

u3a Knole

learn laugh live



Chairman's Report for Newsletter November 2024

There are lots of things I wanted to write about this month but I think I might have to choose or I risk taking over the whole newsletter leaving little room for the Groups to say what they have been up to!

You may or may not know about the Third Age Trust website, www.u3a.org.uk. It isn't the easiest website to navigate yourself around but it is worth exploring. They have online events that are free to join and a quick look at what is on in November shows there are live cookery demonstrations, a monthly session on AI, Laughter Yoga, A Deep Dive into the 1921 Census and many more, so do take a look. You can also join Interest Groups Online. Look under the Learn tab on the Home screen and you will find a list of online groups you can join. It costs £12 a year to join and after 31st October it only costs £6 until April so now might be a good time to try it. There is a u3a radio podcast broadcast every month which you can find on the website, or it's available on YouTube.

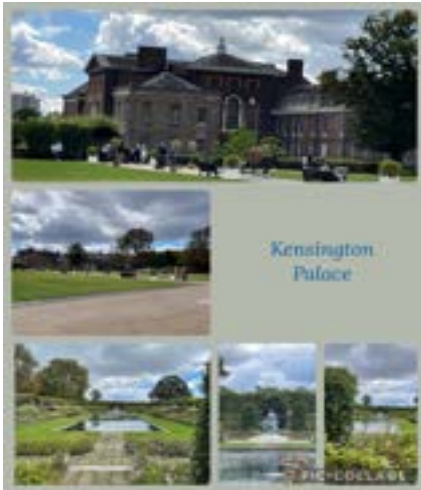
The other thing I want to mention, that you will find on the Third Age Trust website, is an interesting report called Learn to Live, you will find it on the Home page, just scroll down to the bottom. It was only published last month and looks at ageing in a post pandemic world. It emphasises the importance of non-formal learning and keeping mentally and physically active and extolls the benefits of belonging to u3a.

Linked with this idea I have been thinking about developing a Health and Wellbeing Group for Knole. It is really just a thought in my head at this stage but I wonder if we could create a group, a little like our Science For All group, where we invite speakers to come along and talk about aspects of health and wellbeing. Let me know if that is something you would be interested in. [Definitely not a forum, however, for talking about our aches and pains and medical issues!]

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all our new members. I have met many of you at New Members Meetings and have seen some of you at the Monthly General meeting and in other groups. I know you will enjoy being part of Knole u3a and hope you make many new friends.

Debbie Magness

London Studies 2



In September London Studies 2 enjoyed a very interesting visit to Kensington Palace. After the important coffee stop in the Palace cafe we were able to see the King's and Queen's state apartments and experience what it was like for Queen Victoria as a child - all with an audio guide.

There was also an exhibition about the overlooked people who have worked at the palace right up to the present day. Several of the group found time to visit the gardens and see the famous statue of Diana with her children. We rounded off our visit with lunch at The Spaghetti House.

A very successful day out.

Lesley Tibbitts

Medieval History

We had a very good outing to Chatham Historic Dockyards. Subsequent to a discussion about naval history at one of our meetings, we decided that a visit would be interesting - it certainly was. We spent a few hours looking round the various ships and the submarine. This is the group at the ropery, which made the rope for the rigging of the Victory, and which still operates as a commercial concern. It was all fascinating.

Pat Lowe



London Studies 1

Visited The Museum of Design in High St Kensington for the first meeting of its new season. Fittingly situated in the innovative space that was The Commonwealth Institute, the Museum looks forward as well as back. Several members remarked that they would make a return visit and we all felt that some of the designs took us back to our working days....no IBM golf ball typewriters though!

Brenda Johnson



Birdwatching Group

June visit to Riverside Country Park

This was less prolific for birdwatching than on previous visits partly due to the time of year and partly the state of the tides. But it was a pleasant day and we saw 13 different species there including herring and black headed gulls, egrets and oystercatchers.

The highlight of the day was actually in South Darenth where Peregrines had nested in the tower of the old paper mill, and the parents kindly made a sortie to find food enabling us to see the chicks peeking out of the nest box high above our heads! We were indebted to Gill Stubbs who lives close by for alerting us to this treat.

July visit to Stodmarsh

This was much more successful than the previous visit with good sightings of 25 different species including a rare glimpse of a bittern moving slowly around in the reeds near the first hide. Below are pictures of the marsh harrier, the Heron and the great crested grebe also seen there.



Our group is growing in numbers. 4 new members joined at the Open Day this year, and another had joined us in time for the start of our season in September, when we went to Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve.

Here we had another rare treat watching two kingfishers putting on a spectacular display of hover-fishing over the lake by the willow hide.



This picture was taken by Jim Solomon, one of our newest members. Altogether we saw 18 different species including lapwings, snipes, cormorants and a very rare Mandarin duck. Afterwards we met in the café and drew up a schedule of visits for each month up to next July. We now have 20 registered members, although less than half of these come regularly. But we are happy with that as we would have difficulty fitting into the hides if there were more of us!

