few minutes' walk away. Apart from ticketed exhibitions, all museum collections are free.

Natural History Museum. ticketed exhibitions include *Wildlife Photographer of the Year*. (£13.50 pre-book online)

Science Museum. includes five Wellcome Foundation galleries (opened in 2019) housing some of the most significant medical collections in the world with over 3000 medical artefacts.

Victoria and Albert Museum has 7000 miles of exhibits. Refreshment can be taken in the Gamble, Morris and Poynter rooms – the World's first museum café built in 1868 and lavishly decorated with majolica tiles. The V&A is hosting several interesting ticketed exhibitions in February including Donatello's *Sculpting the Renaissance*. (£20 pre-book online)

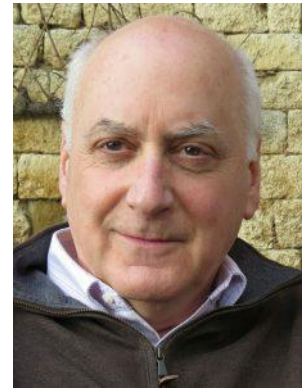
Should museums not be your thing, Harrods is a 10-minute walk away, the Brompton Oratory is a 5-minute walk or Kensington Palace a 20 minutes' walk from the coach drop-off point. The estimated time available in West Kensington is four and a half hours. The Science Museum (sciencemuseum.org.uk) requests that you book your free museum entry tickets online. There is no need to do this for the V&A or Natural History Museums.



Table Tennis Group: In what is a new initiative for our table tennis groups, 16 players of all levels enthusiastically participated in coaching led by Wiltshire table tennis coach Jack Karpinsky. During some very enjoyable sessions the Group refined its basic skills such as serving, positioning and movement and practised how to spin the ball. The more advanced players were also shown how to deliver a spectacular pendulum serve. It is fair to say they are still working on that one! The Group had to disappoint a few people whose busy lives didn't quite fit in with Jack's availability but the good news is that they have plans to get Jack back again soon. For more information contact David Radford at tabtenfri@u3a.org.uk

Other News

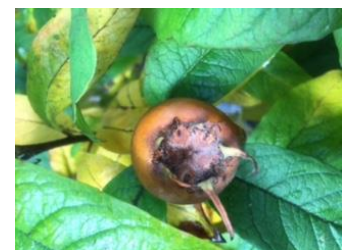
Tom Horwitz: We are deeply saddened by the sudden and untimely passing of Tom Horwitz: a member of the Executive Committee and our website manager. Tom died at the end of the week in which we held our successful 30th birthday and Open Day celebrations where he had arranged the technical support for the event. Tom and his wife Lynne joined u3a in Kennet in 2017. He was elected to the committee in 2019 and re-elected for a further 3-year term just last month at our 2022 AGM. He was a member of several groups including American History, Backgammon, Bridge and two Controversial Discussion Groups., Quizzing and Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths. We will miss his friendship and positive approach, his clarity of thought, his humour and of course his technical expertise.



Jim Kelly: Jim, who was a member of the Digital Photography Group, recently passed away. This was on the 17th October. He was aged 65 years and died at Great Western Hospital. Some weeks earlier he had a fall while at a wedding in Scotland, but was able to return home. His health soon deteriorated and following a second hospital admission he became seriously ill. His wife Lynne and their daughter Marie are both shocked & devastated. A proud and typical Glaswegian, Jim and his family moved to Wiltshire 36 years ago with his employment. He was a sales director with IBM for over 26 years, before taking early retirement for health reasons. Jim joined u3a in Kennet in July 2017 and was one of the original members of the newly formed Controversial Discussion Group, which first met in March 2018. He will be remembered as a devoted family man, who was always interesting with his unique ideas and thoughts, and for his sense of humour, smile and contributions to the group. Recently Jim joined the Digital Photography Group but only had the chance to attend one meeting.



