



Newsletter

February 2024

WELCOME

Spring is coming and with it our full programme of u3a in Kennet events and Talks beginning with a seasonal introduction to preparing our gardens for the year ahead from Sonia Wright at our Coffee Exchange on 29th February 2024. We look forward to seeing you there.

EVENTS

Coffee Exchange: Thursday 29th February 2024 at the Town Hall in Marlborough

Sonia Wright, the Chelsea Flower Show award winning gardener will join us to explain how best to get ready for the spring with her talk on '**Winter prepares for spring**'. Join us to hear her expert tips and bring some cash and a bag too as she will have a selection of plants for sale.

Report on the Coffee Exchange: January 2024, Marlborough Concert Orchestra.

Our first Coffee Exchange of 2024 was attended by almost 100 members. After our usual coffee and chat, we welcomed two groups from the Marlborough Concert Orchestra. Their conductor and a composer, Phillip Singleton, talked about the Orchestra and the musical background. Rob Napier, cello player of the string

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Further details in the main text.

Coffee Exchange; 29th February 2024. Town Hall, Marlborough. Sonia Wright, '**Winter prepares for spring**'

New Members' lunch – by invitation. 8th March 2024. Kennet Valley Hall, Lockeridge.

Beacon workshop – by invitation for Group Leaders, 20th March 2024 from 1.30pm at the Friends Meeting House, Marlborough.

Coffee Exchange: 28th March 2024. Town Hall, Marlborough.

Here are the links to our web page u3aikkennet.org.uk and Facebook page

quartet, introduced their pieces which were by Mozart and Borodin. The wind quintet played pieces by Elgar and Holst.



The experience of beautifully played live classical music on a damp Thursday morning in January was very uplifting. The audience seem to have greatly enjoyed the mini concert and there has been a demand for a repeat visit by the Orchestra. Our recording is available here: (<https://youtu.be/oOrwzwxAEQQ>.)

The Orchestra's next performance will be held on Saturday 16 March at 7:30 pm in the Corn Exchange, Faringdon. The Orchestra will accompany the Faringdon Singers to perform the Mozart Requiem followed by their next concert featuring works by Beethoven and Mozart from 7.30pm on Saturday 23rd March at St Mary's church in Marlborough (www.mco.org.uk).

Kennet u3a Talk, 14th February 2024

About 70 members met in the Kennet Valley Hall to hear 'A History of Punch and Judy' from Alix Booth on Wednesday 14th February. It sounded an interesting subject and, indeed, it was interesting. What was completely unexpected was that it was very amusing and, at times, downright hilarious. Alix told the story with slides, a video and using her glorious character puppets. She started in the early fifteenth century and took us through the centuries via country fairs, town markets, public hangings, and beach shows right up to the Covent Garden Puppet Festival now held annually in London. Punch, his wife Judy, the doctor, the policeman, the girl friend, the servant and the crocodile all made their appearances in small sketches throughout the afternoon. Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Nicola Sturgeon made brief entrances when Alix illustrated how puppeteers in the past extended the classic stories in order to collect more



money from their audiences. Undoubtedly the star of the show was Samuel Pepys – in puppet form – who read from his diaries of 1662 about attending a performance of Italian puppets with his wife. Alix presented the whole history with a most entertaining script and her dexterity and her clever voices brought the subject to life. Click here for the video recording:

<https://youtu.be/mOxmlCaj7OU>

For many years, Alix has entertained children with her Party Puppets and she demonstrated to us how, using her many talents, she can enthrall and amuse a large number of adults. Members may be interested in the puppet show; '**That's my donkey!**' – 23rd March 2024 at 3pm at St Katherine's Church, SN8 3BG to celebrate Palm Sunday. Free entry with donations to St Katherine's church.

GROUPS NEWS

Singles Supper Club,

There has been a lot of interest in our new Singles Supper Club following our Newsletter article in December 2023. David Moakes is organizing the arrangements and is keen to welcome any other members who would like to find out more about the Club. The Group meets together regularly on the second Thursday and fourth Tuesday evenings of each month for a meal and conversation.

If you are interested to find out more please register your interest (without obligation) by emailing singlesdining@u3ainkennet.org.uk .

Tennis

We are currently discussing possible arrangements with Marlborough Tennis for our members including access to the courts and walking tennis. Please email Groups@u3ainkennet.org.uk if you are interested to find out more.