October visit to Cliffe Pools

8 of us made the trip on a lovely day for birdwatching. We saw 23 different species including a weasel which briefly danced along the path in front of us. The pools attract a wide variety of ducks and waders and as our expert ornithologist wasn't on hand that day we had some amusing banter when trying to identify some of the birds! We just missed seeing the Waverley paddle steamer pass by when we finally reached the estuary. And I was thrilled when I correctly spotted a redshank on the way back!

Our visit in November is to Oare Marshes, and on to Conyer creek in December.

Ann Windiate



London Walks 1

Our recent walks have included a delightfully green/rural walk following the route of the 'New River' through the Islington area, across parks and emerging opposite Emirates Stadium, and an interesting walk following the route of the Old Roman Wall from Tower of London to Blackfriars. London's New River is neither new nor a river. Constructed in 1613, it was an artificial waterway to bring fresh water from springs in Hertfordshire to the New River Head, a reservoir in Islington, from which the water was distributed throughout London. Our photo shows the route at Canonbury beside the 'river'.

Our Roman Wall walk included a visit to the Guildhall where we were able to visit indoor sections of an amphitheatre discovered only in 1988 during an archaeological dig in preparation for a new Art Gallery project. London's only Roman amphitheatre was located in Guildhall Yard, and the gallery has been created around it.

During this walk we also encountered the 13th edition of 'Sculpture in the City', an annual urban sculpture park installation amidst the most iconic modern architecture of London's insurance district. We posed for our photo on a piece called Causus, by Samuel Ross, which was being carefully cleaned by two ladies with polishing cloths in an outdoor square off Mitre Street.

Margaret Thorpe



MOT3 had a relatively quiet September, our first outing was to the Beefeater and The Oast. Sunday 22nd we visited Danson House in Bexleyheath for a guided tour and afterwards had lunch in the cafe there, both very good experiences.

On Wednesday 22nd we went to a talk called Local Kent Heroes and Heroines by Bob Ogley at Bat and Ball Station in the morning, in the evening we went to The Stag cinema to see the film Lee.

15th of October we visited Battersea Power Station and went outside and walked along the river to find a restaurant for lunch. We booked tickets for a trip in the lift. If you do this be aware that you are only in the viewing area for about ten minutes which isn't long to see all the places you might want to look for.

19th October we went to The Bob Hope Theatre in Eltham to see the Bromley Players production of The Wedding Singer. Unfortunately the next Bite Size which should have been the following weekend was cancelled.

Next month we are visiting The View restaurant, going to see Paddington and Kiss Me Kate at The Stag and Rock the House Down at Pamoja Hall, Sevenoaks School. There is a lot in the pipeline for next year!

Marian OBoyle



PlayReading

We are well into our second year now, having had ten meetings in all, with another six planned. At present we have ten members, give or take the odd excuse, with three new members from the Open Afternoon, and a couple on leave.

We welcome everyone! Please come and join us! (2nd Monday, 2.30-4.30, Sevenoaks Library, no charges) We can guarantee you a part in one of the memorable dramas of our time.

The list of plays we have enjoyed so far is now getting too long to mention each newsletter, but, having started with comedies, we are beginning to extend our range, and in doing so deliberately to explore the rich diversity of English Theatre.

We've enjoyed TV comedies, comedy plays by Noel Coward, Michael Frayn, Alan Ayckbourn, Oscar Wilde and Dylan Thomas, and famous hits like 'Arsenic and Old Lace'. Ahead lie 'An Inspector Calls' (Priestley), 'Bedroom Farce' (Ayckbourn), 'The Birthday Party' (Pinter), 'Rebecca' (Du Maurier), 'Separate Tables' (Rattigan) and a Christmas Panto.

This month we're reading 'Hay Fever' by Noel Coward, in which an actress mother and her eccentric children exasperate their weekend visitors. "No, dear, I detest her. She's far too old for you, and she goes about using sex as a sort of shrimping net."

But we climbed our Everest last month, transporting our seven readers from modern Sevenoaks to a country village in Oxfordshire in the 1890s in 'Lark Rise To Candleford'. There were 47 (Yes, 47 !!) characters to create, without preparation ! It was demanding and confusing, but full of fun.

So you can see that if you had been with us, it would have been easier !

Please come and join us!

Simon Claxton playreading@knoleu3a.org.uk

Science Group had a very interesting talk on Thursday 7th November on Artificial Intelligence by Russell Whitworth of Guildford U3A. We were given a good insight into where we are now and where it might go in the future. Two of the websites that give much more information are these:

The u3a "AI for Everyone" library can be found here:

<https://u3acommunities.org/interest-groups/computing/ai-for-everyone/>

The u3a on-line learning events can be found here. Look for the "AI News" events, which are held monthly:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

As an example of what AI can do Russell asked for two pictures from the audience and then asked Chat GPT to describe what it saw. I found the answers quite amazing.