The Medlar (from Allan Skipper, member of Flora and Fauna Group): At the rear door to Waitrose in Marlborough there are a number of trees. One of these is a Medlar. Once cultivated by the Greeks and the Romans thousands of years ago it was found in old cottage gardens, orchards and parks here. It is a native of SE Asia and SE Europe. Built on the site of a cinema Waitrose opened in 1977. The tree could then be around 35 years old. Medlars belong to the Rose family. The Dog rose, crab apples, hawthorn, mountain ash, blackthorn, cherry and plum trees are also members of this family. Medlar are small trees with grey bark and crooked trunks. The white flowers have five petals and are pollinated by bees.



The fruit is gathered in October and BLETTERED. This means it is allowed to go over-ripe to become brown and soft. When eaten out of its skin with a teaspoon it tastes like "baked apple with the consistency of chestnut purée." So it is claimed! Jellies and preserves can be made when Medlar is baked; it was used in tanning because of its high tannin content, Medlar tea and medlar cheese are other uses. The cheese is really a cake. There are on line recipes for this if interested. It also has antibacterial properties. The five seeds in each

fruit are dispersed by birds. The dark dots in the photo are some of the seeds. Chaucer called the medlar "an opened arsed fruit". Allan is plucking up the courage to sample the fruit but is still waiting for the bletting to end.

Third Age Matters Magazine: In case you may have missed it, there is an article in the latest winter issue of Third Age Matters entitled "Keeping Max's name in lights. It is written by one of our members – Paul Foxall – former Chairman of the Max Wall society. It is on page 63. The magazine should have just arrived at your house.



Volunteers invited to support St Peter's Trust Warm Space initiative: As of Monday 14th November, St Peter's Trust will be offering the church as a "warm space" for any members of the public who wish to take advantage of warmth and some light refreshment (hot drinks and cake/biscuits). This is a local initiative that is being coordinated with the Town and County Councils as well as other organisations. The timing coincides with the opening and necessary heating of the building for the sale of the charity Christmas cards, which provides us with the opportunity to utilise the building for a greater purpose in this time of need. The church will be open from Monday to Saturday 10am to 4pm, and volunteers are invited to assist as stewards of the "warm space". There will be 3 x 2 hour shifts each day. Guidelines for stewards will be issued, but the principal function will be to welcome people and to serve the drinks and food. If you can help by offering a 2-hour slot either occasionally or regularly, please contact Jane Dugan (administrator) at Jane@stpetersmarlborough.org.uk




u3a Coffee Exchange in Kennet

Come and meet other u3a members, hear the latest news, listen to a local speaker and chat.

Thursday 24th November 2022: 10.30–12.00
at Marlborough Town Hall or on Zoom from 10.45am

The Wansdyke

The talk at the last Coffee Exchange of the year will be given by Eileen Hill, a key member of our Local History Group. Eileen says: "Many of us will be familiar with the distinctive feature of the Wiltshire landscape known as the Wansdyke. Its origins are a bit of an enigma, but its impact as it snakes along the Downs between Devizes and Marlborough is undeniable." Eileen will talk us through a series of maps and photos taken along the length of the route in a virtual 'Walk along Wansdyke' and refer to the work that has been done by historians and archaeologists to understand its significance.



Charity No 1028680
www.u3ainkennet.org.uk/coffee-exchange/
Zoom details from chairman@u3ainkennet.org.uk

u3a in Kennet Committee (recently updated)



Jill Turner
Chair



Jeff Hide
Vice Chair



Kieran Roughan
Treasurer



Annette Weaver
Secretary



Mike Morison
Membership



John Martin
Newsletter



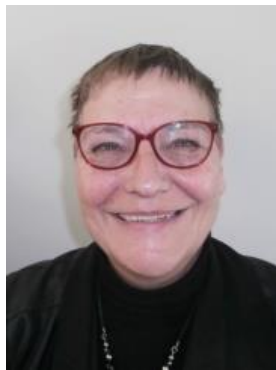
David Lacey
Speaker Secretary



Alison Dewar



Georgie Neville



Geneviève Mapson



Jill Chambers

For more information: u3ainkennet.org.uk/executive-committee/