

Newsletter

JUNE 2026

CHAIR'S WELCOME



Photo: Susan Turner

In this edition we include a couple of dates for your diaries: our 2026 Open Day and our Special Interest Day 2027 for which planning is already underway. Our interesting programme of events throughout the year is an important aspect of our activities in addition to our groups.

Thank you to all of you who make the u3a in Kennet the success that it is through your many and varied contributions.

Mike Morison, Chair, u3a in Kennet

I hope you are all enjoying the return to more seasonable weather as we move into the summer months.

As you read through this excellent newsletter (thank you, Jill), you will see obituaries of two personal friends who have recently passed away. It has made me reflect on the sadness of death, but also on the pleasure and interest our organisation gives to all of us in our retirement years.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Coffee Exchange:

10.15am 25th June 2026,
Town Hall, Marlborough.
The Commonwealth War
Graves Commission, Tony
Hearn

Coffee Exchange:

10.15am 16th July 2026,
Town Hall, Marlborough

Kennet Talk:

2.15pm 22nd July 2026
Kennet Valley Hall

The copy date for the
next Newsletter will be
18th July 2026 with
contributions to:

newsletter@u3ainkennet.org.uk

Other useful links

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

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

COFFEE EXCHANGE, 21st MAY 2026, MARLBOROUGH TOWN HALL

'From Dereliction to Regeneration'

Martin Holliss, Chairman of the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust, came to talk about bringing a UK canal back to life. One of the vice chairman of u3a in Kennet, Gavin Maxwell-Hart, is one of his fellow Trustees and Gavin introduced the session and joined in the presentation. One of the earlier canals to be built, the Wilts and Berks is 70 miles long and is the Uks longest canal restoration project. The Trust faces many challenges. Not least is the negotiations they must have with



between 200 and 300 landowners who own the land through which the original canal passes. The Trustees will have to raise £300 million plus and this does not include the cost of diverting the canal around the proposed

White Horse Reservoir which may add £200 million to the overall costs. If you are interested in volunteering, raising money or just finding out more about the work of the Trust go to wbct.org.

Photo; Hamzah

GROUPS NEWS

ART HISTORY GROUP INVITATION FOR NEW MEMBERS

Art History Group 1 started twelve years ago, and in that time we've covered a range of topics from Turner to Surat and printmaking to stained glass.

In June 2026 we successfully started a Group 2, to offer space to members on our ever increasing reserve list. So far Group two's programme of talks has included Desert Island Art, Childe Hassan, Ken Done, Gabriel Munter, Euan Uglow, and Carl Larsson.

The topics are chosen by individual members. We don't follow a fixed curriculum or study a specific period or school. This approach has enabled the group to explore some unusual topics and artists. Discussions are prepared and led either by individuals or a small group. No experience necessary! Some members are new to the subject while others have a longstanding interest. We all learn from each other.

If anyone would like to join either of the groups there are spaces available in both. Group 1 meets on the 2nd Friday of each month and Group 2 on the 4th Friday. Both meet in the mornings at The Friends Meeting House on the Parade, Marlborough. For more information please contact Group Leaders

We look forward to welcoming some new members. **Jane Fox, Group Leader**

ART GROUP

Group Leader Jilly Hunter has shared some photos of the Art Group in action at their work



DAY TRIPS GROUP

Caerdydd glawog!

It was warm and wet, it rained all day but we had a good day in Cardiff. Some of us stayed near our drop-off point and visited the National Museum and its art galleries. The main draw was the beautifully presented Gwen John Exhibition. Her brother, Augustus, had several works on show in the main gallery along with a large collection of paintings bequeathed by Gwendoline and Margaret Davies in the 1950s. The works ranged from Cézanne, Pissarro, Turner, Monet, Manet, Picasso and Renoir to Auerbach, Bacon, Stanley Spencer and many more. There was also a bronze casting of Rodin's *The Kiss* and Degas' bronze sculpture: *Dressed Dancer*. It was a really rich experience. Not to be overlooked though – I'm told that the exhibition in the Natural History museum: *The Origin of Wales*, was outstanding.

