

News from the Groups – January 2021

Circle Dancing - This year from the end of April in groups of six we danced in the garden until the ground just became too wet and slippery, well wrapped up towards the end when it got a bit chilly. It was wonderful to dance with the birds singing to accompany us especially when the sun shone. We have also had a few sessions indoors, again with restricted numbers.

Crochet -- We meet on the fourth Wednesday of the month in the afternoon, and members take turns in holding a meeting at their house.

In the past year we have managed to keep in touch despite the lockdown. In the summer we had one meeting in my garden, socially distancing of course, and had various zoom meetings.

During the year we have tackled the following projects:

- penguin
- rose flower motif
- goldfish
- string-type bag
- mobile phone case
- slippers

Photography - In 2020 we have discussed Camera Settings, Camera Accessories and had a practical hands-on Portrait Session. We have also watched and discussed some instructive DVDs. Then, since March we have been busy, and kept in touch with each other, despite the fact that we haven't been able to meet up in a Hall. But each month we have set ourselves a Challenge – Photo Exchange, with a specific theme, for example Colour, Abstract, Autumn and so on. Members have been asked to go out and about with their cameras and then submit two photos on that theme which are circulated to the Group. Then each member has the opportunity to choose a First Preference and a Second Preference, with comments if they wish.

Exploring World Faiths - In 2020 we had a visit to a Hindu Temple in Gravesend, a talk on Religious education in Primary Schools, a talk on Judaism, a talk on the Hindu Bhagavad Gita and watched a TV programme on Hinduism. We then had a break during lockdown, and now meet monthly on Zoom, starting with a member's presentation on Confucianism. Humanism will follow, followed by an aspect of Judaism presented by a lecturer who is a member of the Jewish community. All our meetings incorporate lively discussion.

Piano Playing Group - In 2020 it has been impossible to meet due to the difficulty of staying safe while visiting each other's houses and all touching the same keys for a couple of hours.

We remain in occasional contact and intend to resume when safe to do so

Apple Group - Get MORE from your iPad & Mac Devices

We have helped over 200 local Sevenoaks residents get better use of their Apple computers, iPad and iPhones.

Wine Appreciation 1 –

- Members - 9
- Meetings - 9

- Venues - 6
- Wines tasted - 27 [15 white including 3 sparkling and 12 red]
- Headaches - NIL

Art Painting - Most of the members did some painting during the first close down and, when the Seal Village Hall was open again at the start of September, brought samples to this first meeting. We enjoyed another eight sessions (to the end of October). We are now back at home painting. David Taylor set up a small (5 paintings) exhibition for the newsletter – he hopes to arrange others.

Writing – Sevenoaks Scribes - We have been working hard to keep up with our normal amount of writing for our novels. Twice a month we have sent the next chapter(s) by email to each of the group and receive in return any ideas or suggestions. This has been very helpful. We did actually have a real live meeting on my terrace on a really hot day in August – we were thankful for some shade!

Garden Group 6 - In 2020 we have only made two garden visits before the lockdown – to Doddington House and Hole Park which were very successful.

In 2021 (April to October) we are planning for monthly visits in the hope that the current lockdown situation is lifted. We usually visit the garden in the morning and follow with a lunch at a nearby pub/restaurant.

We would welcome new members

Science – Our Universe - In 2020 the Group has had a steady membership of about 8-10 and we have morphed from a beginning in astronomy to a group taking on the task of keeping up with developments and, as our knowledge of all the sciences which help us to understand the Cosmos has developed, we now follow the searches for new physics which will be the basis of the subject through this century. This has kept us occupied through the last year and we continue with small Zoom meetings to exchange ideas. And this works well for a group of our size.

This group will study the science of the cosmos. This will include topics such as :

- how we know the life history of the stars,
- how far away they are,
- how old space is, and
- the awesome range of astronomical objects and forces out there.

Cycling - 1.

We have 24 members and are happy to take more.

- We run weekly rides and we divide into groups of 6.
- All members take their turn in planning and leading rides.
- We have cycled over most of Kent and some members have organised longer trips.
- We try and have an annual expedition of some sort, and these have included the Isle of Wight, and various parts of France. Sadly Covid has stopped us this year.
- We also have an annual celebratory Christmas pub lunch - but not this year!!

Italian Conversation - Enthusiastic Italophiles with a reasonably good knowledge of Italian come together to enjoy conversing in Italian. The aim is to maintain and develop their linguistic skills in an informal and relaxed fashion using CDs, DVDs and newspaper and magazine articles to stimulate discussion. Members are expected to do a certain amount of preparation between sessions.

2020 end of year update:

This year we have read and discussed the works of Alberto Moravia, Umberto Eco, Deledda and others, which we usually prepare in advance of the meeting.

We had great fun on a text from an Italian newspaper regarding the Principality of Seborga within Italy, some 22 miles from Monaco. It has its own government, currency and border post! The current head of state is HRH Princess Nina. Do read about it in Wikipedia! Fascinating story!

We also rang the changes by translating English texts into Italian; Pride and Prejudice, Nancy Mitford's Don't Tell Alfred, Thurber's Macbeth etc and we've even given ourselves a dictation.

At the moment I'm not sure that we still don't spend a large part of the meetings getting Zoom. to work!

As soon as we were able to meet in groups of six we jumped at it even though it meant two people had to miss a meeting on a rota basis.

The wonderful Spring/Summer meant glorious meetings al fresco which will now be just a dream compared to 'back to zoom'!

Stock Market Discussion - The Stock Market Discussion Group normally meets each month between September and June.

Meetings are hosted by the members in turn in their own homes. We are a small group and during the period of Covid-19 restrictions we have successfully held our meetings on Zoom.

The format of our meetings is that, in September each member notionally chooses two FTSE quoted stocks, one of which is retained until the following June and the other has to be notionally traded at least every two months. The person whose notional stocks have achieved the most profit is declared the winner. Each member also predicts what the FTSE index will be in June.

As well as the principal area of the Stock Market our discussions range over a wide spectrum, mostly finance related, and include inevitably

Brexit, the political scene at home and abroad, and other forms of investment. We enjoy one another's company and when we meet face to face usually conclude with light refreshments.

Psychology - In 2020 in our Zoom meetings we discussed issues such as:

- What makes you angry?
- What makes you sad?
- What makes you laugh?
- What makes people conform or rebel to Corona virus rules?
- What makes us tick?

Singing for Fun - Unfortunately, being a singing group we have been especially hard hit by the virus restrictions.

Our last meeting was at the beginning of March. However, our pianist, Janet Sharp, has just begun to hold monthly Zoom sessions - the first one was in October and around 25 of us took part. Not surprisingly, we have not been able to do anything else. Normally, we perform around once a term in care homes and similar institutions, but it will obviously be some time before we can resume this.

We have a waiting list of 6 people who have been waiting between 1 to more than 2 years, so anyone wishing to join at the moment is unfortunately likely to have a long wait, [Editor's Note: unless they would like to start a second group in which case the u3a has a well developed process for this and can help to set up a new group].

European Affairs - The group normally meets October to May, .but in 2020 we managed to meet every month courtesy of Zoom. Among many other subjects we discussed the Influence of Newspapers on Government; Pensions and Social Security Benefits in Different States; Which Country has the best Health Care?; and the EU's relationship with China and Russia.

2021 looks to be another interesting year...!