Issue 104 **September/October 2026**

u3a Knole

learn laugh live



Photo credit: Bryan Rawlins.

Chairman's message

As I wrote in the July newsletter, preparations are well under way for our Open Afternoon on **Monday 28th September**. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes to organise a fun and informative afternoon and so I hope as many of you as possible will try to come along and bring a friend or neighbour to introduce them to u3a.

I recently heard someone say they were dreading retirement because they would have nothing to do and I felt like shouting at the radio 'Join u3a, you'll never be short of having something to do and lovely people to share your time with!' Being part of this wonderful community is good for our health as well as your social life - spread the word, make sure others know about it too!

Debbie Magness

Chairman

London Walks 1



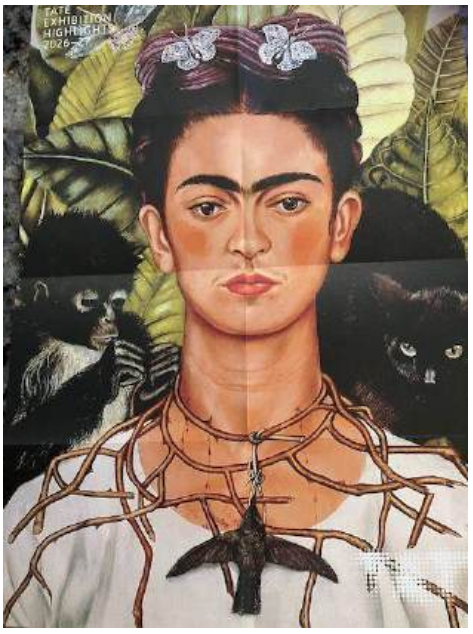
In July we braved the hot weather and walked from The Angel. Starting with a stop at an Austrian cafe (strudel was eaten), we then walked along the Regents Canal finishing at Victoria Park where we found a shady spot by the cafe to have our picnic. With ice creams on the journey home the day was a great success.
We had a great walk from Angel in August , luckily the weather was not too hot. Our members always plan our own walks and members can take a picnic so it is a reasonably priced day out.
Leslie Tibbitts.



London Studies 2

Seven of us visited the Thames Police Museum at Wapping recently. Founded in 1798 The Thames River Police is the oldest continuously serving police force in the world. Our guide gave a very informative talk about the force's origins right through to the present day. There was also time to look at the interesting exhibits on display at the museum ranging from different types of knots, historic documents
and uniforms. Lunch was in the nearby Captain Kidd pub and restaurant converted from a
nineteenth century bonded coffee warehouse. William Kidd was a notorious seventh century pirate, later executed. Despite the very hot day, the party was able to enjoy a steady breeze from the River Thames.
Brian Frow

Gallery Studies1 met in July to discuss the Tate Modern exhibition of "Frida: the making of an icon" and then visited this very popular exhibition in August. It embraced the whole of Frida Kahlo's life although there were only 39 of her art works. However, the combination of photographs, works by her Mexican contemporaries plus some of her impactful costumes bulked out the exhibition, following the subtitle of the exhibition. This was further enhanced by a couple of galleries of international modern works, which were directly influenced by Frida.The final gallery was devoted to how she had been commercialised over the last few decades with almost every aspect of merchandising you can think of and then we exited into the gift shop of.....Fridaware!
Brenda Johnson



Mahjong2



Would you like to learn something new or rekindle your past love for Mahjong? Mahjong is a game for mainly 4 or 3 players. The aim is to be the first player to collect a set of four defined groups of three or four tiles & a pair, or certain special hands. Originally a Chinese game which has been adapted for the Western style which we play.
We're a relatively new group learning the basics & intricacies of this fascinating pastime. We don't score or bet on the games but have a good time challenging ourselves to find the best (& hopefully winning!) hand.
We have a monthly meeting at The Bell, Kemsing on the second Monday afternoon 2-4pm each month & occasionally interim meetings at our homes for anyone available on the date.
We'd love some new members to join us- do contact me if you're interested.
Nikki West mahjong2@knoleu3a.org.uk

Garden Group

The August visit was to Great Dixter Gardens in Northiam. Despite the hot summer, the garden was still a glorious array of colour, overgrown hedges and paths with plenty of interesting plants. The cafe there sells yummy food too!
Next month….Long Barn in Weald.
Julie Stevens

