

u3a in Kennet



Newsletter

November 2024

WELCOME

Welcome to our November 2024 Newsletter in which we catch up on our recent Annual General Meeting and Kennet u3a Talk and look ahead to the start of the festive season.



Photo; Susan Turner

We have more news from our new and existing Groups and updates from some of our member events too.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024 AND KENNET TALK

The u3a in Kennet Annual General Meeting was held on 30th October 2024 at the Town Hall in Marlborough and attended by 140 members.

Chair Jill Turner presented the annual report from the Trustees with a review of the past year (August 2023 – July 2024) noting the following points in particular:

- the total membership had grown from 672 to 708
- u3a in Kennet has 64 Groups including new groups for Global History, Science discussion and a second Poetry Appreciation Group.
- the Coffee Exchange meetings in Marlborough Town Hall were very well-attended

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Festive Coffee Exchange,
10.15 am, 11th December 2024,
Town Hall, Marlborough.
Coffee and Carols with the
Marlborough Community
Choir.



Photo; John Slaughter

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

- the Kennet u3a Talks in Kennet Valley Hall continued to be successful
- other events included a New Members' Lunch and the u3a in Kennet Open Day on 13th September 2023

Honorary Treasurer Alastair Sheen presented his Treasurer's Report and the Accounts which were approved. Thanks were given to Kieran Roughan who had offered to take over as Examiner of Accounts for 2024/5 and John Slaughter was elected to the Executive Committee. For the full set of AGM papers please see our website: <https://u3ainkennet.org.uk/u3a-in-kennet-agm-2024/>

KENNET TALK, 30th OCTOBER 2024, TOWN HALL, MARLBOROUGH.

'MARLBOROUGH UNDERGROUND' presented by BOB HOLMAN.

The fourth and final Kennet Talk for 2024 took place on 30th October following the Annual General Meeting. An audience of about 140 heard Bob Holman telling us about Marlborough beneath our feet. Bob set up 'The Food Gallery' in the High Street in 2006 and it is now run by his children. He developed an interest in photography using his mobile phone and from there has set up a whole new career – with books, lectures, and running courses.

Using a series of unique photos Bob explained how a chance discovery of a brick-built arch under a building (now 16a High Street) led to his investigations of the cellars of properties on the



High Street and up Kingsbury Street and Silverless Street. He presented the photographs in the order in which they were taken – rather than a logical progression up or down the High Street. However it soon became clear that there is strong evidence that a passage about 7 or 8 foot high and about 5 foot wide runs west to east under the buildings each side of the High Street. Bob also found an arch which seemed to connect under the High Street in a North/ South direction.

Photo; John Slaughter

The arches between the properties at this basement or even sub-basement level are now all bricked up. Bob's photos show the different brick work – much more recent bricks and even, in one case, breeze blocks (which only began to be used commonly in the middle of the twentieth century.) It seems the owners hoped to prevent rats moving from property to property – Bob thinks this may not have been successful! It seems that the rooms below the level of the street were largely used by servants and the photos show the remains of storage areas, kitchens, and living areas. There is a coal fired open range under the 'Castle and Ball' which looks as though it was abandoned while a meal was being cooked with pans and kettles in position. Bob showed us photos of many fireplaces in different states of dilapidation and some evocative and striking photos of stairs and steps accessing these lower levels.

All the photographs that Bob took are black and white which somehow seemed to capture the sense of age and mystery of the underground spaces. For mystery it remains. Bob has no explanation as to why the passageways exist under the buildings. He told us that he had



speculated widely but not yet been convinced by any theory. His photos however are an important record for the future and history will be grateful for Bob's passion and determination. They certainly provided everyone with an enormously entertaining and thought provoking afternoon. Hopefully there will be further research which will reveal why these basements/cellars beneath the houses in Marlborough were interconnected. Bob has published several books of his photos and anyone interested in buying one can contact him on bob@bobholmanphotography.co.uk

Photo; John Slaughter

COFFEE EXCHANGE 14th NOVEMBER 2024

THE GARDENS AT AVEBURY MANOR: THEIR HISTORY AND FUTURE CHALLENGES. presented by GARRY MUMFORD, HEAD GARDENER AT AVEBURY MANOR.

The 100 members who attended the Coffee Exchange, were treated to an extremely interesting and illuminating talk by Garry Mumford, who has been Head Gardener at Avebury Manor since May 2023.

He began by giving a short, illustrated history of the garden and paid homage to the work and vision of Leonora (Nora) Jenner, who, together with her husband Colonel Leopold Jenner, were tenants of Avebury between 1902 and 1929. During Nora Jenner's time there she was responsible for subdividing the garden, using Yew and Box, into different rooms or spaces. There are now 11 distinct spaces at Avebury, all of individual character and all treated differently.

Garry made excellent use of historical photographs to illustrate the changes that have taken place over the years. One photograph in particular, an aerial photo taken in 1924, showed the garden when visited by Vita Sackville-West (of Sissinghurst fame) and her husband Harold Nicholson.

Fast forward to early 2024 and an aerial photograph, which showed the extent of the flooding that took place in Avebury. This was a prelude to the second part of Garry's talk: the need to modify the gardens over the coming years in the light of the flood and to take account of climate change. Although some plants were stressed as a result of the flooding, nothing was lost.

The garden is maintained organically, without the use of chemicals and using methods such as heavy mulching and sustained planting to enable there to be colour in the gardens right up until November. Photographs were again used to illustrate the point.