As Russel said he simply asked ChatGPT to "describe the attached photo in detail."

The results are below:



This photo shows a joyful moment inside a car with three occupants: an adult, a child, and a dog.

In the foreground, on the left side of the image, a man is taking a selfie. He has short dark hair and is wearing rectangular black-framed glasses with a friendly smile on his face. He's dressed in a black puffer jacket over a light-coloured T-shirt, which has a small visible logo patch from the outdoor brand Patagonia.

To the right, sitting in the back seat, is a young boy with a big smile. He has short brown hair and is wearing a green T-shirt under a red jacket with dark blue accents. He looks happy and relaxed, with one hand partially raised, as if he's interacting with the dog sitting next to him.

In the middle of the back seat sits a dog with curly fur, primarily white with light brown patches and spots. The dog has expressive eyes and a distinctive face, with long ears and a slightly wavy texture to its fur. It's wearing a blue harness and a white bandana decorated with a pattern of red stars, adding a touch of personality. The dog looks directly at the camera with an alert, curious expression. The background shows glimpses of the street outside, with some buildings and power lines visible through the rear and side windows of the car. The lighting suggests that it might be a bright day, with natural light filling the car's interior.

Overall, this image captures a warm, family-like moment shared between the three, each with distinct expressions that reflect a sense of happiness and companionship.



This haunting and powerful photo captures a memorial installation set in a misty, autumnal landscape. The scene is dominated by numerous black silhouettes of soldiers scattered across a grassy hillside, with more fading into the distance, giving a sense of solemn remembrance. The silhouettes are life-sized and appear to represent soldiers, each one standing in a pose that reflects contemplation, respect, or readiness. Some silhouettes carry rifles slung over their shoulders, and each is adorned with a single red poppy on their chest, symbolizing remembrance for fallen soldiers, particularly from World War I. The black forms and red poppies create a stark and moving contrast, with the poppies standing out as bright symbols against the dark shapes and muted landscape. In the background, mature trees with leaves transitioning to autumn colors – a mix of orange, yellow, and green – frame the scene. Their bare branches and colorful foliage blend with the gray sky, giving a sense of quietness and reflection.

The overcast sky and low, misty light add a somber, almost ethereal atmosphere, enhancing the emotional impact of the display.

The entire setting, with silhouettes gradually receding into the distance, evokes the scale of loss and the respect given to those commemorated. This installation appears thoughtfully placed in nature, creating a space that invites reflection on the sacrifice and memory of soldiers.

The next Science Group talk will be on Thursday 5th December, as usual in the Weald Memorial Hall at 2:30pm It will be given by Philip Harris also from Guildford U3A and is about numbers and symmetry.

“There is beauty in symmetry -- and a deep and powerful connection between the symmetries of nature and the most fundamental laws of physics. During this talk we will explore some of these symmetries and their consequences for our existence, and will introduce an experiment that helps to address one of cosmology’s deepest mysteries: why does the Universe contain so much more matter than antimatter? Partly for fun, and partly in order to maintain an appropriate sense of proportion as we discuss these Big Ideas, we will be accompanied from time to time by a certain well-known (and highly symmetric) Bear of Little Brain.”

With both speakers coming from Guildford U3A Russell has heard this talk before and says it is very good. I hope to see you there.

Howard Dilley

The Garden and Gardening Group met at Great Comp. The gardens were looking wonderful especially as we had a blue sky and sun. Salvias, rudbeckias and dahlias blooming - grasses looking magnificent. Julie Stevens



Knole u3a New Year 2025 Celebration Party.

All the members of Knole u3a are invited to come to our buffet lunch party on Tuesday 14th January 2025, Bat and Ball Centre, Sevenoaks starting at 12.45 for lunch at 1.15pm.

Numbers are limited to 90 (and 70 places have already been allocated) so places will be allocated on a first come first served basis. Once again we have outside caterers. Cost is £25.00 per head. Please see a recent email circulated to all members which gave more details and a ticket request form.

New Groups.

Lunch Group 3 has just been set up.

The Group Contact is Peter Watney email lunchgroup3@knoleu3a.org.uk. It will meet on the last Friday of the month at 1.00pm and will welcome a few more members.

If interested, contact Peter.

London Studies Group There will be a meeting to start a new London Studies Group on Tuesday 19th November 3.30pm at The Bullfinch and anyone who is interested is welcome to join us. The new Contact for that group will be Ron Edmondson email londonstudies5@knoleu3a.org.uk so if you can't make the meeting but are still interested please contact him.

Monthly Meetings

Bat and Ball Community Hall Monday 25 November 14.00

Talk title: The Kent Swing Riots

The talk by one of our members. Alan Heyes, tells the story of the rural rebellion that took place in Kent in 1830. These riots started around the Sevenoaks and Orpington areas and soon spread across Kent and adjacent counties. They took place after a prolonged agricultural recession following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815.

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