



Newsletter

August 2025

WELCOME



Following the summer we are looking forward to a busy September with our Open Day on 3rd followed by our Special Interest Day on 15th, our routine Coffee Exchange on 18th and our New Members' Lunch on 23rd.

Several Groups are starting up again after the holiday and we are exploring interest in some new groups too.

Photo: Susan Turner

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Please remember to pay your annual subscription if you have not already done so following the recent communication from Mike Morison; our Membership Secretary. Please ensure that you pay into the correct u3a bank account (Sort code: 30-92-63 Account number: 42720960) and include your membership number and surname as the reference. If you have any queries please contact Mike on; membershipsec@u3ainkennet.org.uk or telephone: 01249 891093.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Coffee Exchange, 10.15 am,
28th August 2025, Town Hall,
Marlborough

u3a in Kennet Open Day
3rd September 2025 from
10am to 1pm at the Town Hall
in Marlborough

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

Coffee Exchange, 10.15 am,
18th September 2025, Town
Hall, Marlborough

New Members' Lunch; 23rd
September 2025 at Kennet
Valley Hall (by invitation only)

Copy date for the September
Newsletter will be 15th
September 2025. Please send
to: chair@u3ainkennet.org.uk.



OPEN DAY 2025

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our 2025 Open Day event on Wednesday morning 3rd September.

Please bring along your friends who may be interested to join us too.

As usual we will have a display of posters about our Groups. Refreshments will be available and our Group Leaders will be on hand to answer questions.

REPORT ON THE COFFEE EXCHANGE 24th JULY 2025 THE NAMES OF SAVERNAKE, PETER NOBLE

Around 100 U3a members were treated to a very interesting and relevant talk by Peter Noble. Peter has had a varied career, working in education and outdoor training centres in the UK as well as two and a half years working for the British Antarctic Survey in Antarctica. He moved to Marlborough with his wife Jenny 19 years ago and has produced maps of Savernake Forest and West Woods and a booklet about the ancient oaks of the forest. In addition he is a long term member of U3a in Kennet and an ex-chairman.

Peter spoke fluently and without notes on the names of Savernake Forest and provided numerous illustrations and maps to complement his talk.

He began by outlining the history of the Forest, which has been owned by the same family for 950 years, starting with the Esturmy family (1067-1427), the Seymour family (1427-1676), the Bruce family (1676-1747) and the Brudenell-Bruce family (1747-).

He described the names and history of the famous oak trees, including, among others, the Wen (Pot belly) Oak, the Dukes Vaunt, the Cathedral Oak, the Amity Oak and the Braydon Oak, some of which still survive today.

The Brudenell-Bruce family put in good tracks through the forest and Capability Brown was brought in to develop the area around Tottenham House. Names were given to the drives in the Forest and it was thanks to the Chief Forester at the time that the old trees were kept. In addition the gates were named, such as the Prince of Wales Gate and the Voronzoff Gate.

Peter described the significance of the names and their associations with historical figures. Semyon Voronzoff, a Russian diplomat, was sent by Catherine the Great as ambassador to England and married Ekatarina Seniavina, who sadly died aged 23 soon after the birth of their daughter. They had two children and their daughter Catherine (Ekatarina) (1784-1856) married

the Earl of Pembroke. Their daughter Lady Mary Herbert (1813–1892) married George Herbert in 1837 and became the Marchioness of Ailesbury and lived at Tottenham House. St. Katherine's Church was commissioned by Mary in 1856 in memory of her mother. The house called Voronzoff Gate was built in 1856, the year Ekatarina died.

In 1787 Princess Marie Louise of Lamballe, a confidante of Marie– Antoinette, visited England to take the waters in Bath. At that time Thomas Brudenell–Bruce (1729–1814) was Governor to the Prince of Wales and a friend of George III, so it is likely the Princess would be recommended to break her journey at Tottenham House. The Marie Louise Ride is probably named in her honour.

Finally Peter discussed the origin of the name Savernake. A few dubious theories have been aired but no one knows. Savernake does rather sound like seven oaks!



