

Newsletter

May 2023

u3a
in Kennet

News Updates

General News: Welcome to our latest Newsletter. We are enjoying a busy spring with a full programme of u3a in Kennet events for our increasing membership. We held our Kennet u3a Talk on 19th April at Kennet Valley Hall which was addressed by Commodore Ian Gibb who spoke about his distinguished naval career. This was followed by our monthly Coffee Exchange session at the Town Hall on 27th April with Lucy Maynard from the Dogs Trust and then our successful Media Day at Marlborough College on 28th April. Details of these events are included below and we look forward to seeing many of you at our future events including the Coffee Exchange on 25th May with the important topic of keeping safe online. You, our members, are our best advocates so please continue to spread the word about the benefits of u3a membership.

Media Day with Marlborough College:

Less than 24 hours to go ... would the journalists speak to the questions posed in advance by our delegates? Would all five potential student speakers want to go ahead, despite it being exam week? In came a last-minute media clip – too long and it needed editing! Torrential rain was forecast for morning registration: we couldn't serve early coffee unless everyone walked to the marquee – and that'd be too far. All that on top of the ever-changing logistics of speakers whose busy media jobs left limited – and changing – availability within our day. These and many other twists and turns went into our Media Day partnership with Marlborough College. In contrast, our aim was simple: to provide a stimulating, informative and enjoyable day that would be appreciated by those attending (more than 130 u3a members from Kennet and the wider Bath and Wiltshire u3a Network, plus some non-members).



Upcoming Events – details in main text

25th May at 10:15am:
Coffee Exchange

13th September: u3a 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



Spread throughout the day, five student 5-minute ‘mini-TED’ talks on social media were a firm highlight for most delegates. Bea, Carina, Eddie, Emilia and Millie were acknowledged with accolades such as ‘fantastic’, ‘excellent’ and ‘outstanding’. They questioned manipulation by Artificial Intelligence of beauty standards; how social media and its ‘influencers’ make us buy; government control in China; the chronic nature of social media; and its adverse effects on critical thinking. Powerful lessons on how much can be packed into such a short time – and done so very well.

Our seven other speakers – including national and local journalists – addressed a wide range of perspectives on the media. These included changes in the media and our consumption of it, differences between generations (nationally and within our multi-generational audience), and the future of print journalism. Before the day, our delegates suggested over 80 questions to pose to our expert journalists. The main themes were roles, careers and personal responsibilities as journalists; regulation and accountability; the minefields of bias and truth; the effects of limited ownership and editorial power; and the growing impacts of social media and fake news. Delegates were also able to ask questions during the day – and chat to journalists and students at lunch and break times.

Would u3a in Kennet do this again? We are so grateful to all who made this event possible: delegates, speakers, students, College staff, u3a volunteers and several others. Our delegates were very positive about wanting another event: 90% of feedback survey respondents voted ‘yes please’, with a similar percentage rating their enjoyment of the day as 4 or 5 star. A range of topics has been suggested by delegates. You can add your suggestions by emailing mediaday2023@u3ainkennet.org.uk. For copies of the Media Day programme and slides please visit our u3a in Kennet website or simply click here: u3ainkennet.org.uk/media-day

Kennet u3a Talk: For the Kennet Talk this April, we were privileged to be the audience for the Commodore Ian Gibb’s very last talk on the subject *“From Sea Cadet to Commodore and beyond.”* He first gave this talk to a Yorkshire WI meeting in 1996. Since then he has raised over £25,000 giving the talk for the Royal



National Lifeboat Institute. We were fascinated by stories of his training, of cruise liners, the colourful passengers, and latterly his work with Trinity House. The image of a topless Miss Whiplash being rowed around the ship in harbour remains a vivid picture in my mind! After 43 years with the P and O company he moved in a voluntary capacity to Trinity House. He is now an Elder Brother at Trinity House and his work there has brought him into contact with members of the Royal family and leading politicians. Although he has given up helicoptering onto lighthouses and jumping on and off small boats, his involvement continues with his work on policies and addressing the problems of marine law. At the end of his very entertaining talk, the Wiltshire Branch of the RNLi presented Commodore Gibb with a plaque from the national charity headquarters commemorating his highly successful fundraising. The two pictures above are of Commodore Gibb with our new Speakers Secretary Jill Chambers and receiving the

plaque from Ben Bentley of the Wiltshire RNLI. The Executive Committee continues to be very grateful for the support of the Really Useful Group and their contribution towards such a successful afternoon.

