



Newsletter

October 2025



Photo: Susan Turner

WELCOME

Just as the autumn leaves herald the end of the summer our Annual General Meeting on 22nd October 2025 will provide an opportunity to reflect back over the past year.

We will thank the Executive Committee members, Group Leaders and other volunteers for their support for our u3a during which time we have increased the membership and number of groups and enjoyed many interesting Kennet u3a Talks and Coffee Exchange sessions.

I will be standing down as your Chair after completion of my 3 year term of office and almost 9 enjoyable years on the Committee. I will continue to edit your Newsletter and look forward to receiving contributions in future.

As usual this month's edition of your Newsletter contains updates from some of our groups as well as other information which may be of interest to members.

Jill Turner, Chair, u3a in Kennet

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Annual General Meeting and Kennet Talk, 2.00pm 22nd October 2025, Town Hall, Marlborough

Coffee Exchange:
10.15am, 27th November 2025, Town Hall, Marlborough

The copy date for the November Newsletter will be 19th November 2025.

Please send to:
newsletter@u3ainkennet.org.uk

Links to our web page
u3ainkennet.org.uk and
Facebook page
www.facebook.com/u3ainkennet

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REPORT ON THE COFFEE EXCHANGE, 18th SEPTEMBER 2025

THE QUEST FOR WANSDYKE by ALAN SOLDAT.

Alan is a retired town planning consultant based in Wiltshire. He gives presentations and posts on YouTube channels on a wide range of subjects. He covers Anglo Saxon churches, music, architecture, archaeology and many and varied walks around the area.

At the Coffee Exchange in September he talked about the research he has undertaken into the Wansdyke. The Wansdyke is one of the greatest linear earth works in the south of England consisting of a ditch and a running embankment. What remains of the Wansdyke now is in two sections. One between Bristol and Bath and the longer part running from near Devizes to just south of Marlborough in the Savernake forest. These sections almost appear to be connected by 14 miles of Roman road.

Using diagrams, maps and photos, Alan talked us through the research that has been carried out over the last 300 or so years. He explained the theories that had been put forward as to when the Wansdyke was built, and who built it. He also explained the differing ideas as to why it was built. He reached some tentative conclusions which dated its building to the late or post Roman period and he feels that it was probably a boundary. The latest research techniques including Optical Stimulated Luminescence (which has only been used in the last few years) have contributed to these theories.

If anyone wants to see more of the extensive and fascinating details of the research, Alan has a book available from the Hobnob press and some of his slides are on his YouTube post '*The Quest for Wansdyke*'.

NEWS AND UPDATES FROM OUR GROUPS

DAY TRIP GROUP OUTING TO CHICHESTER, WEDNESDAY 8TH OCTOBER 2025

The charming and compact Cathedral City of Chichester is an ideal place for a leisurely day out.

Pallant House Art Gallery was a priority for a lot of the group members and those who visited the *Seeing Each Other: Portraits of Artists* Exhibition were full of praise. The Gallery also has an excellent restaurant.

The Ivy restaurant was one street away. I don't think anyone went although two gourmets in the group found the Brasserie Blanc and enjoyed a very good lunch. Many of us visited the Gallery and the lovely Cathedral with its unexpected treasures – Chagall window, Frink sculpture, Romanesque reliefs and exposed Roman mosaic floor. The shops and cafes were popular, several people visited the Novium Museum and one gentleman took a canal cruise.

Kate Morrison, Group Leader.

GROUP LEADER CHANGES FOR OUR BOOKS GROUP and WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

Two of our Group Leaders have stood down recently and we are most grateful for their support for their popular groups over many years.

Alison Hammond has led our popular Book Group and in her place Betty Dobson has kindly offered to coordinate the group's activities in the short term and she will be supported by Sara Blow and Anna Shantry.

Our large Wine Appreciation Group has been led by Gordon Hutt and he will be followed by a small team comprising Dave Foulkes, David Hammond, Frans Scheepers Alastair Sheen and Maddie Urquart.

We are grateful for Alison and Gordon's hard work and support for u3a in Kennet and to the members who have kindly offered to ensure that the two groups continue to function. The approach in which several members collaborate to lead a group is one which has already proved successful within u3a in Kennet and which could be adopted for other groups. If you are interested to find out more about supporting a group in future please contact groups@u3ainkennet.org.uk

SHORT MAT BOWLS

Our Short Mat Bowls Group has met during the winter months from October to March at Marlborough Leisure Centre every Friday at 2pm.

John Lafford is standing down now after 11 years of leading the group and we are grateful to him for his commitment and coaching expertise in the sport.

The group will not reconvene this autumn unless there is more interest in playing the sport. Please contact groups@u3ainkennet.org.uk if you would like to join the group. Alternatively there is potential for interested members to join the Marlborough Bowls Club (<https://marlboroughbc.co.uk/location/default.aspx>)

DOG WALKING GROUP

Our Dog Walking Group has proved popular for our members with pets offering a sociable walking opportunity throughout the year.

