



Newsletter

OCTOBER 2026

CHAIR'S WELCOME



Photo: Susan Turner

I was very sorry not to be able to welcome you to our recent AGM but was delighted to hear that so many of you did and enjoyed yet another of our excellent quarterly talks.

Our u3a seems to go from strength to strength and it is down to you, all our members, for giving your support to all our activities.

I hope you enjoy this month's Newsletter with more details of some of those activities.

Mike Morison, Chair, u3a in Kennet



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Coffee Exchange

19th November 2026
10.15 Town Hall,
Marlborough

Christmas Coffee Exchange

17th December 2026
10.15 Town Hall,
Marlborough

The copy date for the next Newsletter will be **21st November 2026** with contributions to:
newsletter@u3ainkennet.org.uk

Other useful links
u3ainkennet.org.uk and
www.facebook.com/u3ainkennet Please "control and click" on links to visit suggested webpages

u3a IN KENNET ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2026 Annual General Meeting was held on 20th October 2026 at the Town Hall in Marlborough. Despite the wet weather the meeting was well attended and quorate. Most unfortunately our Chair; Mike Morison was unwell and unable to attend and the meeting was chaired instead by Vice Chair Gavin Maxwell-Hart.

The Chair and Trustees' report reflected on another positive year for u3a in Kennet during which our total membership grew to 795 with 67 groups. We enjoyed another full programme of interesting speakers at our Coffee Exchanges and Kennet Talks. A new members' lunch and a Group Leaders Lunch were held too, along with another of our joint Special Interest Days with Marlborough College and two I.T. workshops for members.

Thanks were due to the Executive Committee members, the two other non Committee members who assist with the website and newsletter along with the 'Usefuls' who support our events with refreshments. Our Treasurer Alastair Sheen presented the Annual Accounts noting the healthy reserves although there had been a slight shortfall of income over expenditure due to the provision of the two lunches.

The elections to posts on the Committee were approved and the full list of members along with their photos are shown at the end of the Newsletter.

The AGM was followed by the Kennet Talk presented by Stephen Carr-Smith on the interesting subject of '**The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World**'.

U3A IN KENNET OPEN DAY, 30th SEPTEMBER 2026, TOWN HALL, MARLBOROUGH



Our 2026 Open Day was held on Wednesday 30th September at the Town Hall, from 10am to 1pm.

We were pleased to welcome members of the public as well as our own members who were interested to find out more about other Groups. Thank you to the 18 Group Leaders who were involved in the Open Day helping to introduce their group activities. Furthermore 9 new members signed up on the day with one further taking away our application form too.

Thanks are due to our Usefuls team members who kept us all supplied with tea and coffee during the event.

MARLBOROUGH HEALTH AND WELLBEING DAY, 3rd OCTOBER 2026



The annual Marlborough Health and Wellbeing Open Day was held on Saturday 3rd October 2026 in the Town Hall in Marlborough.

u3a in Kennet was represented by Committee Member Jeff Hide who is pictured below with Mayor of Marlborough; Councillor Mark Lusson along with Heather Croucher.

The event provided further local publicity for u3a in Kennet and its role in the local community.

GROUPS NEWS

NEW ADVANCED FRENCH GROUP

Le groupe de français avancé de l'u3a, « Français 2 », serait ravi d'accueillir de nouveaux membres ayant un très bon niveau de français, ainsi que des francophones natifs. Nous nous retrouvons tous les quinze jours le mardi, de 11h à midi au cinéma de Parade. Autour d'un café, nous discutons de sujets divers et variés de la boulangerie à la politique, en passant par la culture. Le prochain rendez-vous est le 10 novembre où nous discutons des derniers films de "De Gaulle".

Veuillez envoyer un mail à Cathryn – français2@u3aikkennet.org.uk si vous voulez nous rejoindre, ou venez au Parade mardi 10 nov.

NEW SHORT TENNIS GROUP

We are planning to set up a new u3a Short Tennis group if there is enough interest. This would take place at the Marlborough Leisure centre on a Monday afternoon between 3 and 4pm. Racquets and balls can be supplied if required.

Short Tennis (or mini tennis as it is sometimes known), is an easy and fun way to get into playing racquet sports. Short tennis courts are smaller than standard tennis, with a smaller net, so you won't need to run as far as you would on a full-sized tennis court! The pace is slower than standard tennis, which means it is a great way for mature adults to keep fit. You can work on your technique and build confidence up over time, at a gentler speed.

