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Knole U3A can be found at—<http://www.knoleU3A.org.uk>



A HUGE THANK YOU MAGDA

As we begin a new Knole u3a year, a big thank you to everyone who came to the AGM meeting at Bat and Ball Centre on June 26th, which ensured we had a quorum, enabling the actual business of the AGM to be conducted.

The presence of more than one hundred attendees was also indicative of members huge appreciation of our outgoing Chairman Magda's long and dedicated service which she has given to Knole since being the driving force for setting it up in 2009. That was also emphasised in the generous donations of over one thousand pounds given by members towards a special gift voucher for Magda to mark the occasion.

Magda's original interest in u3a came about as a result of a chance meeting with a member of East Grinstead u3a. She was so impressed with the idea of people forming interest groups and helping one another to learn, she decided to start one in Sevenoaks and in 1994 was elected founder Chairman.



The working experience and organisational skills of her professional life as a College Lecturer and later a published author of several books must have proved invaluable in bringing together a varied group of mature people with diverse range of interests, to make it happen.

Magda went on to help start Tonbridge u3a in 2001 and Malling & district in 2007. Plus, over the following years, Sevenoaks u3a steadily expanded until, on reaching about 700 members the decision was taken to cap the membership. This proved to be a key moment, for Magda began to realise the need for a second u3a in Sevenoaks to respond to the growing waiting list. So in 2009 Magda, as the then Chairman of Sevenoaks u3a, invited several of those would be members to her house for a friendly and gently persuasive chat about starting a new u3a. As a result a group of about half dozen enthusiastic previous strangers came together to launch Knole u3a, a name chosen to reflect its close connection with Sevenoaks.

Later in 2013, recognising that Knole u3a itself was growing rapidly, she went on to found Edenbridge, Westerham and latterly Meopham u3a's
In 2006, in recognition of her services to the u3a movement, Magda received the MBE and in 2011 was added to the Trust's Roll Of Honour.

To formally recognise her huge contribution to Knole, your committee voted to bestow the title of President and Life Member on Magda.

Following the AGM we now extend a warm welcome to our **new** and enthusiastic **Chairman Debbie Magness** and her new committee, whose impact is already being seen in the move to encourage online renewals.

Please see the new link, specifically for Membership Renewals on the **JOIN US** page of our website.
'www.knoleu3a.org.uk'



Monthly Coffee Mornings – Restarts
SEPTEMBER 11am

(2nd Thursday of the month)

The coffee mornings at Miller and Carter at Riverhead. It's a lovely venue and they make us very welcome. We would love to see more members there as it's a really good opportunity to meet up with friends and make new ones. The coffee mornings are not just for new members, although it is an excellent way for new members to be introduced to Knole. Members of the Social team and Committee members endeavour to be there so come along and chat to us, you would be very welcome. Please remember, however, when parking, to enter your car registration number on the screen as you enter the restaurant or you will be charged, otherwise it's free.

Introducing our New Chairman



I grew up in Bexleyheath and until 2011 lived there all my life. My memories of school are mainly all happy ones, I didn't pass my 11+ but did well at Secondary School and went on to do A levels at the then Bexley Tech.

After my A levels I went to Teachers Training College at Furzedown in Tooting where I spent three very happy years. There I made lifelong friendships and the girl in the room next to me not only became one of my closest friends but a few years later became my sister-in-law when we married brothers [the same sister-in-law that made Magda's cake].

I got married in 1977 and we had three children, two boys and a girl and I now have six grandchildren ranging from the youngest who is seven to the oldest who is 18.

I spent the rest of my teaching career in Primary education in Bexley Borough. My passion was teaching children to read but I had three children of my own who hated reading because all three of them were dyslexic. This led me to eventually gain a qualification in teaching children with specific learning difficulties and as well as being a class teacher I was the school SENCo [Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator].

I never wanted to be a Headteacher, that would have taken me out of the classroom and I didn't want that, I was just happy to be part of the management team.

In 2011 I retired and we moved to Kemsing and immediately loved it. My husband was still working at that time and to get to know people in the area I joined Knole and have never looked back. I quickly made friends and had to hold myself back because I wanted to join everything on offer!

