



Newsletter

December 2025

CHAIR'S WELCOME



As we approach the end of the year, I reflect on another busy year in retirement and find how much the u3a has been part of my activities. I trust your experience of the u3a in Kennet has been just as fulfilling and enjoyable as well.

I hope you all have plans to spend the Christmas and New Year celebrations with family and/or friends or are looking forward to break away from the dullness of winter in this country! Hopefully, refreshed after the break, you will be anticipating enjoying the same or some different activities with our u3a next year.

To our Group leaders and all our other volunteers, I do hope you now make time for yourselves and enjoy the end of year's break; thank you for all you have done for the u3a in Kennet in 2025.

Wishing you all a very festive Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Mike Morison, Chair, u3a in Kennet



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Coffee Exchange:

10.15am, 22nd January
2026, Town Hall,
Marlborough

Kennet Talk,

2.15pm, 10th February
2026, Kennet Valley Hall,
Lockeridge

Coffee Exchange:

10.15am, 26th February
2026, Town Hall,
Marlborough

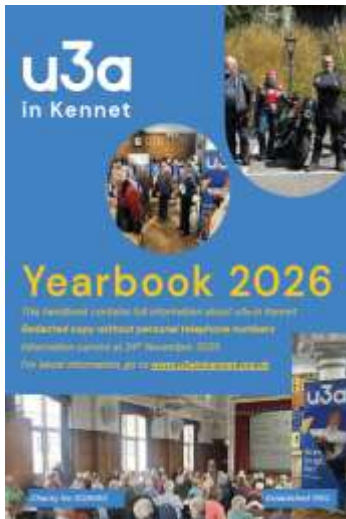
The copy date for the next Newsletter will be 14th January 2026 with contributions to:

newsletter@u3ainkennet.org.uk

Other useful links

u3ainkennet.org.uk and
www.facebook.com/u3ainken.net

Please "control and click" on links to visit suggested webpages



u3a IN KENNET 2026 YEARBOOK

Our u3a in Kennet 2026 Yearbook has just been published and a copy has been sent to all members.

The Yearbook contains details about each of our groups; their meeting arrangements and the Group Leaders' contact details as well as the dates of our Coffee Exchanges and Kennet u3a Talks.

A redacted version of the Yearbook has been placed on our website too here: <https://u3ainkennet.org.uk/u3a-in-kennet-yearbook-2026/>

Thank you to all of our Group Leaders who have contributed to the Yearbook and we hope you will find it helpful in finding out more about our many groups and activities.

COFFEE EXCHANGE NOVEMBER 2025

'THE LIVERY COMPANIES OF LONDON EXPLAINED' by ALAN HAWKINS

Our November Coffee Exchange was another well attended session and members were interested to learn about the history of the Livery Companies.

Alan had been the Chief Executive of the British Retailers Association and subsequently became Master of the Worshipful Company of Builders Merchants in 2023-24. He retains an active interest in several boards, trusts and pension schemes.

He began by tracing the very early history of the Companies dating from 1155 and then through the subsequent Tudor period with the early guilds and the designation of 'Freemen' who were eligible to work in the City of London. In turn 'Freemen' could become 'Liverymen' after training.

Some of the earliest trades to be established were the weavers in 1125 followed by bakers (the origin of the 'baker's dozen'), grocers, mercers and drapers. The rivalry between the latter two resulted in the saying of being at '6s and 7s) with agreement to alternate their position on an annual basis.

No new Livery companies were formed between 1708 until 1928 and the creation of the Master Mariners' company in recognition of their contribution to the 1st World War. The most recent companies include Nurses, Entrepreneurs and Communicators.

All Liverymen attend Livery Hall ceremonies including the silent robing events.

We learnt about the current work of the Companies spanning from support for charities including those working in the fields of mental health and rehabilitation of ex-prisoners and 250 London cabbies taking a group of disadvantaged children to Disney World in Paris.

The coat of arms of the Builders Merchants' Company features an owl (wisdom) and a pelican (representing homes) holding images of building materials: a brick and a log. The company has

links with each of the three armed forces including the Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment. The Company funded the anointing screen for the coronation of King Charles 111.

The Livery Companies and the London City Corporation embraces its rich history with pride and visible displays of status including the splendid robes as well as the beautiful and historic Halls such as the Drapers' Hall which can seat 200 for dinner and the Mansion House with their richly decorated rooms and ceilings, silverware and splendid events. The latter being of particular note such that Alan's final slide drew our morning to a close with a picture of him struggling to fasten his jacket buttons after his year in office and many lavish dinners.