Coffee Exchange: The April session focused on the Dogs Trust, a talk given by Lucy Maynard. It was attended by around 80 people at the Town Hall. Lucy gave a very enthusiastic, interesting and well-presented talk which was extremely well received by those attending. For over a century the Dogs Trust (formerly the Canine Defence League) has been working for a better future for dogs and the people who love them. They care for dogs in distress, find homes for homeless dogs and help when owners cannot cope. They never put down any dogs that they accept into their centres. Lucy touched on the background of the charity since it was founded in 1891 and reminded us of the slogan that many people will recognise: 'a dog is for life, not just for Christmas'. She described the facilities at the Rehoming Centre in Newbury (where she works) which even has underfloor heating in its kennels as well as a pampered pooch parlour and a vet suite together with outside runs, agility runs, AstroTurf and woodland and meadow walks. An important aim is to find homes for the dogs that come to the trust centres and Lucy discussed what support the trust offered to prospective owners, such as free advice for the life of the dog. Other areas touched on were: campaigns to improve dog welfare; fundraising to support the work of the Trust; education including workshops in schools; and the work of volunteers and foster carers. She also talked about the Canine Care Card, a free scheme run by the Trust, whereby dogs registered under this scheme can be accepted into Trust centres after their owners have passed away. Lucy was also happy to take questions and stayed on after the talk to chat to members. She brought along leaflets and booklets which explained the work of the Trust and ways in which people can be involved. Look out for their new advert on TV. It is very well filmed and both funny and heartwarming. We thank Lucy for her fascinating insight into the work of the Trust. In addition to the talk, there was time to chat, have coffee and tea and to introduce the new Creative Writing group which is just being established as well as to flag up existing outdoor groups including dog walking, walking and cycling groups. You will find further information about all these groups on the U3a in Kennet website. Finally, a big thank you to the members of the Really Usefuls for serving the refreshments so efficiently.



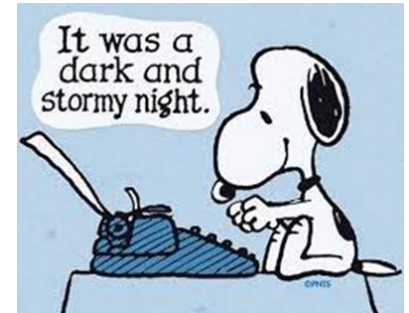
The next Coffee Exchange session will be on Thursday 25th May upstairs in the Assembly Room at Marlborough Town Hall. Doors open at 10:15am and coffee, tea and biscuits will be available from 10.30am. Our speaker will begin at 11.00am. Alan Brown will talk to us about Staying Safe on line. Alan works for the Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust who for nearly 25 years has been securing the homes of elderly and vulnerable people living in Wiltshire and Swindon and have talked to over a 1,200 community groups, working in partnership with the Wiltshire Police. One of the newest initiatives of the Bobby Van Trust is to show us how to meet the current challenges of modern day life. Cyber-crime is the Nation's fastest growing crime – with around one third of fraud occurring online. Alan will explore some of the threats faced by users of the internet and explain essential tactics we should employ, and should things go wrong, whom we should tell. We plan to record the talk so that those unable to attend are able to "catch up" later.

New Committee Member: Alastair Sheen is a new Committee member. See his picture below. Alastair joined u3a in January and Executive Committee in April 2023, having moved to Marlborough from Bedfordshire with his wife Judith, in December 2022. He belongs to the Really Usefuls, Monday Walking, Table Talk Luncheon and Classic Car groups and is on the waiting list for Wine Appreciation! A Chartered

Banker, Alastair has spent 25 years preventing, detecting and investigating Credit and Debit Card Fraud for an international bank. He is a member of the CAMRA Moonrakers Tasting Panel and also curates a growing collection of gins from around the world. He can be contacted at alastairsheen@u3aikenet.org.uk

Group News

Creative Writing Group: Have you got a story inside you? Have you ever wanted to write for yourself or others? Would you like to join a group in a relaxed setting to get creative, exchange ideas, discuss some writing (maybe your own)? Would you like to help others? It doesn't matter if you haven't written since school. Spelling doesn't matter either. Of course, it would be great if some interested u3a members had experience, too. But just being able to discuss writing can be interesting and fun. Contact groups@u3aikenet.org.uk. If this is of interest why not come along and explore it with a little group who would like to be a bigger group (and to be a new u3a in Kennet group). Come to Krumbs café in Marlborough for our next informal gathering at 9am on Friday 19 May.



The Theatre Group: The Group is going to see J M Barrie's *Quality Street* at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre in Guildford on Thursday 15th June (matinee performance). There are still some tickets left (£42 pp). In addition there are free seats on the coach, so if you like the idea of a day out in Guildford you would be welcome to join the party (£14 pp). Please contact Jenny or Sarah by emailing theatregroup@u3aikenet.org.uk if you would like more information on this visit.

Croquet Group: From now until the end of September you will be able to play croquet in a new u3a group. Croquet is a grass surface game, with two forms. Association Croquet for the serious minded. We will play Golf Croquet in teams of two against two. It has simpler rules but is more interactive. It also has the advantage that it can be played on a smaller lawn. Golf Croquet can be learned very quickly but still requires some skill. For more information follow this link to the [National U3A Croquet section](#). In Kennet, we will play at a private house for the simple reason that public croquet lawns are very scarce. Few houses have flat lawns of the required size. Hence we will play on a lawn that is about 60% full size, with less than perfect grass. This adds an element of luck into the game. It is a game of great fun and very social. We have one croquet set for 4 players but if you have your own mallet then do bring that along if you prefer. There is no charge other than a small fund to cover the cost of tea/coffee and biscuits. There is a patio to sit on whilst waiting for a game, shelter in the garage when it rains and a cloakroom at the back of the garage. Meets: in Lockeridge on 10.30 am on days to be decided by members. Contact: croquet@u3aikenet.org.uk



Monday Walking Group: Here is the Group in March at walking near Ogbourne St George in March. If you are interested in joining the Group please contact the leader at mon.walk@u3aikenet.org.uk.