Photos: Jill Turner

It is also worth noting that the meaning of a forest was a royal hunting ground. Savernake Forest was transferred from Edward VI to Edward Seymour, warden of the forest, through a legal 500 page document. It should have changed its name to 'Chase', being no longer royal, but intriguingly it did not, which makes it the only private true forest in England.

We would like to thank Peter for this most thought provoking and fascinating talk that was well–received by all present.

The talk can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/QBPvaqHI8PI>

NEWS AND UPDATES FROM OUR GROUPS

AMERICAN HISTORY GROUP



Our American History Group will be focussing on US Presidents from the autumn, starting with George Washington. At alternate meetings there will be presentations on social and cultural aspects of the American story.

American History could be for you if you would like to delve into such topics as which President

- was the most controversial (present incumbent excepted)
- delivered the most significant social or political change
- is rated the worst failure
- or if you would like to learn more about how America became such a dominant force in so many fields of endeavour.

Our provisional programme for the new season:

Oct – *Meet the President 1*

Nov – *The Birth of Television Entertainment 1936–45*

Dec – *Americana Quiz* with mulled wine (partners invited)

Jan – *Meet the President 2*

Feb – *1968: Year of Turmoil, Year of New Beginnings*

Mar – *Meet the President 3*

April – *All That Jazz* (joint meeting with Jazz Appreciation Group)

May – *Meet the President 4*

Jun – *The Japanese Americans 1858–1959*

Sessions are informal, with participation encouraged and tea and buns to follow.

For further details please contact Patrick Hickman –Robertson (email hickmanrobertson@btinternet.com) or call Alastair Sheen on 07905 528266 (please leave a message if he is not available immediately)

NEW GROUPS STARTING IN SEPTEMBER – ART AND ART HISTORY 2:

Due to demand, this group will be starting in the autumn. For more details please contact Jane Fox on email: art.history@u3ainkennet.org.uk

Please mention that you are interested in becoming a member of group 2 as the first group is already full.

TABLE TENNIS:

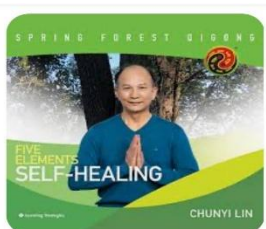
Our new Tuesday Group will meet weekly in term time from 10am at Marlborough Leisure Centre.

The first session will be held on Tuesday 2nd September. For more details please contact Vivien Gibbs on email: tabtentues@u3ainkennet.org.uk

SPANISH GROUP APPEAL FOR A NEW LEADER.

Currently we have about ten members interested in joining a Spanish group. However we do not have anyone willing to run this group. If you or anyone you know could help we would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact Georgie Neville: email groups@u3ainkennet.org.uk

QIGONG



Qigong for Self Healing -...
Spring Forest Qigong



Spring Forest Qigong

Led by Felicity Simpson again our Qigong Group will recommence in the autumn.

Spring Forest Qigong is a modernised practice developed by best selling author and teacher Master Chunyi Lin which simplifies ancient powerful self healing practices

We will be concentrating on the “5 elements” and “small universe” movements.

The Group will commence on Monday 22nd of September from 3pm to 4pm at D'arenberg House Chandlers Yard Marlborough and weekly onwards.

For more information please contact Felicity on WhatsApp: 07843771599

LIFE SCIENCES GROUP

The Life Sciences Group will be starting the new u3a academic year on September 17th with a slightly different format. The group leader, Graham Barnes, will be giving a series of talks throughout the year about how the brain and nervous system function. The content will be similar to a short course that was given about 6 years ago with the title Discovering Neuroscience, but it will be covering some additional topics and all topics will be brought up to date with as much of the latest information as possible.

If you're not already a group member and you are interested in joining this group, please email the group leader at lifesci@u3ainkennet.org.uk or apply via the u3a website. A science background is helpful but not a necessity; the aim is to present talks that are as accessible as possible to a general audience. Group sessions are held in the Friends Meeting House in Marlborough on the 3rd Wednesday of each month.

For further information please contact lifesci@u3ainkennet.org.uk

POTENTIAL NEW GROUP: 'MINDFULNESS MEDITATION'

U3a in Kennet member Lora Markham proposes to set up a new group on Mindfulness.

