

Newsletter

May 2025



WELCOME



Photo: Susan Turner

COFFEE EXCHANGE 22nd MAY 2025

u3a in Kennet **Coffee Exchange**

Come and meet other u3a members, hear the latest news, listen to an interesting talk and chat.
Thursday 22nd May 2025 10.15 – 12.00
at Marlborough Town Hall

MC Escher – Artist or Mathematician?

 **Maurits Cornelis Escher (1898 – 1972)** was a Dutch graphic artist of international renown. His work displays consummate skill and is influenced by the world of mathematics.

 **Jane Fox** will introduce us to the life and work of this extraordinary man. She exhibits with several art societies and opens her studio each year for the Marlborough Open Studios Art Trail. She is an active member of u3a in Kennet and Group Leader of the Art and Art History Group.



Along with the better weather we have a full programme of Coffee Exchanges and Kennet Talks for the summer months. Plans for our 2025 Special Interest Day in September are being finalised and our groups continue to flourish.

Join us and u3a colleagues at the Town Hall in Marlborough on 22nd May to hear our Art and Art History Group Leader Jane Fox introduce us to the work of Dutch graphic artist Maurits Cornelis Escher.

Following refreshments Jane will challenge us with the intriguing question of whether Escher was an artist or a mathematician.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2025

Coffee Exchange, 10.15 am, 22nd May 2025, Town Hall, Marlborough.
Jane Fox: M.C. Escher: Artist or Mathematician?

Coffee Exchange, 10.15 am, 19th June 2025, Town Hall, Marlborough

Kennet Talk, 2.00pm, 25th June 2025. Kennet Valley Hall

Special Interest Day with Marlborough College; 'Global tipping points'. 15th September 2025 at the College.

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

REMINDER FOR ALL MEMBERS – EMERGENCY CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

We would like to hold details of a contact phone number for our members for us in the event of an emergency. The details will be kept in confidence.

If you have not already given us a number and are willing to do so please contact Mike Morison, our Membership Secretary on: membershipsec@u3ainkennet.org.uk

REPORT ON THE COFFEE EXCHANGE 24th APRIL 2025

AN ENIGMA IN PLAIN SIGHT; WILTSHIRE'S CHALK HORSES



Photo: Susan Turner

Wiltshire is full of famous sites and the White Horses are among the better known. The White Horse is an iconic symbol of the county, thirteen of the twenty-four of the original British hill figures having been found in Wiltshire. The remaining eight monumental landscape chalk horses have varied and interesting stories behind them.

Garry Gibbons has become enthralled by the stories behind some of these horses and is carrying out in depth research into the validity of some of the theories.

Starting from the writings of the Reverend Plenderleath and using contemporaneous sources, he gave a talk to the Coffee Exchange concentrating on those horses from the Georgian period. His meticulous research throws up many anomalies and contradictions. He has left us with more questions than answers! The recording of the talk has been sent to all members.

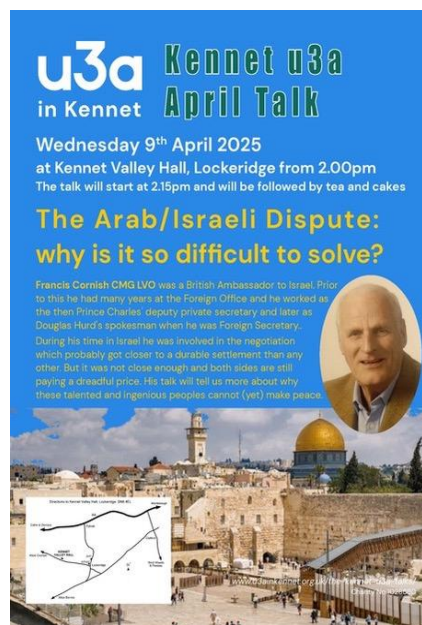
REPORT ON THE KENNET U3A TALK, 9th APRIL 2025

THE ARAB/ISRAELI CONFLICT: WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO SOLVE? FRANCIS CORNISH CMG LVO

Francis Cornish was British Ambassador to Israel at the beginning of this century. This appointment followed a distinguished career in the Foreign Office in many parts of the world. He was a spokesman for the Foreign Secretary, an advisor to the Governor at the handover of Hong Kong to China and for two years a Deputy Private Secretary to the then Prince of Wales. He brought all this experience and knowledge to tell us about the Arab/Israeli conflict which has dogged the Middle East for generations.

Francis began by summing up the history of the situation. He described the persecution of the Jews over centuries in Europe. The UK was a more comfortable place for Jews and it was here at the end of the nineteenth century that the idea of a Jewish State was first proposed and, in 1917,

the then Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour sent a letter saying that there should be a Jewish homeland in Palestine but that the Arabs there should not be dispossessed or affected by this.



