

No 86 September 2023

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

Chairmans Report

I wrote in my last report in July about new beginnings and I am writing this at the beginning of September so for many people it feels like the beginning of a new year...a new school year perhaps. Many of us will have grandchildren who are starting school, going into a new class, a new school, going off to University or starting new jobs. For Knole, after what seems a little summer lull, September is the start of our year again.

We held a meeting for the Group contacts last week and are busy making plans for the Open Afternoon on the 25th September at the Bat and Ball Community Centre from 2pm until 4pm. We are trying something new this year and hope to showcase a bit more of what our groups do. It is your opportunity to find out what Mah Jong is all about and perhaps see it played, see some of the art work produced by some of our talented members, discover a new poem or a book you've never read, even try your hand at some gentle golf! Maybe you have an idea to start a new group or have an interest you would like to share. We would love to see as many of you as possible at the Open Afternoon, it isn't just for new members, it's for all Knole members. We are hoping it will be a very social event and as usual, when I'm involved, there will be tea and cake!

Although the Monthly meetings took a break in the summer, things have still been happening as reports from the groups will show.

Some of us had a very enjoyable few days in Lincoln at the end of July and Barbara Walker has written a short report on what we did and how much we all enjoyed the break. I would very much like to thank Margaret Thorpe for organising yet another wonderful holiday, it is always so well organised and she is so calm, taking small mishaps in her stride, 'shhh', don't ask about the morning in Newark! The details of the trip for 2024 has just been released so do think about joining us, we always have a fun time.

Lionel Parks, our Webmaster, has been working very hard trying to make our website easier to navigate and a little more interesting to visit. If you haven't looked at it for a while then do take a look, there are some photographs of Lincoln and past holidays to whet your appetites. He is in the process of creating a Gallery page and has made a plea for photos in this newsletter.

I am so looking forward to us all getting back together again and hope to see many of you at the Open Afternoon, the next Monthly meeting in October or the monthly

Coffee Mornings which have just started again at the Miller and Carter, Riverhead. I would especially like to extend an invitation to all our new members, come and meet us, we really are a very friendly bunch.

Debbie Magness

Chairman Knole u3a

01732 763042

Mob 07725 046610

chairman@knoleu3a.org.uk



Monthly Meetings

We have a varied programme of speakers for our Monthly Meetings in the coming year. **Meetings will normally be on the fourth Monday of the month at 2pm, at the Sevenoaks Community Centre** on Cramptons Rd (adjacent to Bat and Ball Station).

There are a few innovations to the programme for this year.

23rd October Our speaker is **Gerry Abalone, a Senior Conservator with the National Trust**, on his work with some of the Trust's most important treasures.

27th November we have **Bob Ogley**, a well known local figure, former editor of the Chronicle, who will speak about the **1987 Great Storm**.

15th January New Year Party

Please note that our January Monthly Meeting is a week later than usual. (We'll need a breather after the excesses of the party!)

29th January Peter Griffiths will return to give us part 2 of his amusing talk about his life in aviation.

Later in the year, at our AGM on 24 June, we hope to have short presentations from some of our Study Groups. Also, for the first time, we aim to hold a meeting on the **22nd July**

More details of Monthly Meetings in future newsletters.

Festive Celebrations

Although it is only just Autumn, the Social Team is starting to think about our Festive Celebration.

It has been decided this year to make it a New Year Celebration again and it will be held on **Monday 15th January 2024**.

We are planning a big change with this event as we are going to use a Catering firm for the first time rather than ask Members to provide the food and help with the washing up! I need to point out here that this means we will be selling tickets and we will have to be very sure about numbers by a certain date. Depending on numbers, the tickets should work out at approximately £20.00 per head. All information about cost of tickets and closing dates will be available soon.



Monthly Coffee Mornings – Restarts

14th.SEPTEMBER 11am

(2nd Thursday of the month)

The coffee mornings are held at the 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.

Annual Holiday



Margaret did an excellent job in organising and managing the, albeit energetic and sometimes exhausting, holiday to Lincoln. Four nights in the Double Tree by Hilton hotel, pleasantly situated on the waterfront, not too far to walk to the city centre.

We picked up the coach in the car park at Knole Academy. Everyone on time and we left at 8:00 and headed north to our first stop at Oakham to visit the castle. All that remains is the Great Hall of what once was part of a Norman Castle. The main feature is a wall showing a magnificent collection of giant horseshoes engraved with the names of royalty and nobility through the ages. A pleasant town with many independent speciality shops.