If you are interested in finding out more details, please email tabtentues@u3aikkennet.org.uk

NEW ORAL HISTORY GROUP

This month's Kennet Talk on the 'Seven Wonders of the Ancient World' showed just how much can be lost for ever over passing time. This is not confined to old valuable structures once

recognised as extraordinary and now gone, but it also applies to special things possessed today, that once gone, will not be saved unless we take care of them now.

This conclusion was reached by u3a in Kennet in 2019 and then Covid struck and we lost groups. One group in the process of preparation was the Oral History Group. Our own ancient Borough of Marlborough and its local villages possess not only a world heritage link to temples, tombs and henges of a sacred landscape but to indigenous inhabitants whose accent of the English language is established over a lifetime despite incomers, television and digital speech soaking into everyday conversation.

To save this wonderful language of the Wiltshire dialect I am considering re-forming an Oral History Group of just a few members who have a keen interest in recording history. Training to talk to others with prepared questions and answers will be part of the arrangements as will be the acquisition of appropriate recording devices. In due course we would hope to establish a library of information, histories and stories for use in u3a, town and village institutions and museums.

If you are interested and can spare some time to discuss, please contact me: Jeff Hide on mobile: 07792 10 2219 or email: charities@u3ainkennet.org.uk

FURTHER PLACES AVAILABLE – DOUBLE BOUNCE TENNIS GROUP

The Double Bounce Tennis group meets weekly on a Wednesday morning at 10am at the Marlborough Tennis Club (which is next to the Golf Club). The group has been established for those who either 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, using standard rules, but the only difference is that a double bounce is allowed before hitting the ball. The sessions last for one hour and the cost is £4 per session, which includes coffee and cake. Equipment can be provided if needed. Do come along and join this friendly group as it's great fun and good exercise.

Please contact Anne or Viv for further information: walking.tennis@u3ainkennet.org.uk

VOLUNTEERING WITH OUR EVENTS

Thank you to Cathy Lawson and Juliet Bonser, who have stepped forward to help organise our catering for coffee exchanges, Kennet talks, our annual open day and other events.

Both are relatively new members of u3a in Kennet and it's great that they have joined in to help run the group. There is lots (but not too much) to do behind the scenes and we're very appreciative of being able to share this aspect of our collective volunteering.

Do say hello when you see them. And if you would like to help at events please contact usefuls@u3ainkennet.org.uk

DAY TRIP TO LONDON, 14th OCTOBER 2026, KATE LACEY, GROUP LEADER.

Sixty u3a in kennet members from the Day Trips Group visited London on a sunny October day. These are my jottings compiled from the notes people wrote on the journey back to Marlborough:

We went to the 'Renoir and Love' exhibition at the National Gallery. It was superb, although crowded having only opened on October 3rd. We also went to the Richard Dadd exhibition at the Royal Academy. Dadd isn't as well-known as I feel he should be, but it was great to see his most famous work, The 'Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke' (1855).

Another member who went to see Dadd made me smile when she said she later sat in the sun and enjoyed a glass of wine in the V&A courtyard. That summed up the value of having an easy day out – seeing what you want to see, doing what you want to do and then being coached home again in comfort.



Photo: Kate Lacey, The Royal Academy



Photo: Queen Elizabeth II Wedding Dress, Kings Gallery

Sheila Hanson

Others stuck to the Museum Mile with the V&A being favourite but the Science Museum and its Smithsonian Starstruck Experience (with virtual reality headset) was lauded. Several people spent a lot of time in the Natural History Museum. I think they were brave to mingle with, what seemed to be, hordes of school children.

Someone saw pelicans in St James's Park – what a treat. One member had managed to get a ticket to the King's Gallery (sold out for months) to see Queen Elizabeth II's dazzling wardrobe, including her wedding and coronation dresses.

Several people used the day to meet up with family and old friends. It was a lovely day to sit by the river with someone you haven't seen for a while.



Photo: Royal Greenwich, Lindsay Long



Photo: Tower Bridge, Lindsay Long

And for the adventurous: a small group went on a riverboat to Greenwich, saw the Painted Hall (1726), had an interesting wander and found the market as well as a very good Pie & Mash shop. Some people had picked up on recommendations made by members who'd been on the last London trip, for Leighton House and the museum in the Royal College of Music.