Some people visited the Castle which has amazing Gothic interior decorations by William Burges, others tracked down the Victorian arcades and indoor market. Many people went down to Cardiff Bay, some on the Princess Katherine ferry and one hardy group, on foot. The Bay sounded very interesting and could be an alternative drop-off point for a future visit. Two members had booked a tour of the Senedd and watched a Parliament session. The French-Gothic Renaissance themed Pierhead building in the Bay was greatly admired. One member got the bus out to St Fagans National Museum – a place probably worth a visit of its own. Some joyful experiences included a ride on the Ferris Wheel, having a very long lunch at a Côte Brasserie, buying fresh calamari from a Sicilian Deli and the purchase of three pairs of Kurt Geiger shoes!

Thank you to everyone who came along. **Kate Morrison, Group Leader**



'The Kiss' Rodin *Photo; Kate Morrison*



Happy Shoppers! *Photo; Heather Lee*



Cardiff Castle Keep

Photo: Kate Morrison



Cardiff Castle interior

Photo: Vince Bedford

GLOBAL HISTORY GROUP

The U3A Global History Group has arranged a special showing for U3A of the new film of the **'The Odyssey'** at the Parade Cinema, Marlborough on Tuesday August 18th 2026 at 10:00.

Directed by the brilliant Christopher Nolan (director of Oppenheimer) and starring Matt Damon, Ann Hathaway, Tom Holland, Charlize Theron, Robert Pattinson & Zendaya. The film is based on Homer's epic poem 'The Odyssey' which chronicles the long and perilous journey of Odysseus from Troy to his home in Ithaca and including his encounters with Sirens, cyclops, Calypso and Circe.

Please see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Odyssey_\(2026_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Odyssey_(2026_film)) for background information about the film. All U3A members welcome. The price will be the £8 day rate for seniors. Further details will follow next month.

DOUBLE BOUNCE TENNIS AND TABLE TENNIS GROUPS

The **Double Bounce Tennis group** meets weekly on a Wednesday morning at 10am at the Marlborough Tennis Club, and is designed for those who probably cannot, or do not wish to, run around the court as fast as maybe they were once able to! The tennis is played on a normal sized court, but a double bounce is allowed before hitting the ball. The sessions last for one hour. The cost is £4 per session which includes coffee and cake. Equipment can be provided if needed. Do come along and try as it's great fun and good exercise.

The **Tuesday Table Tennis group** hires tables at Marlborough Leisure Centre. All levels of ability are welcome, including beginners. As well as improving your co-ordination and reactions, table tennis is a lot of fun, so do come along and try it. Equipment can be provided if needed. There is a small charge of £1 per person to cover the cost of the table hire, which is great value considering the benefits of playing for an hour!



Photos: Viv Gibbs

MORE U3A IN KENNET EVENTS

2026 U3A IN KENNET OPEN DAY

Our annual open day be held on 30th September 2026 at Marlborough Town Hall at which many of our groups will share information about their activities.

Keep the date free in your diary and spread the word among your friends and neighbours who may not yet have joined us as members. Encourage them to come along to meet with us and to find out more about what we do. Refreshments will be available too. You might find more information about other groups which you may wish to join too.

More details will follow.

SPECIAL INTEREST DAY 2027 WITH MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE

Our 4th joint Special Interest Day with Marlborough College will be held on **20th September 2027** (date to be confirmed). The very early planning is now underway and further information will be provided as the programme is confirmed.

The all day event will be held in the Memorial Hall at Marlborough College and we will be joined by students from the College and other local schools. As usual we will invite members from the other u3a's in the Bath and Wiltshire u3a Network to join us.

OBITUARIES

VERNON ASKEW

We are very sad to announce the recent death of Vernon (Vern) Askew. He was a successful businessman who, on retirement became a book dealer, having had a lifelong passion for literature & collecting books.

He was an active member of the u3a, involved in the Aviation, Bridge & Jazz appreciation groups. An erudite gentleman with a great sense of humour who will be greatly missed by his family & his wide circle of friends.

TONY SANT

We are also very sad to announce the death of Tony Sant in May.

Tony, with his wife Helen, moved to Marlborough a little over three years ago after a lifetime in engineering.

He was closely involved in the Aviation and Bus Adventures groups and was regularly seen at Coffee Exchanges with Helen, cheerfully serving our refreshments as a member of the Really Usefuls. He too will be sorely missed by his family and friends.

OTHER NEWS FOR MEMBERS

STRENGTH AND BALANCE COURSE – FUTURE COHORTS

Following the success of the first two u3a in Kennet Strength and Balance courses at the Jubilee Centre in Marlborough planning is underway now for further courses each of 5 weeks beginning in the autumn after the summer holidays on Wednesday and Friday afternoons (dates and times to be confirmed).