Over the five days we visited many historic venues and National Trust properties. Highlights for me were Lincoln Cathedral and Castle. A guided tour of the Cathedral then the castle. The guide for our group was excellent with commentary laden with dreadful puns. He redeemed himself with a long history in rhyme. Very cleverly done. A walk round the castle walls provided lovely views of the cathedral and the town but took all the energy I'd reserved for the whole holiday! A very worthwhile day.

In Newark the highlight was to have been a trip along the river Trent but that unfortunately had to be cancelled due to high water levels so boats couldn't go under bridges. Another highlight was the magnificent Burghley House, where we stopped on the drive back to Sevenoaks.

A most interesting, and thanks to Margaret Thorpe, a very well organised few days away.



What is Beacon and why do we use it?

I'm sure that many of you, just like me up until a few months ago, think that Beacon is some airy, fairy thing that committee members talk about but you have no idea what it is or why we talk about it. Well let me try and enlighten you...excuse the pun!

Beacon, in its simplest form, is a database of all our members. In the old days I'm sure that the membership secretary would have had a record of all the members on a spreadsheet on his/her computer. To comply with data protection laws that computer would have had to be password protected and kept safe. Everything would have been done manually, so inputting membership records would have been very time consuming, especially at renewals time when over 400 records would have had to be checked and updated. If the computer broke down or was stolen, then all those records would be lost. When a new membership

secretary took on the task they would have to learn the system set up by the first membership secretary but maybe they wouldn't have the same software on their computer so might have to set up their own system and start from scratch.

Beacon takes care of all that for us automatically. It was devised by u3a members for u3a's to use. We adopted it in 2018 after realising the simple Excel system we were using wasn't adequate for our needs and some extensive research by Alan Heyes and other members of the committee at the time. Beacon is used by hundreds of u3a's all over the country and its use is growing. It is web based, this means it can be accessed on any computer, tablet or phone and it isn't kept on any one computer.

Each u3a has a Beacon administrator, ours is Jean Zariffis and she does a great job.

We do think though, that it is important that someone else could step in and knows the system well and so Jenny Wickham has agreed to learn how to use it and will be our second administrator. Only a very few people, approved by the committee, have access rights to Beacon and Jean takes care of all that. Different people can see different parts depending on their role. For example, the membership secretary can only see members records and a small part of finance that pertains to membership.

There are three main components to Beacon, Membership, Finance and Groups. At the moment we mainly use the Membership component. It keeps all our records up to date and ensures they are safely stored. We can very easily see that members have paid their subscriptions and that their membership is up to date, very important for insurance purposes. We can easily manage members preferences such as Third Age Matters mail shots. The most useful feature to us is the ability to email all our members at once. It even personalises each email and ensures that all email addresses are hidden. It can be put to good use, as it was this week when

a spare theatre ticket was offered to all members.

Renewing your membership online through Beacon this year has been a huge benefit to both our Membership Secretary and our Treasurer because it has saved them hours of work checking and updating records manually. Many of you created your own access to Beacon when you renewed your membership and this now means you can correct or amend your own details easily and check that your membership is up to date.

Groups News

Bird Watching



Our first outing of the season was to the local Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve - a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) created from a disused quarry just off the A25 in Bradbourne Vale Road. It is run by Kent Wildlife Trust. There are 5 lakes, plus reed beds, seasonal flooded ponds and woodland. It takes about an hour to walk around the site and there are various bird hides along the way, from which it is possible to see a wide variety of species. There are three well established heron's nests on one of the islands, and this time we even spotted a kingfisher actually plucking a fish from the water! We met in the café afterwards to plan our visits for the year ahead. These will include some of our go-to favourites such as Rye Harbour, Oare Marshes, and Sandwich, plus some new ideas for exploring further afield. We are researching a trip to Knepp in Surrey to see the rewilding project which has been so successful in restoring endangered species to that area, and which was described so beautifully by Isabella Tree in

her bestselling book "Wilding". We are also considering a trip to Minsmere made famous as a regular venue for Springwatch. That will be an overnight stay if we do.

We have 17 members of the group currently and are happy to welcome more. We meet on the 2nd Friday of each month, and the visits usually start at around 10.30am and last between 2 and 4 hours (plus travel time) dependent on the nature of the venue. Mostly we take a flask and a sandwich to eat as we sit in a hide, but sometimes use the visitors centres facilities, or find a convenient local pub for a bite and a drink afterwards. Walking shoes or boots, a backpack and country clothing are a must, as are binoculars! Some of our members are very knowledgeable and bring their portable scopes so we can get close ups. Others of us, myself included, are keen beginners and are most grateful for the insights and knowledge we can pick up from our more expert friends. On occasions we organise to have a ranger or a guide with us who can show us the best viewing places for a particular location or species, in which case we usually collect a small donation (£5) from each visiting member. We car share to keep travel costs to a minimum. If you are interested in joining us please email me:

ann.windiate@btinternet.com

Walking with Dogs

Our dog walking group have been enjoying some really lovely walks with our 4 legged friends Mickey, Bella, Star, Teddy and Luna. We've also had some very enjoyable pub lunches together.

