



Newsletter

March 2026



CHAIR'S WELCOME

By the time you have settled down to read this latest Newsletter (thank you to Jill Turner for carrying on producing this excellent publication) you will, no doubt, be looking forward to the Easter break.

Photo: Susan Turner

Hopefully, the u3a in Kennet is providing you with plenty to do, especially with the outdoor and activity groups, enjoying the Spring sunshine (well, it was shining when I wrote this!) and longer days.

I wish you all and your families a very happy Easter.

Mike Morison, Chair, u3a in Kennet

GROUP LEADERS' LUNCH FRIDAY 27th MARCH 2026

Group leaders and co-leaders are our lifeblood. To show appreciation and thanks, they have all been invited to a simple lunch in Kennet Valley Hall this Friday (27th March 2026). Discussion is planned, as well as chat – and we hope all our members will enjoy the extra sparkle this might give!

If you, too, are interested in supporting your group – or your u3a – in this way please get in touch. It's been 3 years since our previous thank you event and since then many new leaders and co-leaders have stepped forward to support our self-help ethos. Training and guidance is there to help. Contact groups@u3aikkennet.org.uk

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Coffee Exchange:

10.15am, 26th March 2026,
Town Hall, Marlborough.
Savernake Park
Community Farm, Mark
Jankovich

Coffee Exchange:

10.15am, 23rd April 2026,
Town Hall, Marlborough

Kennet Talk; 2.15pm 5th
May 2026

The copy date for the next Newsletter will be 17th April 2026 with contributions to: newsletter@u3aikkennet.org.uk

Other useful links

u3aikkennet.org.uk and www.facebook.com/u3aikkennet

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

COFFEE EXCHANGE, 26th FEBRUARY 2026 DAVID DU CROZ, 'MAGNA CARTA – MYTHS AND REALITIES

David opened his talk by asking the audience what does *Magna Carta* mean? Several voices came up straight away with – *The Great Charter*. David agreed and went on to spend the next thirty minutes disproving that it was so great. Certainly there was a document sealed – not signed – at Runnymede in 1215 but it was almost immediately overtaken by other treaties and events. It seems that judging events which took place over 800 years ago can only meaningfully be done if taken in the context of the times and understanding the real motives of those involved.



(It is interesting to note that it is the United States who have paid for the very impressive memorial at Runnymede not the English. . Perhaps they are unhappy that we have no written constitution and are looking for something to mirror their own Declaration of Independence)

Interpretations are therefore always possible, and it is one of the roles of the historian to sort out what can only be the most likely truths.

Photo: Hamzah

David du Croz is a historian who spent his whole career imparting knowledge and he continues to do this in his retirement. He gave a stimulating talk with a lot of background information and entertaining illustrations. Like all good pedagogues, David left his audience prepared to question what are considered the accepted facts of history. If you were not able to attend the talk it is available here: <https://youtu.be/Yc2tJW8GQPA>

NEWS AND UPDATES FROM OUR GROUPS

AMERICAN HISTORY AND JAZZ APPRECIATIONS GROUPS

On April 21 the American History Group and the Jazz Appreciation Group will be holding a joint session at the Friends Meeting House in the Parade.

The Jazz Group's leader Clyde Nancarrow will give a presentation on the early history and development of Jazz, from its origins in early 20th century New Orleans to its breakout as a worldwide phenomenon. He will be exploring the impact of jazz on society as it became the first manifestation of black popular culture to achieve mainstream acceptance in the US and elsewhere, accompanied by illustrative audio. Any u3a in Kennet member who would like to attend as a guest of the AHG and the JAG will be welcome, space permitting, on a first come, first served basis. Please apply to Alastair Sheen at treasurer@u3ainkennet.org.uk

DAY TRIP GROUP – LONDON VISIT

March 4th was the fourth time I'd been to London with u3a in Kennet. Each trip seems to be better than the last, not because the organisation improves or because we find more things to see, it's more the spirit the Day Trip Group members bring to the u3a trips. On the way back to Marlborough everyone scribbled down where they had been, what they had seen as well as where they'd eaten! It's a fascinating list.

We arrived in Kensington at 10.15 on a lovely spring morning. The coach doors opened – and suddenly all 58 people had gone. Some disappeared into the V&A to see the Marie Antoinette Exhibition. Those who'd not been to the V&A Café before were delighted to have coffee in the majolica tiled rooms of the world's oldest museum café (1868). Prince Albert's other museums were also visited: the Natural History Museum which still has the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition and the Science Museum which was showing City of Science: London 1500–1800. One member made her way to the British Museum and visited the Samurai Exhibition. One couple had joined the trip specifically to visit Leighton House (Frederic, Lord Leighton 1830–1896) in Holland Park. Leighton House showcases C19th British art and an Arab Hall decorated with C17th Syrian tiles. Someone else found the Postal Museum which was very interesting. London is full of quirky museums.



Photo: Heather Lee: The Marie Antoinette exhibition at the V & A Museum

The art galleries were popular especially the Tate Britain where the acclaimed Turner & Constable Exhibition is running. Some went to see Seurat and the Sea at the Courtauld, a small but beautiful collection. Others went to the National Portrait Gallery, the Tate Modern and the Hayward gallery. One member discovered, and much enjoyed, the Rosa Wylie Exhibition at the Royal Academy. The Banksy Limitless Exhibition has been extended and the members who went said it was a highlight.

One couple who, after touring the Legal Quarter in the City, went into Two Temple Place and found that they also had a very good temporary art exhibition.

