

### Chairman's note

This month the weather has delivered its normal seasonal icy blast and caused disruption to some of our group activities, but there are signs in the garden that spring is just around the corner.

We had another GOs' Coffee Morning to exchange views and ideas about the groups and the U3A in general. The meetings are valuable to us on the Executive Committee as they give us a chance to talk to the Group Organisers in an informal and friendly setting. They also allow the GOs an opportunity to meet each other. If you have not yet been to one of these please try and come. We move the day around such that it gives everyone a chance to attend, and if you cannot attend in person, then do delegate to one of your group. They will be welcome. See points on p3.

One idea that has come forward is to re-establish the Chairman's visits to groups. This was an activity undertaken by previous chairs but fell in abeyance due to the large number of groups involved. I do not intend to impose myself on any particular group but leave it to you, the Group Organiser, to invite me along to one of your meetings, especially to those where I do not already have a direct link.

Another initiative is in response to the Group Organisers' meetings we held last summer. With this Newsletter you will find a questionnaire seeking your views of our U3A and any areas of interest in Study Groups that we are unaware of. The purpose is to expand the current register of members' interests from recent joiners to the whole membership, in order to give us a more complete and up-to-date picture of our current requirements. More details overleaf.

*Bob Ruffles*

### Meetings open to all

**Monthly Meeting**                      **Wednesday 28 March**  
Community Centre, Bat & Ball                      Start at 2.0pm

The speaker for 28 March will be Malcolm Wells MBE who will speak to members about the work of

#### **Canine Partners**

He is their National Speaker. Canine Partners is a registered charity that assists people with disabilities to enjoy a greater independence and quality of life through the provision of specially trained dogs, whose well-being is a key consideration.

#### **Science Group**

**Monday 12 March**

#### **Fluoride: Friend or Foe?**

by Professor Ronald Spiers.

Water fluoridation and the protective action of fluoride. Otford Village Memorial Hall, 2pm.

All Sevenoaks U3A members welcome.

£2 entry includes tea.

#### **Science Group Visit**

**Wednesday 18 April**

The Science group is organising a visit to two museums at Kew: the Kew Bridge Steam Museum and the Musical Museum. Travel by train.

Full details on the enclosed flyer.

#### **Computer Group**

**Monday 19 March**

#### **Life's a Spreadsheet - do it with Excel**

by Simon McIntyre

Otford Village Memorial Hall, 2pm.

All Sevenoaks U3A members welcome.

£1 entry includes tea.

**Please note:** Cancellation of a meeting of the Computer Group due to bad weather will be announced on the Sevenoaks U3A website ([www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk](http://www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk))

#### **Computer Courses**

Members are reminded that **S&G Training** continue to offer free courses for computer beginners at the offices of Mind (34 St John's Road, Sevenoaks - 01732 458910). In addition - at a modest charge - internationally accredited courses in Microsoft Office are available.

Basic computing courses are also available at local libraries; and at the offices of **AgeUK** (also located in St. John's Road).

Microsoft has recently announced that the programme for the supply of its software to students (including U3A members) at significant discounts to the normal sales prices via **[www.Software4Students.co.uk](http://www.Software4Students.co.uk)** will come to an end on **31 March 2012**. Members who wish to purchase Windows 7 or Microsoft Office 2010 should take advantage of this last chance.

Please send copy for the February Newsletter by **Friday, 16 March 2012** to both Linda Young and Magda Sweetland

**SEE U3A 2011 - 2012 HANDBOOK FOR FURTHER CONTACT DETAILS OF PEOPLE REFERRED TO IN THIS NEWSLETTER**

## News and Views

Articles to *Magda Sweetland*

### Register of Members' Interests

The enclosed letter from the Chairman, Bob Ruffles, is self-explanatory. For the first time in Sevenoaks U3A, we are carrying out a survey of what members actually do, what they want and where they may be having difficulty. We are aware that, in our eighteenth year, there may be changes afoot which we need to address, so that the organisation reflects the requirements of the whole membership.

Some factors are:

- The retirement/ pensionable age is later than it was in 1994, ie retirees may have worked longer into their '60s than before.
- They may have less disposable time. They often have responsibility for very elderly parents and/or grandparenting duties. They call themselves the 'sandwich' generation.
- As a result, they may have different requirements, and are looking for sociable groups, or ones with a little less reading and preparation. The urge to talk has not diminished!
- Newcomers may find it hard to join our established groups where everyone has already 'bonded' - and seems to know everything there is to know about the subject!