The area remained under British control in a deal with other European countries when the Ottoman Empire broke up. During the Second World War, the area was crucial as a supply route to the East and for the supply of oil. However in 1947, the UK unable to find a solution quit Palestine making it over to the United Nations. From there onwards there has been chaos, the declaration of a Jewish state by Ben Gurion in 1948 was followed by an exodus of Arabs and after the Six Day War, Israel took over the entire area. And so the Palestinian struggle began to take back their land. The Israelis took over and built more and more illegal settlements in defiance of international law.

Francis described the multiplicity of factors which are preventing the two sides agreeing. These included the fact that Israel does not believe that handing back land to the Palestinians will bring peace and fundamentally the Palestinians do not believe that Israel will ever allow them to live in peace. The

situation is exacerbated as the Israeli Defence Force is ill disciplined and the soldiers take every opportunity to punish and humiliate the Palestinians. International factors continue to affect the situation. A ceasefire has been brokered following the recent kidnapping and murders but it is not long lasting. Trump has given Israel full rein. The revolution in Syria has cut off the supply route to the Palestinians. The Israeli Defence Force is exhausted and has still not obliterated Hamas. Saudi will not recognise Israel until the right of Palestine to exist is confirmed. Netanyahu needs his extreme right wing so he can remain in power so cannot make any concessions. In fact, any resolution seems impossible.

Francis then drew our attention to the solution of the Northern Ireland problems. This, he maintained, was the result of strong leaders in UK, in Ireland and the US who all agreed that solution was possible and also the strong support of the mothers of Northern Ireland who vowed to agree to prevent the death of their sons. He felt that a change in leaders in Israel, US and Iran would make an important difference in the possibility of peace.

Francis' authoritative and eloquent explanation of the intractable situation – and a very tentative possible way of resolving it – was a fascinating insight into the world of diplomacy and international affairs. The slides which illustrated his talk accompany this Newsletter.

SPECIAL INTEREST DAY – ADVANCE NOTIFICATION

We are busy planning for our next joint 'Special Interest Day' with Marlborough College and other local schools The Day will be held at the College on 15th September 2025 and members of other u3a's in the Bath and Wiltshire Network will join us too.

Our speakers will consider the theme of '**Global tipping points**' from a range of aspects including politics and climate change and further details will follow shortly.

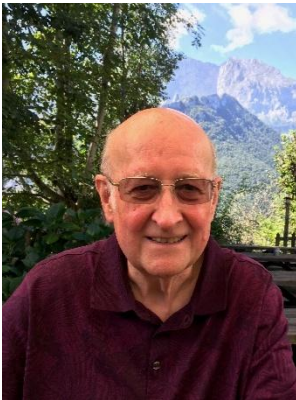
GROUPS NEWS

REMINDER: NEW SPANISH GROUP LEADER

We have two Spanish groups at present and will be setting up another one following requests from our members who are keen to learn the language. We will need a new Leader for the Group too. Can you help to support the new group? The new Leader will need to have a reasonable knowledge of Spanish but not necessarily a degree. A native Spanish speaker would, of course, be ideal. Please contact groups@u3ainkennet.org.uk if you can assist and for further information about the group.

OBITUARIES

We were saddened to learn of the recent deaths of two of our members: Fred Briers and Philip Elias.



Fred passed away on 29th April 2025.

He had been a member of the Jazz Appreciation Group and our Theatre Group.

He had also been a member of the STEM Group and with his wife Jackie he had enjoyed attending our Coffee Exchanges events.



Phil passed away on 27th April 2025 at the age of 73 years.

He was a retired civil engineer and had been studying French for 10 years.

He was a member of our French conversation and Current Affairs Group.

His wife Cheryl and sons Mark and Christopher miss him very much.

OTHER LOCAL NEWS

We have been informed about some forthcoming local events which may be of interest to u3a in Kennet members and which we are sharing accordingly.



WHITE HORSE BOOKSHOP – SUMMER SCHOOL 2025, 3 JUNE – 1 AUGUST 2025



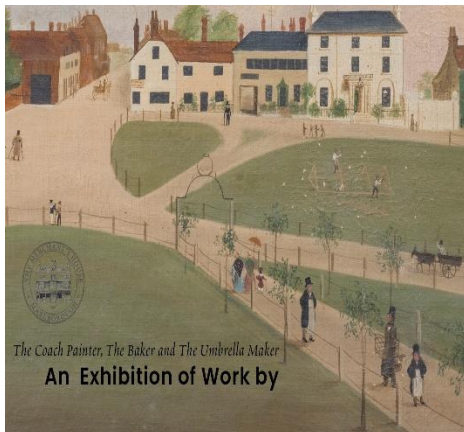
The White Horse Bookshop in Marlborough is offering a summer of workshops and lectures from 3 June – 1 August 2025. Tickets are now on sale.