Places of Worship visited included Westminster Abbey, the Temple Church, Brompton Oratory and St Clement Danes. Members who wanted sunshine wandered in Hyde Park to admire the great drifts of daffodils and the ducklings waddling the banks of the Serpentine.

But no-one can dedicate themselves to culture for seven hours non-stop. Kensington bistros were visited, one member had lunch at Rules in Covent Garden and some anonymous members enjoyed champagne and oysters in Harrods. We ate at Aram, a Syrian restaurant in Somerset House and I definitely recommend the Zaatar croissant.



Photo: Harrods Heather Lee



Photo: Seurat exhibition, Courtauld, Kate Morrison

A little retail therapy is always good. Harrods and its fabulous Food Hall was inspected. One person hopped on a bus and found the Apple Store and another visited the lovely Divertimenti kitchen shop.

The journey back to Marlborough was an adventure. Part of the A4 was closed resulting in a tortuous journey through the dark lanes of Ramsbury where we met another coach head-on. The drivers' driving skills, squeezing past each other with an inch to spare, were remarkable.

We had a lovely day and so, perhaps in the autumn?



PHOTO COMPETITION FOR MEMBERS

Alison Dewar asks for any suggestions as to what the photograph shows.

It was taken when planning a u3a in Kennet walk.

Answers please (serious or funny) by the end of April to newsletter@u3ainkennet.org.uk

OTHER NEWS AND INFORMATION for MEMBERS

CPR AND DEFIBRILLATOR TRAINING

A defibrillator and CPR training session will be held on Saturday 16th May 2026 from 10.00 to 12 noon at Kennet Valley Hall. u3a in Kennet members are invited to attend including anyone who has attended previously. Please contact jillturner@u3ainkennet.org.uk to reserve a place.

I.T. SKILLS WORKSHOP REMINDER

The next IT Workshop will be held in St Peters Church, Marlborough (at the other end of the High Street from the Town Hall) on Thursday, April 16th at 10.15am. We will have a few 'experts' on hand who will be able to help you with both Apple and Android products working on the assumption that there is 'no such thing as a stupid question'!

If you would like to have help with your smart phone or tablet, please let me, Mike Morison, know via morison_2017@outlook.com.

We are using St Peters as it has plenty of room, a good Wi-Fi set-up, a well-stocked cafe, and is an excellent town facility which could do with our support.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING: SECOND STRENGTH AND BALANCE COURSE

Following the success of our first set of Strength and Balance classes I have arranged a further course exclusively for u3a in Kennet members. The 5 week course on strength and balance will be held on Friday afternoons from 3 – 4pm starting on 17th April 2026 at the Jubilee Centre 28 High Street, Marlborough, SN8 1LW. The sessions are suitable for members of all abilities and will be delivered by former Paralympian Chris Hunt Skelley MBE with up to 10 places available at a cost of £30.00 for the 5 week course.

Please contact : jillturner@u3ainkennet.org.uk for more information and to reserve a place.

ANOTHER VENUE FOR u3a in KENNET GROUP MEETINGS

Marlborough Tennis is offering use of their Club House to local groups for meetings free of charge. The Club House is situated on the first floor with space for groups of approximately 25 – 30 people. Kitchen facilities are available as well as a large screen for presentations.

Please note that at present the House does not have a lift for disabled access. The Club is located on Port Hill and share the entrance with the Marlborough Golf Club. For further details please see the website: <https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/MarlboroughTennis>

In addition to games of tennis the courts are also available for other outdoor activities. For further information please contact Peter May: <p.pmay@btinternet.com>

THE MERCHANTS HOUSE, MARLBOROUGH

The Merchant's House will present '**History Live**', a week-long festival celebrating the past Monday 20 April – Saturday 25 April celebrating history in all its forms. This inaugural event promises something for everyone: from engaging lectures and a walking tour of Marlborough to visits to Wilton Windmill and Shaw House.

- An exclusive audience with renowned archaeologist Phil Harding
- A special screening of A Kingdom in Chaos at The Parade Cinema
- Experience a magical twilight tour of The Merchant's House
- Live music from Andrew Rumsey
- And a virtual tour of The Merchant's House New York

History Live invites visitors to step back in time, explore local heritage, and experience history in a dynamic, interactive way. Organisers hope this marks the start of a landmark annual event for Marlborough. (The Merchants House in Partnership with North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust and Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust)

See the website for further details <https://themerchantshouse.co.uk/book-now/>

MARLBOROUGH LIT FEST 2026

The LitFest have confirmed the first two authors for this year's 17th festival (24–27 September 2026): **Sir Anthony Seldon** and **Kit de Waal**, covering non-fiction and fiction. Award-winning author Kit de Waal will talk about her latest (sixth) novel at LitFest, alongside historian and educationalist Sir Anthony Seldon discussing his latest political biography about Rishi Sunak and his time as prime minister.

The full LitFest programme is currently being planned; more authors and festival events will be announced over the coming months. See here for details: [Marlborough LitFest](#)

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



**Mike Morison, Chair,
& Beacon Administrator**



**David Pocock
Joint Vice Chair & Events**



**Gavin Maxwell-Hart, Joint
Vice Chair & Outreach**



**Alastair Sheen
Treasurer**



Annette Weaver, Secretary



**Jill Chambers
Speaker Secretary**



**Alison Dewar
Groups and Really Usefuls**



**Jeff Hide
Compliance**



**Georgie Neville
Groups**



**Hamzah
Technology**



**Julian Beames Co-opted
member, Information and
Publicity**



**Kate Morrison Co-opted
member: Membership
Secretary**