One walk started in Weald with lots of wild life and wild flowers to hold our interest. We started another in Shoreham, walking along the river to Lullingstone. The lavender fields were magnificent and the smell of lavender, which kept wafting up, was a real joy.

We meet the 2nd Friday of the month and I am sure our Jack Russell knows exactly when it's time to meet up with his friends.

Current Affairs

The Current Affairs Discussion group meets on the first Monday of the month at the Slater room, Christchurch, near to the station, starting at 1.30pm. We have changed the format recently. Each week a member will introduce a topic of interest then open up discussion. Thereafter we pick the latest topics of interest from the current news.

We have 12 members and usually engender a lively debate. We do not always agree, but that is part of the fun.

Spanish Group

In the last year we have welcomed new members to our Spanish group and with the standard being fairly equal we are using at least half the lesson in lively conversation on a variety of topics. So a real sense of using the language rather than just learning it.

Also we have been fortunate enough to welcome a local native Spanish speaker to guide the group on two occasions which has meant a further benefit of hearing the accent. We are still using the remainder of our lessons on comprehension and listening to Spanish and of course revision of the basics. It's lovely to see the group get on so well while sharing this common interest.

Theatre Group

The Theatre Group meets locally every other month for discussion on productions we have seen and plan for the future. So far this year we have been to five West End productions and have another two planned between October and December. Ten members recently went to see 'The Crown Jewels' at the Garrick Theatre and in December we will see 'Hamnet', also at the Garrick.

We have just had our September meeting, which we now hold at The Bell public house, Kemsing, in order to decide what members would like to see in

October/November. Lots of suggestions were put forward and we will go with a majority vote. I wonder what it will be?

There is always space for a few more members so if you are interested, please come along to the Open Afternoon on 25th September, Bat and Ball Centre, at 2pm and look out for the Theatre Group in the Culture Area.

Singing for Pleasure.

The Singing for Pleasure group has several spaces. All abilities are welcome.

Perhaps you have not sung for some time or sung in a group before, so come along and enjoy the first session free, to see if it is for you.

We are a friendly group and have a new leader called Joe who is enthusiastic and fun to be with and we enjoy singing a large variety of songs.

We stop for a short break and members bring their own refreshments.

There is parking at the hall or you can park in the Otford public car park.

We meet the 4th Friday of the month from 2-4 pm at the Methodist church in Otford so our next meeting will be the 27th October.

You may have other questions and I know for some members it is not easy to join a new group and it would be good to talk with you before the 27th October, so please give me a call on 01732.460578 Janet Austin

Film Group

We start our season again on September 25th with 'The Unforgivable' followed by October 23rd with the film 'Little Miss Sunshine'. Then November 23 brings us 'Tea with Mussolini'

We spent August suggesting, and voting and the above are the results for the first three months.

We currently have no vacancies, and I would suggest if any wish to join they start up Film Group 2

Science for All

The new Knole Science Group programme commences on Thursday 5th October at 2.30pm – Sevenoaks Weald Village Memorial Hall. For just £2 a meeting, you can have an interesting talk about a wide range of science or technology topics following by questions to each speaker. Over some high-quality tea and biscuits, you also get an opportunity to have a discussion with your u3a friends about the merits or otherwise of the subject!

The programme of talks is kicked off by the Science Group chair, Alan Heyes, who will be speaking about the problem of science fraud and associated hoaxes with a few case studies of both historical and very recent examples.

Future talks will cover topics as diverse as Glass, the science behind the Covid test kit, Fusion power, the origins of the Anthropocene, and grassland and grazing animals and how they can help cool the planet.

Also, a return by popular request, of the Science Committee will give presentations about scientists you have probably never heard of but made an important contribution to science.

Kent History Group

The Kent History Group is now approaching its tenth year of existence having started out as the Kent Industrial Heritage Group, with its members researching and presenting talks on a diverse range of topics such as Windmills, Tanning, Clock Making, Papermaking, Roads, Brewing, Railways and the Victorian Internet – the Telegraph! Over the past few years, the group has been researching a broader range of historical topics going back to the origin of the Megaliths, how Kent towns developed, and the impact of the Napoleonic War in Kent. The new programme, starting in October, will include topics as diverse as the Kent Swing Riots, The Deer Parks of Kent, the history of electric power in Kent, and what

was it really like to be poor in 19th century Sevenoaks post 1815. If you are interested in researching Kent history and giving a presentation about your studies, this would be the group for you. We have a few vacancies if you are interested in joining us.