She writes:

'We know that our brains continually change and develop in response to our thoughts, feelings and perceptions. Mindfulness training, over time, actually 're-wires' our brains so that we are happier, cognitively sharper, and more emotionally resilient, relaxed and at peace. Because of this, we get along better with others and kindness, compassion and understanding are naturally fostered.'

If you are interested to find out more about this Group or have any ideas about starting a new group, then please get in touch with us to discuss your ideas. email: Georgie

Neville: groups@u3ainkennet.org.uk

CLASSIC CAR GROUP

The Classic Car Group held a very successful summer gathering at the beautiful home of Group members, George and Isabel Clarke. A total of 24 members were treated to a generous lunch by the hosts in their delightful garden.



Photographs; Ashley de Safrin

In addition to their pleasant outing the group members raised £370 for donation to the Prospect Hospice.

OBITUARIES

We were sad to learn of the recent deaths of two u3a in Kennet members; Ann McKinley and Audrey Peck and Eric Midwinter; one of the original founders of the u3a movement in the UK.

Ann died on 31st July 2025 having joined u3a in Kennet many years ago. She had been a member of the Strollers group and the former Theatre group.

Audrey joined u3a in Kennet in 2023 and was a member of our Short mat bowls, Croquet, Day Trips and Scrabble Groups.

Her funeral will be held on 28th August at 12noon, at West Overton Church followed by refreshments at Kennet Valley Hall. The family have requested that flowers are not offered and donations would be welcome either for Wiltshire Air Ambulance:

<https://www.wiltshirebathairambulance.org.uk/>) or the Salvation Army (<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk>)

Eric Midwinter established u3a in the UK in 1982 with Peter Laslett and Michael Young. They considered that later life should be a time of continued learning, connection, and contribution.

Eric's commitment to challenging negative stereotypes of ageing, and to creating spaces for older adults to share skills, knowledge, and friendship, has shaped the lives of hundreds of thousands of u3a members over four decades.

SPECIAL INTEREST DAY – 'GLOBAL TIPPING POINTS', 15th SEPTEMBER 2025

Have you booked your place yet? Non members are welcome too.

Details about our joint 'Special Interest Day' with Marlborough College and other local schools have been sent to all members.



The event will be held in the splendid setting of the Memorial Hall at the College and members of other u3a's in the Bath and Wiltshire Network will join us too.



Our expert speakers will consider the theme of '**Global tipping points**' from a range of aspects including politics, health, Artificial Intelligence, language and climate change.

Once again this year some students will give short presentations on their chosen aspects of the overall theme of the Day and respond to questions from the audience.

Please see: www.u3ainkennet.org.uk/global

OTHER NEWS FOR MEMBERS

OVER 70S AND DRIVING LICENCES

Of late there has been an increase on the various information channels on the Internet relating to drivers aged over 70 years. The national news and media are now also putting out messages on this subject publishing claims yet to be confirmed in the Government statement due in the autumn.

This subject falls into two areas. One deals with renewing driving licences and the other concerns the requirement to be able to meet the eyesight standards already laid down in legislation.

As the law stands, those over seventy years must renew their driving licences every three years. This may be done on-line or in writing. Questions are asked by DVLA about health and eyesight which must be answered truthfully. Failure to renew or where there is an anomaly will not result in a renewal until resolved. Telling untruths is a criminal offence which can result in revocation of the right to have a driving licence or even a prosecution brought in the magistrates' court.

The second issue concerns the health, particularly eyesight when a driver is driving on a public road.

As the law stands police can stop a driver of any age to check on driving documents, health, including alcohol or drug consumption, or the condition of the vehicle if they reasonably suspect an offence. For instance, unsteady steering. Police can already demand that the driver takes an eyesight test and that is not confined to the over seventies. If the driver uses driving glasses, the test includes the wearing of those glasses. If a driver cannot pass that test, that driver will lose his or her driving licence either by revocation by DVLA or be disqualified through the courts.

That has been the case for many years. What is now being published is merely a tightening up of this issue. We will not know for sure how the rules will change yet but come that time it will be clear to all. The likelihood, as rumoured recently, is that upon the three year renewal of the driving licence for over seventies, the current voluntary answers to health and eyesight subjects will require written evidence from a doctor or optician. We will see later this year.