MOT3 has been less busy than usual partly due to the hot weather and there is less on during August. Our list since the last Newsletter: a nice lunch at Chart Farm Kitchen. Dinner at The Never Say Never followed by a visit to The Oast to See Gentleman Jack. Pie and Pint evening at The Kentish Rifleman. Lunch at No8 - the food there was freshly cooked and very tasty.
The trip to Polesden Lacey and the proposed trip to Allington Castle had both been cancelled due to heat. Allington Castle in particular is mainly a garden tour of 1.5 hours and we didn't think the garden would be at its best this year.
We went to lunch at Poult Wood on Sunday 6th August. Next event The Stag Plaza to see Into the Woods on Friday 19th. Then it will be Being Human in an Age of Intelligent Machines at The Pamoja Hall, Sevenoaks School on 23rd September. This event is free but places should be booked. On 24th September we are going to see The Misanthrope also in the Pamoja Hall.
Marian O'Boyle



Painting Group 2

A few pictures from Brian Heyburn above. We need more people to keep our group (2) going forward. Contact: Brian Heyburn. paintdraw2@knoleu3a.org.uk



London Studies 4

The group recently visited Stephen's House and Gardens in Finchley, the home of Henry 'Inky' Stephens. It was built in the 1870's and was one of the earliest concrete structures in England. Henry's father had founded the very successful and profitable Stephen's Ink Company in 1832. Stephen's ink had multiple uses including across government for all legal documents as well as domestically and in schools. It was also used worldwide. Now run by a Trust, the house itself has had a diverse history as a military hospital, public library and council offices. Threatened with demolition and redevelopment in the 1980's by Barnet Council, it was saved as a result of a campaign spearheaded by the unlikely pairing of MP for Finchley, Margaret Thatcher and local resident Spike Milligan. Stephens himself was a classic polymath - inventor, chemist, politician and businessman. He used innovative techniques in the house including the introduction of electricity through a system of piped rainwater harvesting from a concrete water tower at the top of the garden and used to drive a turbine in the cellar. It is said that it was the first house in England to use electricity although this is disputed! The house has had alterations both internally and externally since being built and it was a fascinating tour. We followed this with an enjoyable buffet lunch which was an optional extra to the visit. Our guide was excellent - well-informed and entertaining - and it was a visit that certainly met and probably exceeded our expectations.
Pauline Gibbons



MOT 1 relaxing during races at Lingfield. We all put in £10. We have been going once a year for a long time. Last year we were at a loss and carried forward £40. This year there were 8 of us & we all got our £10 back & £20 to carry forward to next Year!
Val Parker

Historic Buildings 1

Our most recent visits were on some of the hottest days this summer. In July the visit was to Strawberry Hill House. An interesting building in the Gothic Revival style. The building was started by Horace Walpole in 1749 and altered over the next 30 years. It includes a Robert Adam fireplace. Getting home caused problems for some members as trains were cancelled due to the heat and trespassers on the line.





In August we went to Rochester Cathedral and Rochester Castle. The Cathedral was pleasantly cool and the guide was exceptional in her knowledge and her presentation of it. The castle was hotter as it is in the open with little shade. Quite a few of the group retreated after a while back into the cool of the Cathedral and watched as a wedding party made their way through the nave. The other braver souls did a more thorough exploration of the castle as evidenced by the photos.
Jacquie Martin

BIRDWATCHING GROUP

7 of our number made it to Cliffe Pools. This is an RSPB site near Rochester with several large salt water lagoons, freshwater pools and grassland. A network of nature trails allows visitors to explore all areas. We followed the long route round the site hoping to see more birds that way, but we were disappointed to discover that a number of the smaller shallower pools had completely dried up in the heatwave! Nevertheless despite it being a rather blustery sort of day, we did manage to record 29 different bird species seen or heard (and sometimes identified with the help of the Merlin App!). They were as follows:-
Chiffchaff, Wren, Blackbird, Blackcap, Little Egret (pictured below), Grey Heron, Robin, Jackdaw, Cuckoo, Carrion Crow, Cetti's warbler, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Goldfinch, Dunnock, Herring Gull, Rooks, Black Headed Gull, Shelduck, Mallard, Spoonbill, Mute Swan, Oystercatcher, Egyptian Goose, Lapwing, Avocet, Skylark, Kestrel, and the star of the day was a Buzzard (clutching a rat in his claws) which flew right above us as we walked along the path.