Historic Buildings Group

In August we had a very interesting visit to Firlie Place. The property has been owned by the Gage family for some 500 years. The original house was built in Tudor times but extensively remodelled in Georgian times. There were also plenty of items in the house to look at, including a very large collection of Sevres china.

London Studies 4



On July 27th London Studies 4 visited the new Salters Halls

Golf



Golf can be Challenging.....

But it is always fun.

Come and join us every 3rd Wednesday of the month. Rain or Shine.

Botany Group

The Knole Botany Group was established some three years ago with the aim of learning to identify the wildflowers in the Sevenoaks area and eventually to prepare a record of these for publication on our u3a website as a Sevenoaks Flora report. We are a small group who meet up once a month for a gentle stroll to look for beautiful plants in our respective areas of study. We would welcome a few more to join us if you are interested in learning about our local flora. There is some homework!

A few of the beautiful flowers seen just a few miles from Sevenoaks

Common twayblade



Bladder campion



Greater butterfly orchid



Goatsbeard hybrid



MOT3

Our visit to Pashley Manor and Merriments went very well with just a small interruption of rain, and our coffee and cake treat at Sonia's was blessed with beautiful weather and she raised a good amount for charity. Oklahoma at the Stag was a good lively film and we had our last outing to The Oast for this season.

In August we saw Oppenheimer at the Stag , visited Camden Place in Chislehurst which has a very interesting history and finally visited Standen House in East Grinstead where a volunteer told us some of the history of the house.

In September we are going to The Savoy in London for lunch and hope that this time our plans will not be thwarted by a train strike. We also have a lunch planned at Poul Wood Golf course on 17th and a talk at the Biggin Hill Museum on 23rd about Eglantyne Jebb born 1919 who founded Save the Children and finally a visit to Provender House so a reasonably busy time.

Book Group 1

We are looking for one new member and would make anyone interested in joining our group very welcome.

In the past three months we have read:- *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Gamus, *The Spyglass File* by Nathan Dillon Goodwin,

Bodies of Light by Sarah Moss and this month we are reading

Godmersham Park by Gill Hornby.

These titles are representative of the varied books we read, each chosen by a group member and though very different were well received and lead to some good discussion.

The Spyglass File and *Godmersham Park* were particularly interesting to us as they are both set in Kent.

Lunch Group 2

On August 1st we visited The Kentish Rifleman and it was a very pleasant experience. The food was very good with plenty of choice on the menu. The landlord was most obliging when I asked if we could bring a birthday cake and agreed that we could serve and eat it there and supplied a sharp knife and plates for us and the pub itself has a good atmosphere, very clean and well presented. The serving staff were nice and friendly and very helpful. Highly recommended.

Knole Website

As some of you have already noticed and given positive feedback, the Photo Gallery on our web site is now up and running. Lots of photos from previous years Social trips have already been contributed by members and uploaded. Thanks especially to Margaret and Debbie.

I would welcome photos of Group Activities, as that page is looking rather bare at the moment!

Please email as a jpg attachment to webmaster@knoleu3a.org.uk

Vacancy - Meetings Co-ordinator

Harry Reeves will be stepping down as Meetings Co-ordinator in the next few months, and we need to appoint a replacement. We have all meetings booked up to June of next year, and we hope a successor will take over, whilst there is no urgency about future bookings, and Harry is still here to support him or her and have an extended handover.

Deadline for next edition:-

November 10th.2023

Laughter Lines

APROSDOKIANS are figures of speech in which the latter part of a sentence is unexpected; Winston Churchill loved them.

1. Where there's a will, I want to be in it.
2. Since light travels faster than sound, some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
3. If I agreed with you, we would both be wrong.
4. War does not determine who is right - only who is left.

If you know of any amusing jokes, (keep it clean) please send them to: -

'newsletter@knoleu3a.org.uk'

Knole Open Afternoon

Come along to the Open Afternoon on Monday 25th September at Bat and Ball Community Centre, Cramptons Road at 2pm. It isn't just for new members, it's for all members! A chance to find out about all the diverse groups we have, you never know, you may be tempted to start a new interest. Just come along and have a cup of tea and cake and meet up with friends. Bring someone along and introduce them to our wonderful organisation, we look forward to seeing you.