OBITUARIES

We were saddened to learn of the recent deaths of Stuart Hyde, AnnMarie Travis and Len Steet OBE.

Len Street, OBE 1926 – 2024 and former national u3a Chairman

Len was born in London and after leaving school at 16 years of age he became a laboratory assistant before joining the Navy in 1944, training to be a radar mechanic and subsequently taking a degree. Len's career was spent in education with posts including the principal of Stockton Billingham Technical College at 42 years being one of the youngest principals at that time. Subsequently he took the post of principal at Hertford Regional College. He was an active member and honorary officer of the Association of Principals of Education Colleges holding the post of its first general secretary from 1984 – 1990.

Beyond education Len led a full and active life with diverse interests including becoming president of the East Hertfordshire Opera Society. He was chairman and later president of the Nazeing Conservation Society and vice chairman of the Hertford Association of National Trust members and supported the Lea Valley Talking Newspaper for the Blind and the Hoddesdon Music Club.

Len became involved with u3a in 1992 when he was elected as chairman of the Steering Committee which led to the formation of Lea Valley u3a and later becoming chairman from 1992 – 1976. He Joined the u3a National Executive and he became the elected national chairman from

1997 – 2000 and oversaw important developments in the national educational support available to u3a members and groups including a regular educational bulletin ('Sources'), study group networks, study days, national summer schools, training for subject leaders and more recently online learning programmes written by third-agers for third-agers.



He instigated regular contacts with government about lifelong learning and a strategy for older people and succeeded in securing national recognition of the role of u3a in education. As a scientist, Len also began the u3a annual Royal Institution lecture, when some of Britain's most distinguished scientists talk about subjects of interest to u3a members.

Photograph: Len Steet OBE at the u3a National Conference 2011 talking with Baroness Morris of Yardley, formerly Estelle Morris, Education Secretary

Len received his OBE in 2003 being the first person to be awarded the honour for services to u3a. His important contribution was described in the books '**500 Beacons: the u3a story**' by Eric Midwinter: one of the founder members of u3a in our country and in '**The u3a story**'. In 2012 Len began to explore approaches to the provision of in-depth study groups leading in 2014 to the launch of two in applied mathematics and early Christianity.

He moved to Marlborough in 2018, at the age of 92 after his wife died and joined his son Phil and



his daughter –in– law Sara. He took part in a couple of u3a in Kennet groups, and ran an opera appreciation group in his Canning Place apartment block. He was very active to the end of his life and gave his last opera talk only a few weeks before he died. He had recovered well following heart surgery but sadly became unwell and passed away on 29th January 2024 a few months before his 98th birthday.

Photograph: Len third from right at the u3a in Kennet 30th anniversary Open Day, November 2022

OTHER NEWS

REMINDER: Savernake – Our Forest

Peter Noble is pleased to report a positive response to his invitation last month for members to volunteer in support of Savernake Forest. Further help is always welcomed please contact Peter on 01672 519034.

u3a in Kennet Chorister Boy apple tree

The Marlborough Community Orchard held their winter health check on the trees in the Jubilee Field in Manton including our u3a in Kennet Chorister Boy apple tree.



The Community Orchard team supplied mulch and fertilizer, stake ties and prepared with wellies kneelers, garden gloves and trowels. Our u3a volunteers dug, cut and lopped to prepare for the spring and summer growth. Our tree is small at present and we look forward to the future fruitful harvests.

Marlborough LINK Scheme

LINK schemes provide valuable help linking volunteer drivers with people needing transport, mostly transport to medical appointments. Our local Marlborough LINK Scheme is appealing for more volunteers and has approached u3a in Kennet for assistance. Some of our members help already and please see the website here <http://www.marlboroughlink.org.uk/about.html> for further details and the contact phone number too.

NATIONAL UPDATES

The current edition of 'Third Age Matters' includes details of the new national initiative called 'u3a Friends' offering a regular newsletter. Interest Groups Online (IGO) provides another opportunity enabling members to join a wide range of groups. Please see www.u3a.org.uk/igo and <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>.

U3A IN KENNET COMMITTEE



David Moakes has been coopted to the Committee and will take a lead on developing our publicity in the local community.

For more information about the Committee please see u3ainkennet.org.uk/executive-committee/



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Commission Contact*



Jeff Hide
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Alastair Sheen
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