We also spotted a Cinnabar Moth, a Damsel fly and a Lackey Moth caterpillar (also pictured here) Thanks to Jim for the excellent photos!
After our long walk we repaired to a local cafe for a restorative drink before heading back. Overall a very pleasant day and no rain!

7 of us made a visit to the Sevenoaks Wildlife reserve on 10th July. We chose to go there rather than Stodmarsh as there was much more shade available and the weather was very warm indeed.
We were rewarded with some lovely sightings from the Carter hide of a kingfisher fishing in the North lake and of many dragonflies and damselflies from the main hide, plus the largest collection of geese I think I've ever seen there!





Altogether we saw 18 Species of birds, namely:- Coot, Tufted Duck, Kingfisher, Mallard, Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Wood Pigeon, Great Crested Grebe, Lapwing,Black Headed Gull, Cormorant, Egyptian Goose, Moorhen, Red Kite, Little Ringed Plover, Grey Heron, Pied Wagtail, Carrion Crow.
And we also saw the following insects: Southern Hawker Dragonfly, Emperor Dragonfly, Black-tailed Skimmer Dragonfly, Banded Demoiselle Damselfly, Red Admiral Butterfly, Gatekeeper Butterfly.
Once again Jim took the lovely pictures, and we enjoyed a very worthwhile visit on a very hot day!

Thank goodness the recent refurbishment of the visitor centre cafe included air conditioning!!
Ann Windiate





Vacancies:

French Improvers Group meets in Riverhead, and would be pleased to have new members. Contact Rose(mary)Holstein: frenchimprovers2@knoleu3a.org.uk

The Cooking Group are looking for new members, for information contact : Avril Steer: cookeryandbaking@knoleu3a.org.uk

Current Affairs

Would like another couple of members. Here is an outline of the Group!
We meet in the Slater Room, Christ Church Sevenoaks, alongside Sevenoaks Station. On the first Monday of the month at 1.30pm.
At each meeting we review the recent events of the previous weeks and discuss the situations and possible outcomes. Very informal.
The Draft agenda is circulated a few days before the meeting. Additionally members may if they wish present anything of particular interest to them .
David Small : currentaffairs@knoleu3a.org.uk

Sevenoaks Literary Festival - a wonderful local event celebrating its 25th anniversary of bringing world class authors to the town. This year's festival runs from September 26th - October 4th and has a host of events and speakers that I think will be of interest including Prue Leith, Caroline Quentin, Gyles Brandreth, Lady Anne Glenconner and Victoria Hislop to name just a few. We're also hosting a writers' workshop led by a multiple Sunday Times bestselling author for those with an interest in turning their writing aspirations into reality. As a not for profit event run entirely by volunteers.
Tickets are available to purchase at:
https://www.ticketsource.com/sevenoaks-literary-festival-2026 or www.sevlitfest.com or https://sevlitfest.com/2026/05/23/2026-dates/
Miriam Nevill - Sevenoaks Literary Festival

Riviera Travel

Just a reminder that if you are booking a holiday with Riviera, please let them know at time of booking that you are a u3a member. At no cost to you, they will donate 10% of the cost of your holiday to Knole u3a. It's also useful to tell us because occasionally the payment goes astray and we've had to follow it up.

It is a really valuable way of boosting our funds….

One of our members took a holiday with Riviera this summer and on booking told them she was a member of Knole u3a. We have just received a commission from that holiday of just over £500, a significant sum!

General Meetings

Bat and Ball Community Centre, Crampton's Road, Sevenoaks TN14 5DN
between 2.00 and 4.00pm.

List of Speakers for 2026.

September 28: Open Meeting.

October 26 Health & Wellbeing and details of the Health and Wellbeing roadshow.
Sally Salter, a Health & Wellbeing Coach will be talking to Knole U3A in October 2026 on health, wellbeing and ageing well.

The Next Newsletter

Copy Date: 10 November 2026 newsletter@knoleu3a.org.uk
Copy for the Newsletter need not just be from the group contacts, anyone is welcome to contribute, copy date for the next issue is always mentioned at the end of each issue.