A new leader (or several leaders) would be most welcome to enable the group to continue. For more details please contact groups@u3ainkennet.org.uk

NEW MEMBERS JOIN OUR LEAGUE OF HELPERS

Thank you to all those 'new members' who volunteered to help out at coffee exchanges, similar events or with other support to fellow members. Very much appreciated.

Apart from two that Alison has managed to lose track of (very sorry!), you should all have had an email inviting you to help at the AGM. If you didn't get that email and would like to help on some occasions please get in touch: usefuls@u3ainkennet.org.uk or by text to Alison Dewar on 07970 723 470.

Helpers will be needed for our November (27th) and December (11th) coffee exchanges in Marlborough Town Hall. Everyone on the helpers group list will be invited to RSVP for those events. More details here: <https://u3ainkennet.org.uk/really-usefuls/>

Volunteers welcome from longstanding members too! Thank you.

OTHER NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS – STORAGE FOR OUR EQUIPMENT

We have a number of items of equipment which support our meetings and events including several poster boards and posters about our groups, our u3a banner, a screen for presentations and our feather flag. At present these items are stored at home by several Committee members and more storage space is required now.

If you have space at home or in your garage and would be willing to help please contact chair@u3ainkennet.org.uk. Ideally the items would be stored in or near Marlborough where we hold most of our meetings.

MARLBOROUGH LITFEST PLUS WITH TONY ROBINSON: TUESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2025

Following the 2025 LitFest programme a special event with Sir Tony Robinson has been arranged for Tuesday 21st October 2025 at 7pm in Marlborough Town Hall.

Tony took the role of the iconic Baldrick in the *Blackadder* series and long-time presenter of *Time Team*, Robinson makes his fictional debut for adults with *The House of Wolf*: the first in a new historical series (*The House of Aethelwolf* series) spanning the Anglo- Saxons, Alfred the Great and the making of England. Published in September, this book is said to be perfect for fans of Ken Follett and Bernard Cornwell and has been praised by historian Dan Jones as 'A page-turner full historical intelligence, wit and heart'.

Tony is the author of over 30 children's books and several adult non-fiction books, including an autobiography, *No Cunning Plan*. An ambassador for the Alzheimer's Society since 2008, Robinson received a knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2013.

Tickets cost £15 and are available online here:

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/marlboroughlitfest/tony-robinson-the-house-of-wolf/e-agmeqk>
or from the White Horse bookshop.

MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE INVITATION FOR U3A IN KENNET MEMBERS TO THE ANNUAL '749 LECTURE'.

u3a in Kennet member David Du Croz will present the lecture on: '*The 749 – Stories behind the Names*'. Wednesday 12th November at 7.30pm in the Memorial Hall at the College.

In this centenary year of the Memorial Hall, the lecture will explore some of the stories of duty and service behind the names of the 749 from the Marlburian community who dies in the First World War, and in whose memory and honour the Hall was built.

David was educated at Winchester College and read History at Trinity College, Cambridge. On retiring from his final job at Head of History at Marlborough in 2007 he became involved in helping to co-ordinate the College's commemoration of the centenary of the First World War, in the course of which he co-produced the film '*The 749*' and co-wrote the book: "[Marlborough College and the Great War in 100 Stories](#)".

Registration is free of charge and members are invited to register with the College using the link

https://host.nxt.blackbaud.com/registration-form/?formId=f7816800-1d2d-492b-89d5-165c1e290181&envId=p-W-D4AJr_4UiKzfhFPRWhlg&zone=eur

St PETER'S TRUST TALK

St. Peter's church will host a talk about bronze sculpting on Thursday, October 30th at 6pm,

Richard is an inspiring and passionate speaker who will be talking about the beauty of bronze sculpture, the art of sculpting, as well as his work as Director of the Talos Art Foundry and gallery.

Tickets are £10 (to include a glass of fizz) and can be purchased via the St. Peter's website- <https://stpetersmarlborough.org.uk> with the proceeds contributing to the Church's building programme.

THE MERCHANT'S HOUSE EVENTS

Forthcoming events include 'Spooky Tours' for children at half-term. Available from Tuesday 28th October – Saturday 1st November, 10am – 4pm (last entry at 3pm).

<https://themerchantshouse.co.uk/event/spooky-tours/>

Christmas Wreath Making workshops are also being planned at The Merchant's House from 8th & 9th December 2025. Workshop: 10 – 1pm.

A Christmas Carol Comes to Life This Festive Season

This Christmas, the beautifully restored 17th century Merchant's House in Marlborough will be transformed into a magical world inspired by Charles Dickens' classic: *A Christmas Carol*.

Opening date: Tuesday 18th November, 10 – 4pm, last entry at 3pm (then Tuesday – Saturday each week until the end of December, 10 – 4p, last entry 3pm)

Meet Santa who will be taking a well-earned break from his North Pole travels to spend time with us on Saturday 29th November and again on Saturday 6 December, between 10am and 3pm. **For all events see:** <https://themerchantshouse.co.uk/events/list/page/2/>

u3a IN KENNET EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE u3ainkennet.org.uk/executive-committee/



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