This committee wants to address these issues which are widespread in the U3A movement at the present. Add to these 'internal' problems the 'external' ones of a huge demand for spaces in a U3A (three U3As in north Kent will cap their membership shortly\*, and three more are looking to form a second U3A nearby) then management of a large, well-supported U3A is no easy matter.

Please give this questionnaire a few minutes of your time. Recently, Tunbridge Wells carried out a similar exercise and achieved a 60% return rate. The U3A is important to all its members and we want to take on board your comments and concerns. Of course, we would as always be glad of offers of help with the routine work, admin and forming new Study Groups.

*Magda Sweetland*

\* "Why does a U3A cap its membership?", a member asked me recently. Usually because of

- hall capacity
- the workload on the committee
- a growing sense of 'anonymity' - but that is subjective

All of this varies from place to place. City U3As are often large: Sheffield has 2,000 members - but it has a city's facilities on hand. Some small U3As are very dynamic - and want to stay that way as 'village' U3As serving a local, integrated community, where the social aspects are paramount.

### Do you have an unused laptop?

Some of the photographic groups use laptops for members to practise their manipulation skills. These groups are now so popular that there is a shortage of machines. We think that some members may have an old laptop sitting in a cupboard which they are loath to throw away. Well, we could put it to good use!

As long as it switches on, it doesn't matter what vintage it is. That's irrelevant for photographic programmes. We will clean off the hard drive by re-installing the operating disc (and will do that in your presence if you are worried about any sensitive files.)

If you have an old laptop you could donate to the U3A, please contact:

**Janet Austin** ☎ 01732 460578.

### Managing your Finances in Retirement

This **Seminar**, run by Knole, is aimed at giving information to U3A members who, at the point of retirement, are faced with a different set of issues from those that were relevant during their working life.



The **Seminar** will be led by experts in their field. The sessions are not meant to offer advice, as each member's circumstances will be unique, but aim to set out the latest thinking in these areas, which members can follow up if they choose.

**Date** Monday 2 April - 10am to 1pm

**Venue** Club Room, Otford Village Hall

#### **Schedule**

09.45 Registration

10-11 Talk and questions on

#### ***Inheritance Tax Planning***

*by Octopus investments*

11-11.20 Coffee

11.20-12.30 Talk and questions on

#### ***Power of Attorney & Wills***

*by Richard Lamb*

*of Dilworth Lamb Ltd., Orpington*

12.30-1pm Talk and questions on

#### ***Equity Release***

*by Mark Stroud*

*of Prospect Financial, Sevenoaks.*

**Cost** £4 a head

**Organiser** Magda Sweetland ☎ 01732 461901

Speakers co-ordinated by Danny Young,

Independent Financial Adviser: Charles Derby

**TO BOOK:** Please send a **cheque and a stamped addressed envelope**, together with a

note of your own details, name, address and telephone number to:

Judy Bunn, Woodlands, Caxton Lane,

Limpsfield Chart, Surrey RH8 0TD

## News from the Groups

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Beryl Mansell ☎ 01959 525010

### Groups with vacancies

#### Industrial Heritage

We meet 2-4pm on the 3rd Friday each month in members' houses. We concentrate on the South East and the topics are of the members' choosing. Our current programme is a talk on gunpowder in March and, in April, a visit to Faversham Mills including a guided tour. In May, there is a presentation on canals, followed in June by a visit to Hythe and the Royal Military Canal. New members will be very welcome. Please contact Ron and Janice Harding ☎ 01732 761076

#### First Lines

Six members have now joined this group which will meet for four more sessions, starting in March. We began with a first look at form and style in poetry, before examining **The Night Mail** by W.H.Auden. This was written as the background to a GPO documentary film which we were able to view at the end of the session. The intention is for this to become a permanent group from the autumn. To join, contact: Magda Sweetland ☎ 01732 461901.

#### Short Course

Six members have now joined this group which will meet for four more sessions, starting in March. We began with a first look at form and style in poetry, before examining **The Night Mail** by W.H.Auden. This was written as the background to a GPO documentary film which we were able to view at the end of the session. The intention is for this to become a permanent group from the autumn. To join, contact: Magda Sweetland ☎ 01732 461901.

**Family History Group 2** has two spaces. The group learns to use different reference sources, such as different kinds of criminals and the records they are creating. They also go on visits such as to The National Archives at Kew in March. Contact: Jean Stirk, ☎ 01732 884316.