CHRISTMAS COFFEE EXCHANGE EXTRAVAGANZA, 11th DECEMBER 2025



Once again this year the Marlborough Community Choir opened our event with a selection of carols and Christmas songs along with some audience participation.

The Choir was raising funds for British Ukraine Aid and have provided the following website link for members wishing to make an online donation: <https://british-ukrainianaid.org/make-a-donation/> and a QR code:



Following the Choir's contribution we enjoyed a Christmas miscellany.

Mike Brook who entertained us with a seasonal mix of festive poems and readings, humorous songs and a pantomime act in which several of our members participated revealing a hidden depth of acting talent!

Mince pies and coffee were served by our 'Usefuls' Group members adding to the festive atmosphere.

NEWS AND UPDATES FROM OUR GROUPS

TABLE TENNIS GROUPS

Our four table tennis groups held their combined Christmas lunch rather early this year, on 3rd December at Marlborough Golf Club.



Group Leader Simon Caudell explained that 'Once our party of thirty had eaten so much they could no longer move I inflicted a quiz on them. This included a cryptic crossword; only a small one but nonetheless annoying.'

The cryptic crossword follows on the next page and the answers will be published in the January 2026 edition of your Newsletter.

Eight Words of Eight Letters

1		2			3		4
5							
6							
7							

Across

- 1 & 7 My Pooh Bear and his funny song.
 5 One using radio to record direction, right?
 6 Car heading for Dover in A50 South, say.
 4 As a rule there's no room, friend.

Down

- 1 Man in pub is an acrobat.
 2 This year, mad frenzy.
 3 It's suggestive ... of an Italian suppository.

BRIDGE ONLINE COURSE WITH THE NATIONAL u3a BRIDGE GROUP

If you are interested in learning how to play bridge there is a Beginners Bridge Course online which is run by the u3a Bridge Subject Adviser twice a year. The next course will be starting soon – further details are available here: <http://www.bridgewebs.com/u3abridgegroup>"

IT WORKSHOP UPDATE



Plans are underway for our next I.T. workshop in the new year.

Our sessions are designed to support users of both Apple and Android smartphones, laptops and tablets and to provide help with mastering the basics of using the technology.

Further details will follow next month.

WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

The Wine Appreciation Group had a Christmas party recently. Gordon and Angela Hutt were retiring after running the group for 10 years and handing over the group to the committee consisting of Maddie Urquhart (organising events), Dave Foulkes (managing membership) supported by David Hammond, Frans Scheepers will handle day to day finances and Alastair Sheen is the treasurer.

The group meets at Marlborough rugby club on the last Thursday of the month. The events are always very popular and new members are welcome. Please contact wag@u3ainkennet.org.uk for further information.



Photo: Hamzah

Gordon and Angela at their 'retirement' event.

OBITUARY

MILES HOWARTH

Miles Howarth passed away on 21st November after a short illness.

The funeral will be held on Monday, December 22nd at 12 noon at the North Wiltshire rematorium, Swindon Road, Royal Wootton Bassett, Swindon, SN4 8ET and will be followed by a wake at Bassett Down Golf Complex, Hay Lane, SN4 9QW.

OTHER NEWS for MEMBERS

Governance and Compliance

I marvel at the way, our chair, Mike and his predecessors, including Jill, David and Graham during my time managed to guide and support this growing community we call u3a in Kennet for, as its membership has grown so considerably, so has the official paperwork, legal rules, guidance and national requirements. I learned many years ago that good governance was to select the best offers to help, delegate with care and then leave them to do their task. Do not interfere unless necessary or help is requested.

Good governance includes well organised committee meetings and then any issues of compliance can be achieved by a light hand on the tiller. According to a recent speech from the Charity Commission, the best foundations such as u3a, are those "that are engaged with their beneficiaries and deeply embedded in their communities. They consult widely, they listen carefully, and they design their work shaped by lived experience and genuine engagement with those they seek to help." This is, I believe, a good description of u3a in Kennet; the members, their group leaders and executive committee of trustees.

Best wishes to you all as we head into a changeable forthcoming 2026.

Jeff Hide [Compliance] Email: charities@u3aikkennet.org.uk



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



Mike Morison, Chair,
*Membership & Beacon
Administrator*



David Pocock
Joint Vice Chair



Gavin Maxwell-Hart, *Joint
Vice Chair*



Alastair Sheen
Treasurer



Annette Weaver, *Secretary*



Jill Chambers
Speaker Secretary



Alison Dewar
Committee Member



Jeff Hide
Compliance



Georgie Neville
Committee Member



Hamzah
Technology



Julian Beames *Co opted
member, Information and
Publicity*