Any member is welcome including those who have attended previously. Our trainer; former Paralympian Chris Skelley, MBE tailors each session to suit the abilities and requirements of the group.

CYBER FRAUD WARNINGS. SCAMS

Following the information which we shared last month about scams one of our members has notified us about advice which was recently published in the Guardian newspaper here:

<https://pilgrima.ge/p/the-faceless-voice>

'GREEN' INITIATIVES IN THE PEWSEY VALE

The Green Vale project, funded by the National Lottery for 2 years, was launched on 22nd of March 2025. The purpose is to share information about a variety of initiatives across all 26

Parishes in the Vale of Pewsey. Community surveys identified three issues that they want to address:

- Farming and Nature recovery
- Flooding and Water Quality
- Home energy efficiency (including Community energy).

1. Improving home energy efficiency talk Burbage Village Hall, Monday 22nd of June 19:00. FREE Focus on surveying your home to work out what needs doing, and how to achieve the best 'bang for your buck'. The talk will include case studies with examples of projects and the savings which were achieved.

2. Great Bedwyn Open Gardens, Sunday 28th June 14:00 to 17:00. Including some of the 24 rain gardens that capture, store and divert water from roofs to prevent the surge of rainwater into the drains and rivers as a means of improving the biodiversity and attractiveness of our gardens and village spaces with minimal cost and maintenance.

3. National Meadows at Jones's Mill Reserve, Saturday 4th July 2026 from 10:00 to 15:00 Dursden Lane, Pewsey, SN9 5JN . Guided walks • Spoon carving • Identifying and recording Wildlife • Children's activities. Dogs on leads welcome. Jones's Mill is 1km from the Centre of Pewsey and is managed by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

4. Green Vale event at the National Self Build and Renovation Centre, Thursday 9th of July, 2026. Lydiard Fields, Great Western Way, Swindon, SN5 8UB, Junction 16 on the M4

The NSBRC are putting on this special event from 10 to 12:30.

See the technologies available for improving insulation, controlled ventilation and energy efficiency of our homes – including historical and listed buildings. Bring your questions for the experts Tickets are £5/person and available via <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nsbrc-green-vale-session-thursday-9th-july-1000-to-1230-tickets-1991057794461?aff=oddtcreator>

5. Energy Training and Careers for young people.

Young people leaving school or university may be interested to see <https://energy-trust.co.uk/training-courses/>. There are lots of career opportunities for those interested in helping with the transition from fossil fuels to electricity.

MERCHANTS HOUSE MARLBOROUGH OPEN GARDENS, 28th JUNE 2026 (1 – 5pm)

Take a stroll through beautiful gardens and hidden floral gems on the Open Gardens trail – all within easy walking distance of Marlborough High Street.

One of the most important fundraising events in The Merchant's House calendar, Marlborough Open Gardens helps support the ongoing care and restoration of this remarkable historic house.

Enjoy sweeping lawns, vibrant flowerbeds, and charming courtyards while helping to preserve one of Marlborough's treasured heritage buildings.

Tickets: £10 in advance or £12 on the day.

For tickets in advance book please book here : <https://themerchantshouse.co.uk/book-now/> or purchase at the visitor desk in the House.

WHITE HORSE BOOKSHOP SUMMER SCHOOL AND MARLBOROUGH LIT FEST

For the latest news about the Summer School and the Lit Fest please see here: <https://www.whitehorsebooks.co.uk/the-white-horse-summer-school-2026> and <https://www.marlbroughlitfest.org/>

The award-winning author of *Empireland* and a repeat visitor to Marlborough LitFest, Sathnam Sanghera's latest book, *Tonight the Music Seems So Loud: The Meaning of George Michael*, is a kaleidoscopic portrait of one of Britain's best loved musicians.

Part biography, part social commentary of Britain in the 80s and 90s, Sanghera explores the extraordinary life and legacy of the late pop icon through issues of fame, sexuality, identity, immigration and belonging.



Photos: Lit Fest



Author Louisa Young carries the family torch following in the footsteps of her aunt Elizabeth Jane Howard's iconic *Cazalet Chronicles*.

Continuing the story of one of the most beloved families in British literature, familiar faces reappear and the legacy of the Cazalets carries on into the Swinging Sixties in *The Golden Hours* – the first of a new Cazalet trilogy. According to the *Sunday Telegraph*, "the Cazalets have earned an honoured place among the great saga families".

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**