Jeff Hide (Vice Chair) Email: vicechair@u3ainkennet.org.uk

WILTSHIRE and SWINDON SPORTS PARTNERSHIP (WASP) – NEW COURSE TO PREVENT FALLS

Sadly 1 in 3 adults over 65, and half of those over 80, experience at least one fall each year. According to the NHS, falls and related fragility fractures cost the UK over £4.4 billion annually. To help reduce the risk of falls and build confidence WASP will provide a new and innovative programme in Marlborough this September. **"Finding Your Feet"** sessions use simple, adapted judo techniques to help participants to:

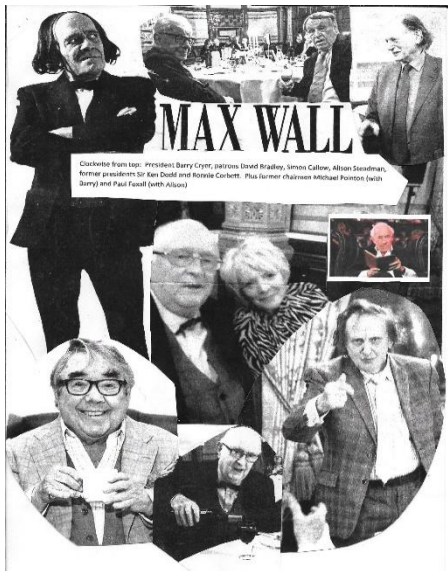
- Improve your balance
 - learn how to fall more safely
 - build confidence in getting back up again
-
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These sessions are suitable for people of all abilities aged 50+ and will be held at **The Fitness Space, Elcot Lane, Marlborough, SN8 2BG.** (<https://fitnessspacemarlborough.co.uk/>) But it's not just about technique — it's about creating a **supportive, friendly community** where people come together, connect, and boost their confidence and wellbeing. "Finding Your Feet" is about feeling more **resilient, independent**, and living life with less fear of falling. The sessions will be delivered by former Paralympian Chris Hunt Skelley MBE.

If you're interested in joining, please complete the short form through the following weblink by **31st August 2025** or as soon as possible <https://forms.gle/qdaPuyRdG6me9iEF7> Alternatively you can reply to Dominique@wiltssport.gov.uk direct or call / text Dominique on 07786221235. There will be an introductory offer of just £50 for the 10 week course.

MAX WALL FROM MGM TO BBC TV by PAUL FOXALL

This is the story of my fervour to join the film industry as a teenager before being engaged by BBC Television. Some readers will recall my piece on Max Wall in a previous journal and this episode precedes that. I always had an artistic flare and was attracted to films and the cinema but living in the heart of Leicestershire in the 1950s, getting a job in a London film studios was nigh impossible. On leaving school my only choice was to enroll as an apprentice in one of the heavy industry factories in my home town of Loughborough. In those days local television studios didn't exist so London was the only option and that was 100miles away.



Quite by chance there was a small film studio in the town, so I terminated my apprenticeship which left me free climb the ladder into life as a film-maker. They had a big 35mm camera that was used to shoot motor racing subjects and it was whilst filming an event at Silverstone in 1960 that MGM approached me to ask if I could film various action scenes for them at Le Mans. The star of 'The Green Helmet' was Bill Travers who played a racing driver. I couldn't believe my luck, being paid for what was once my hobby.

When I finally moved to London I was able to join BBC TV and that added to the MGM work, my dream of a role in the film industry was a reality . Proof in my case that perseverance and a slice of good luck paid off. Further well known

celebrities emerged that I worked with when I became a freelance documentary director in 1980. These included Max Wall or course plus Stirling Moss, Peter Ustinov, Enzo Ferrari, Stephanie Powers, Val Singleton and Alison Steadman who was a fellow member of the Max Wall Society along with Simon Callow. *Montage created by Paul Foxall includes Alison Steadman and Paul along with familiar faces including, Simon Callow Ronnie Corbett, Barry Cryer and Ken Dodd.*



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



David Pocock
*Co-opted Committee
Member*



Gavin Maxwell-Hart
*Co-opted Committee
Member*