When in 2020 my mum died of throat cancer, my lovely husband died of pancreatic cancer and my brother-in-law died of Covid it was u3a friends as well as my wonderful family, who got me through that awful year. I feel now that becoming Chairman has given me a new purpose.

I would never have settled so well into the area and felt so much part of the community if it hadn't been for u3a. It's a wonderful organisation with so much to offer and I am so pleased to be part of it.

Debbie Magness

Chairman Knole u3a

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Introducing our New Vice-Chairman

I have always lived in the South East of England and I moved to Sevenoaks in 1978. I am a lawyer by qualification. I practised as a barrister for 10 years, then went into lecturing in Law. From there I started writing legal textbooks, my first being published in 1995. I continued to write until 2017 when I decided that, at the age of 72, I would retire. However, I have retained editorship of one series of books.

My retirement from writing left me time to enjoy other pastimes and I joined Knole u3a in 2017. I belong to various study groups, French, Historic Buildings, London Walks and Dining out.

I have known our new Chairman, Debbie Magness, for many years and am very happy to support her.

Jacquie Martin

Vice-Chairman Knole u3a

New Committee

Jacquie Martin - Vice Chairman

Rosemary Oldman - Secretary

Richard Clout - Treasurer

Suzi Morgan - Membership Secretary

Jenny Wickham - Membership Assistant

Bryan Rawlins - Groups

Lionel Parks - Website

Jean Zariffis - Beacon

Wendy Willsher - Social Events

Harry Reeves and Alan Heyes are co-opted for one year.

First Chairman's Report

It seems strange to be talking about new beginnings in the middle of July but for Knole that is indeed what it is. At our AGM at the end of June we thanked our longstanding Chairman, Magda Sweetland, for the huge contribution she has made to Knole. For those of you who were unable to attend we presented her with a rose that won the gold award at the Chelsea Flower Show this year, some flowers and a cheque which was so generously donated by you, the members, to show your appreciation of all that Magda has done for Knole. A special cake was made for the occasion and Magda was also presented with a certificate awarding her life membership to Knole. It was also decided by the committee to honour her with the title of Honorary President, a very well deserved and apt title.

I now, of course, have the unenviable task of following her lead! I am very grateful to the committee members who have agreed to stay on and welcome the new committee members who have agreed to share this ride with me, we have our first committee meeting this week.

There is much work to do and one of the first changes we have made is around membership renewal. A great deal of work has been going on behind the scenes over the last few months with a small team consisting of Suzi Morgan, membership secretary, Jenny Wickham, assistant membership secretary, Lionel Parks, our webmaster, Richard Clout, our treasurer, Jean Zariffis, our Beacon administrator, Jacquie Martin and myself. You may wonder why we have made the changes and the reasons are twofold.

When it comes to the end of June and renewals are due, it involves a lot of administrative work for our membership secretary and our treasurer, processing over 400 membership renewals all at once is extremely time consuming as you can imagine. The new method of renewal through Beacon is all automatic and involves them in far less work, you get confirmation straight away that your renewal was successful and you even get emailed a membership card, of sorts! The other reason is that it is much more cost effective than having to pay in lots of cheques to the bank. The bank charges a fee for each cheque paid in, PayPal also charges a fee for each transaction but it is far less than the fee banks charge per cheque. With bank closures it also gets increasingly difficult to pay cheques into a bank.

If you have paid by cheque or bank transfer and **not** through Beacon then please remember to download a renewal form and fill it in and send it to the membership secretary. The reason for this is that we have to check your contact details each year to comply with GDPR regulations [data protection].

We have been very pleased with the number of members who have renewed using Beacon and we have had very positive feedback from members. As I write, I think nearly half our membership have renewed in this way. If you haven't yet tried this method of renewal then I urge you to try by following the link on the website. You can pay by credit or debit card and you **do not** have to have a PayPal account. I know some people have had problems but it is usually sorted out by Jean and we very much appreciate the work everyone has put into this.

It's been a steep learning curve for all of us and it can only improve.

If you have not been invited to renew your membership and you think you should have, then contact Suzi, the membership secretary, as there were quite a few lapsed members after the pandemic and you may be one of them.