Marlborough College Summer School is not taking place this year; The White Horse Bookshop already runs art workshops in its gallery and workshop space throughout the year and decided to run a more extensive programme of events for this summer. The White Horse Summer School Programme will include art workshops, author talks, an antiques valuation day, a jazz and Latin guitar lunchtime recital, silver jewellery-making workshop, a health workshop, yoga, history and politics sessions with tutors, creative writing workshops and lectures.

For tickets, call 01672 512071, pop into the bookshop or find more information at www.whitehorsebooks.co.uk

Please note, the Summer School Programme is for adults only.

THE MERCHANTS HOUSE



The Coach painter, the Baker and the Umbrella Maker'. An Exhibition of Work by George Maton Saturday 14th June – Saturday 28th June 2025

A unique opportunity to see the largest collection of work by this enigmatic Victorian artist. Little is known about George Maton but his paintings of Marlborough provide a snapshot of everyday life, with many characters appearing in more than one and the Town Crier appearing in nearly all of them.

Funds raised from this exhibition will enable restoration of the two Matons now in The Merchant's House Collection.

Open daily from Tuesday to Saturday from 10am – 4pm (last entry at 3pm).

Tickets are £8 per adult for the Exhibition or House & Exhibition £15

<https://themerchantshouse.co.uk/whats-on/whats-on-calendar/>

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF OUTDOOR THEATRE AT OGBOURNE MAIZEY!

The Rain or Shine Theatre Company are back in Ogbourne Maizey and will perform 'The Rivals' at Ogbourne Maizey on 3rd July 2025 at 7.30pm.

Will heiress Lydia Languish choose the penniless Ensign Beverly or the eligible Jack Absolute? Come and sample the sparkling wit and whirlwind plot of 'The Rivals'. This brand new adaptation combines Richard Brinsley Sheridan's masterpiece with Rain or Shine's fast and furious comic flair.

Recommended age 7+. Approximate running time 2.5 hours including 15 minute interval.

Details:

The Rain or Shine Theatre Company is in Wiltshire for one night only on 3rd July at Ogbourne Maizey. Performance starts at 7.30pm (gate open for picnics at 6pm). Bring your own chairs. Bar/coffee/ice creams/WC/parking. Venue: Maizey Lodge, Ogbourne Maizey, Marlborough SN8 1RY. Tickets in advance only: Adults £16, children (under 16) £8, Family £42 (2A+2C). Tickets: 01672-512125 or email maizey50@gmail.com. This year's charity performance is in aid of Marlborough AgeUK.

UPDATE MARLBOROUGH LITFEST, 25th – 28th SEPTEMBER 2025



25-28 September 2025

More names have been announced for the Marlborough LitFest's 2025 line-up including poet **Brian Bilston**, actor and author **Rupert Everett**, as well as this year's Big Town Read by prizewinning author **Susan Fletcher**. They will join **John Suchet**, **Poppy Okotcha**, **Clare Chambers** and 2025 **Golding Speaker Alan Hollinghurst** at this year's festival from 25 – 28 September. The full programme will be announced at the end of June; general tickets go on sale on Friday 11 July, with priority booking for Friends of LitFest from Monday 30 June.

The Big Town Read aims to get as many people as possible in and around Marlborough reading and discussing a chosen book. This year's title is *The Night in Question* by **Susan Fletcher**, praised as an 'uplifting literary murder-mystery' and packed with lovable characters, lyrical prose, profound themes and page-turning plot twists. Fletcher's first novel, *Eve Green*, won the Whitbread First Novel Award and the Betty Trask Prize and she has subsequently written seven other novels.

LitFest encourages everyone to come along to the event ready to quiz the author. To help you, reading group questions will be available on the LitFest website from late July but – spoiler alert – do read the book first!

The full festival programme will be announced in late June with priority booking for Friends of LitFest from 30 June and general ticket sales from 11 July. For more information and regular 2025 festival programme updates, see www.marlboroughlitfest.org



Jill Turner
*Chair and Charity
Commission Contact*



Jeff Hide
Vice Chair



Alastair Sheen
Treasurer



Annette Weaver
Secretary



Jill Chambers
Speaker Secretary



Alison Dewar
Committee Member



Hamzah
Technology



Mike Morison
*Membership & Beacon
Administrator*



Georgie Neville
Committee Member



Catherine Lockwood
*Co-opted Committee
Member*



Gavin Maxwell-Hart
*Co-opted Committee
Member*



David Pocock
*Co-opted Committee
Member*