Other News

Anna Harrison: Here is sad news received from Allan Skipper about Anna who passed away recently:

Anna, once one of the most active members of the Thursday walking group, died earlier in April. Both Christine and myself remember her in particular as she was the leader of our very first walk with the group in 2003. We were promised a scenic walk from the Small Grain Picnic site on what turned out to be a very foggy morning. She went on the lead many a fine walk which she did with competence and care. Anna was also very knowledgeable about the Wiltshire countryside and her love and enthusiasm for walking were very infectious. We will always remember her. Here she is at the centre of the Group, 6th from the left. Here funeral was on the 11th May.



Malcolm Hall: Here is a message from Gordon Hutt. "Sorry to be the bearer of sad news but I had a message on 13th April from Carole White to tell me that Malcolm had died a couple of weeks ago. He led our group for several years while we met at St Peter's and the Con Club and was one of our most enthusiastic members. Sadly, due to poor health, he left us about three years ago and had been in a care home in Newbury. Malcolm was the leader of the Wine Appreciation Group for about 8 years after the group was started by Sandie van Sommeren. A memorial service was held at St George's church at Preshute. A lot of his friends and WAG members were there with Carole to celebrate his life, and raise a glass to his memory afterwards."

Rachael Watson-Smith: Rachael has also passed away. She was a lovely person, kind, friendly and always so interested and thoughtful. She was the first person to chat to our Chair when she joined Michael Hart's English History Group back in the summer of 2017. Rachael was a member of several groups including English History, Flora and Fauna and Table tennis. She helped lead a Science Group initiative to focus in women in science. Her friend Sue Jenks remembers her:

'Rachael was a wonderful mother and grandmother. She had lived in Wootton Rivers for about twenty years and her great love after her family was her garden. She enjoyed u3a activities enormously and was very sorry when Covid stopped the table tennis. Rachael kept her lovely looks until the end and died as peacefully as she lived.'

Jane Smith: Jane passed away in May and her son Martin writes:

'On the off chance there may be some people in the U3A who remember Mum, it's with sadness I have to report her death on 24th April after a long struggle with Alzheimer's and other ailments affecting her mobility. She moved to Bruce's Cottage in Easton Royal near Pewsey with my father in 1992. However with his sudden demise in 1993, she found herself in a new place with very few friends. She started to rebuild her life and I know that the U3A became a very important part of that. She was an enthusiastic walker and joined the walking group, going on many trips and holidays as well. There is evidence of her partaking in a local history group and an Italian group. She also contributed by offering French and Latin classes (both the subjects she read at Oxford) which ran for many years until she was well into her eighties. By then she had

moved to College Fields in Marlborough. After a short stay in Merlin Court Care Home she passed away peacefully at the age of 91. Her funeral was held on 15th May 2023.



Prospect Hospice: The Hospice is pleased to announce the launch of its 'Remember Me' roses to celebrate the lives and honour the memory of loved ones who have died. The campaign invites supporters to purchase a beautiful rose, made from recycled metal and available in four colours; red, pink, white and yellow. Each rose will be tagged with the name of the person being remembered and will be displayed in the hospice's gardens, forming an art installation to be revealed at the hospice's annual garden fete on 9 September. After the display draws to a close at the end of September, you will have the opportunity to

collect your very own rose as a keepsake to cherish at home. The Remember Me Roses are a way to hold dear the memory of someone special and help support the work of Prospect Hospice at the same time. All funds raised through this campaign will go towards providing specialist end of life care for those who need it most.

Wotton River Church: A professional troupe of actors is putting on Twelfth Night in Wootton Rivers on 23rd June in aid of the village's church funds. Here is a copy of the poster with relevant information should you wish to attend.



Chalke Valley History Festival (26th June – 2nd July). u3a members might be interested to visit the Festival and tickets are available at <https://cvhf.org.uk/>. The Day Ticket will get access to 3 talk stages, all the living history, performances, experiences and all the other summer festival bits such as live music, food and drink etc. In addition talks in the main tents are paid for additions to the day ticket. With more than speakers the key themes include:

- Environment: From farming and food production to climate change and the shifting sands of time.
- Conflict: Warfare throughout the ages from ancient times to Ukraine.
- Politics: Whether in Ancient Rome or more recent times, the rise and fall of dictators, prime ministers and presidents have shaped and defined our lives.
- Science and Exploration: From inventions to the crossing of oceans and deserts.
- Society and Culture: Everyday life through the ages: food, art, literature, music and how the fabric of society evolves.
- Sport

Request for Information: Peter Noble, a previous Chair, would like to contact a mathematician to help him calculate a formula for a curve on a graph. Anybody who can help, please contact him at peter@kingsburysquare.org.uk.

u3a in Kennet Committee



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