Other places visited included: the National Portrait Gallery, the Wallace Collection (Churchill's paintings), Apsley House (Duke of Wellington's residence), Somerset House, a guided tour of the Albert Hall and the enigmatic Frida Kahlo at the Tate Modern. Retail therapy wasn't forgotten – and included Harrods and Fortnum and Mason.

The next London trip is planned for April 2027.

OTHER NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS

SCAMS / PHISHING EMAILS WARNINGS

If you receive an unexpected email for example offering products or even with threatening language, follow the guidance from the National Cyber Security Centre:

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/top-tips-for-staying-secure-online>

- Do **not** reply or click on any links
- If you can, **forward** a suspected scam or phishing email to report@phishing.gov.uk which is a government agency for reporting scams and phishing emails.
- You will receive an email from the Fraud office to acknowledge your email. The do not provide updates on your specific email/s
- Use your email '**Block sender**' option
- **Delete** the email and remember to remove it from your 'junk' box

Hamzah, our Technical Committee member warns about spam emails:

'I notice that users of our u3a@u3a.org.uk emails are currently receiving a fair number of spam emails. Most worrying are the scam emails which can be nasty. I try to catch them at our servers but unfortunately the email structures changes frequently so a few do get through. Importantly, there are particular spam emails which asks you to change your password or telling you about email restriction. Please **DO NOT** click the link on the email as it may install a virus. Please **delete** the emails when you get it and **inform me** at technical@u3a.org.uk.'

USING A.I.

You may have heard about a recent scare with regards to AI being able to access data websites world-wide. Reassuringly, we were informed that our u3a Beacon database was temporarily shut down but has now been reinstated with a suitable level of protection. We have been informed that all your personal data was 'kept completely safe and secure'.

The national u3a Trust provides a free resource which includes information about using AI. This is designed for new users, and details can be found on this website: [AI for Everyone – U3A Communities](#)

Regular online presentations are provided, where u3a members from across the country share their experiences of using AI and how it benefits their lives. There is also a monthly newsletter where latest news updates are shared. This is a great way of learning to safely get the best out of AI if you are a novice!

THE LATE ESTHER RANZEN – TRIBUTE IN 'u3a MATTERS' (NATIONAL PUBLICATION)

U3a in Kennet member Paul Foxall worked alongside the late Esther Rantzen on the BBC programmes 'Braden's Week' and 'That's Life'.

Paul has informed us that Sharon Parsons, editor of the national u3a Trust publication 'u3a Matters' is writing a fulsome article on Esther Rantzen in the Winter edition of the publication and that Paul's personal memories will be published in February 2027.

NATIONAL u3a TRUST – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2026

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Third Age Trust – the national organisation supporting all u3as across the U.K. – was held on Wednesday 14th October 2026.

The session included the presentation of the annual report and accounts and reports from the Chair of the Third Age Trust, the Chair of the u3a Council and a presentation from the new Head of Marketing. There was also a vote on a member submitted resolution calling on the board to conduct a formal consultation with u3as before undertaking any activity that would involve the Trust in advocacy, campaigning or public policy outside the promotion of the u3a movement.

All u3as are affiliated to the Third Age Trust which is a charity supporting local u3as and promoting u3a activities. It operates through a board of directors, the u3a Council which represents local u3as, and a small dedicated staff. The u3a Council comprises elected representatives of the 12 u3a regions including the Southwest Region.. Each region has Networks of u3as who come together for mutual support. There are also many national u3a Volunteers who support and organise many activities. The Third Age Trust provides various services to u3as including advice to committees, insurance, copyright licences and support for some IT services including BEACON, the membership management system. It publishes the regular u3a Matters magazine and organises some national events including the u3a Festival and various on-line learning events. It also offers members various discounts [through u3a Friends Extra](#).

You can find copies of the presentations, a complete video of the event and the Third Age Trust Annual Report and Accounts here: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/agm-2026>

ITEM OF LOST PROPERTY



The trolley shown in the photo was left behind in the Town Hall following our Open Day on 30th September.

Please contact newsletter@u3ainkennet.org.uk if you have any information as to the owner.



Photo: Susan Turner 'Autumn leaves'.

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
Information and Publicity



Kate Lacey Membership
Secretary