I may have only been chairman for a couple of weeks but I have been preparing for the last few months. I have attended several courses run by the Third Age Trust on Zoom, which proved to be excellent training in preparation for the role of chairman. A few of us attended a Kent Network Day in May which was very useful in giving us ideas and meeting people from other u3a's in Kent. I also attended the Kent Network AGM this week, also on Zoom...and to think a short while ago none of us had even heard of Zoom!

The committee and I are really looking forward to doing the best we can for you and are keen to maintain and improve the wonderful community feel that has always been evident in Knole. When we join u3a we agree to abide by the principles, which if you need a reminder, are on our website. We are all volunteers, every one of us and I am so grateful to you all for the contribution you make to our wonderful organisation. If you have any suggestions or comments then please get in touch, I would love to hear them.

Debbie Magness

Chairman Knole u3a

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Changes to our Open Afternoon

We are looking ahead to our next Open Afternoon in September and we would like to make it more interesting and interactive.

The purpose of the Open Afternoon is to attract new members to Knole u3a and to encourage our existing members to do more and get involved.

Our Open Afternoon has been much the same for years and we would like to change it to showcase our groups and what we do. To this end we would like to create a more interactive day and would ask you to think about what we could do to change things.

We would like you to start planning by taking photos of group activities [remember to check people are happy to be in a photo], collecting materials for display or discussing in your groups what you might like to do to showcase what your group does.

With some fresh ideas from you, we think that the Open Afternoon could be much more fun and achieve a better response for those that attend.

Speak to your Group co-ordinator and let us know if you can help us.

GROUPS NEWS

London Studies 4



Syon House

On a warm June day London Studies 4 travelled to West London to visit Syon House, the home of the Dukes of Northumberland, the Percy family, for over four hundred years.

Built originally in 1547 on the site of a monastery, Syon House received a major redesign when the 1st Duke commissioned Robert Adam to produce a suite of five magnificent state rooms complete with statuary from Italy. All remain untouched today and include a long gallery over 41m in length and many fine paintings of the numerous historical and royal figures associated with Syon. Outside in the well-kept gardens is a very impressive Conservatory dating back to the 1820s – another feature which makes Syon House a highly recommended destination for other groups.

MOT3

In June we visited The Oast and Beefeater as usual plus a visit to Chelsea Physic Garden and Chelsea Royal Hospital. In July we are planning a visit to Merriments and Pashley Manor on 13th. Have been invited to Sonia's for coffee and cake on 17th. On 19th we are going to see Oklahoma at The Stag and Oast and Beefeater on 24th. We have also planned a lunch at The Savoy.

The Garden Group



Ightham Mote

We had a guided tour of the Ightham Mote garden in June. You may think it isn't a very special garden in terms of National Trust properties but we had such an interesting tour. Our volunteer guide was very knowledgeable and humorous. His talk wasn't so much about the plants or garden design but more about the history and special features. We learnt the mote was built to supply fish to the house and not, as I thought, to defend it. He showed us an Alder tree which apparently, when the wood is put in water becomes as hard as iron and Venice is built on Alder piles. We saw a very old chestnut tree which is believed to be at least 700 years old. I urge you, if you visit Ightham Mote, to try and join one of the free garden tours, I'm sure you'll be surprised at what you might learn.

London Studies 8



Highgate Cemetery

We eventually managed to visit Highgate Cemetery after several attempts interfered with by Covid and British Rail strikes! We had a brilliant day, and excellent guide.

Historic Buildings

In June we visited Camden Place, Chislehurst where Napoleon III lived in exile. The history was very interesting. The building is now used by Chislehurst Golf Club.



Allingham Castle

In July we visited Allingham Castle near Maidstone. We reached the Castle by boat. The castle itself is one of the oldest in England. It has two dovecotes which were mentioned in the Domesday Book.



New Communications Team for Knole

Delma, Magda and Lionel are doing a great job of bringing us our newsletter and keeping the website up to date. Magda would like to step back at some stage and it would be good to have at least two people sharing each role. We would like to find people who ideally have some knowledge or experience in using Word, Desk Top Publishing, Websites, or just enthusiasm to help create a new Communications team for Knole. It would be good to have some fresh ideas and working together on such a project can be exciting and fun. If you think you could help us in any way, even if it's just with ideas, then please get in touch with either Delma, Lionel or myself. Debbie