Additionally, Garry stressed the diversity of wildlife that has benefited from the changes that have taken place.

There were lots of questions at the end of the talk and Garry also spent time afterwards talking to individual members both about the garden and their specific gardening queries and observations. We thank Garry for his talk and will certainly look forward to visiting the gardens next year or even to join one of his garden tours.

Photo; John Slaughter

OTHER u3a IN KENNET EVENTS

NEW MEMBERS' LUNCH 18th NOVEMBER 2024

We hosted another of our lunches for new members on 26th November at Kennet Valley Hall. Group Leaders and Committee members were on hand to welcome some of those who have



joined u3a in Kennet during the year and to introduce the many and varied Groups and activities which we offer.

Once again we enjoyed the splendid meal provided by Dan from Bedwyn, and thanks are due to Alison Dewar and our RUGs who served and washed up during the event. *Photo; John Slaughter*

TECHNOLOGY WORKSHOP 26th NOVEMBER 2024



Following publicity in our October 2024 Newsletter our first technical support workshop was held on 26th November at the Friends Meeting House in Marlborough. Led by Michael Morison, our Membership Secretary, the aim was to help members with their mobile phones and other technical devices such as ipads and laptops and working on the basis that "there is no such thing as a stupid question".

Photo; Susan Turner

We provided focused support on a small group and one-to-one basis for 10 members divided into 2 groups; one for those who use Apple devices (phones and laptops, Ipads etc) and the

other for users of Android devices. We responded to individual members' specific issues, problems and queries allowing the 'pupils' to work through the particular issues using their own phones / laptops etc.

The session was very well received: 'Brilliant!', 'thank you for your excellent help' etc.

We propose that we offer a further session (or sessions) in the new year, once again at the Friends Meeting House. If you would like to come to a future session, please contact Mike Morison on morison_2017@outlook.com or 01249 891093 and further details including the date will be provided in the new year.

Please contact Mike too if you are an Apple user and would be willing to provide support at the workshops.

GROUPS NEWS

'MUSICAL MISCELLANY' GROUP

The Musical Miscellany Group meets on the second Tuesday of the month from 14.15 – 16.15 in Marlborough and, facilitated by the leader, hear and comment on mainly classical music composed over the centuries. Only an interest in music is required without needing to know much about it. Tea/coffee and biscuits can be enjoyed in comfortable surroundings.

New members are welcome and for further information please contact Jeff Hide: vicechair@u3ainkennet.org.uk

QIGONG GROUP

The next meeting of the Group will take place on Monday 9th December 2024 from 10am at the Friends Meeting House, Marlborough.

For further information please contact Felicity Simpson, Group Leader on 07843771599 or email: qigong@u3ainkennet.org.uk

NEW GROUP – CHESS GROUP



Following our earlier publicity we are pleased to report that we have received some member interest in our proposed Chess Group and more players would be very welcome. The new Group will meet regularly. We have already received an offer to lead the group and boards and chess clocks are available too. Please contact groups@u3ainkennet.org.uk if you are interested to join the new group.

Photo: Susan Turner



TABLE TENNIS GROUP

Just one of our three table tennis groups enjoying their weekly social meeting at the Cardinal Coffee shop in St Peter's, Marlborough.

Photo: Felicity Simpson

For further information about any of our Groups please contact: groups@u3ainkennet.org.uk

OTHER NEWS

u3a IN KENNET POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

Your u3a is a registered charity and therefore we have a range of policies and procedures to enable us to function and to abide by relevant legislation and the requirements of the Charity Commission and the u3a Trust. Our policies are based upon guidance and legal support from the u3a Trust and are available here: <https://u3ainkennet.org.uk/policies-and-procedures/>

LLOYDS BANK IN MARLBOROUGH

Following the closure of Lloyds Bank in Marlborough a member of staff will be present in Marlborough Library on a Wednesdays to help customers. Further information is available as follows: **Phone number;** [01672 512663](tel:01672512663), **Email;** libraryenquiries@wiltshire.gov.uk and **Social media** [Facebook: Marlborough Library](#) (opens in a new tab).

MARLBOROUGH CONCERT SERIES

The next concert will be held on Sunday 12 January 2025 at 7.30 pm in the Memorial Hall at Marlborough College. This concert is a special opportunity to hear a full symphony orchestra in the town. The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra will present a "New Year Viennese Extravaganza" with a programme of the famous waltzes, polkas, and other pieces from the Strauss family, Lehar and others. Tickets are available now, on-line, at www.marlboroughconcertseries.org or email: mccstickets@marlboroughcollege.org

MILDENHALL BOOK GROUP

We have four u3a in Kennet book groups now with a new one being set up too. One of our members: Dierdre Watson, has informed us that the small book group in Mildenhall has closed recently and they are interested to find out if any of our members might be interested to join it. The Group met at 7.30 pm at the Horseshoe pub in Mildenhall on the last Thursday of the month. If you are interested to find out more about the Group (or might like to meet on another day) please contact Dierdre: email dwatsonweavers@gmail.com or telephone number 01672 512729.



Jill Turner
*Chair and Charity
Commission Contact*



Jeff Hide
Vice Chair



Alastair Sheen
Treasurer



Annette Weaver
Secretary



Mike Morison
*Membership & Beacon
Administrator*



Jill Chambers
Speaker Secretary



John Slaughter
Committee Member