**History of a House** has one vacancy. The aim is to establish the history of a house or building by investigating the changing structure, its use, the people who were owners or tenants and the community in which it is located. Each member of the Group chooses a house to study (often their own) and carries out their own research, with the help of advice from other members of the group. Visits are also arranged to houses of historic interest. The Group meets every six weeks. Contact: Carole Andrews ☎ 01732 459872

**Medieval History** can take 2/3 new members. The group meets 10-12 on the first Wednesday. We take a wide view of medieval history starting with the reign of Henry II, with talks on the Knights Templars, castles through the period, the customs and beliefs of medieval Christmas and the development and growth of Italian City States. We will look at life in the medieval city, buildings and furnishings of the period. Contact: Jennifer Ruffles ☎ 01732 461348 or Linda Gilbert ☎ 01732 883386.

**London Studies 1** would be delighted to recruit some extra members (p.16 in Handbook). Also, **Walking 1** has formed a section for those wanting to walk only for a morning and seek some extra members. In both cases you would be very welcome to give us a try - or ask for more information.

Contact Maureen & Arthur Russ ☎ 01732 453863.

### Group Organisers' Coffee Morning, 2 Feb

25-30 Organisers came to discuss what was happening in their groups and these are some of the points they raised:

- Some have been leading the same group for a long time and would like a change, possibly of topic. We are starting to recommend that, after 4/5 years, everyone thinks of the succession principle but that's not obligatory.
- All recognise it is hard to integrate new members in to an established group - everyone has to put extra effort in to making the joins seamless, even the new members.
- There was a need for new groups with new GOs. Existing GOs enjoyed the work and found it rewarding, when preparing the actual material was shared out. Everyone will help the new Organiser to get started.
- The Website: all knew of its existence but few are consulting it as yet. However, the Executive has been looking at a new Website designed by the team members and are very impressed by its possibilities. It is in the trial stage but should be running by the autumn.
- GOs appreciated the return of the Open Afternoon, even if they had few or no spaces to fill. It felt like being back in business. Likewise, the **Handbook, Newsletter** and **Time to Learn** were all seen as successful publications.
- Most groups are running well but GOs advertise to Knole if there are spare places.
- Members were confused about what they could join in Knole, and also whether they could become full members paying a subscription. The shared groups are marked S in the Handbook and their Contacts are named. They can be rung or e-mailed in the usual way and newcomers will be welcomed. Sevenoaks U3A does not want to encourage multiple memberships - in order to keep the admin down - and the same goes for Knole. If there are a number of Shared Groups (and some of these are floated to all the West Kent U3As), there is no need to pay a second subscription.

## Social Events News

Pam Walshe ☎ 01732 454769

Flyers are enclosed for three events, the Science Group Visit to **Kew Museums**, a repeat visit to **London Docklands** (which sold out last year) and the **Jazz and Blues** Study Morning. Please apply early - our trips do fill as a rule. Remember we hold applications for ten days so everyone has enough time to apply, then open them by ballot.

John Dean has a total of 35, including members of Malling U3A, travelling to **Sicily** in the autumn. John had the frustration of finding that Easyjet had cancelled the flight for the homeward journey! However, within a short time and with no fuss at all, he had managed to reschedule everyone for the same trip **but a week earlier**.

Many of you have asked about the Knole trip to **Bletchley Park**. They sell places at the Monthly Meeting, and their trip virtually filled on the first day. Because of the interest generated, we think that Sevenoaks also ought to run a visit of its own in the autumn. Watch this space!

The performances at The Stag of **Journey to the Throne**, an account of the girlhood and accession of Queen Elizabeth II, were attended by at least 100 Sevenoaks members. We are pleased to report that Diana Edwards and Pamela Murphy are looking at bringing a shortened version to our AGM in June, as our own celebration of The Jubilee.

### Events Open to All

**The Strollers Tuesday 20 March**  
Meet at the car park of 'The George' in Trottscliffe for an 11am start. The walk is about 3 miles with a few stiles and slopes. The views from the Pilgrims way are good. Followed by an optional lunch at 'The George'.  
Leader Barbara Coleyshaw ☎ 01732 884381.

**Ambling Wednesday 21 March**  
Meet at the main Westerham pay and display car park for a 4-mile walk starting at 10:00am. From Sevenoaks, the car park is on the right hand side of the A25 just before entering Westerham (map ref 451541). Optional pub lunch at approx. 12:30.  
Leaders: Robbie and David Hill ☎ 01732 453185.

**Half Day Walking Monday 26 March**  
Meet at Spadework Limited Nurseries in Teston Road, Offham for a 10am start. The grid reference is 664573 and the postcode ME19 5NA. From the A20 in Wrotham Heath turn right into B2016 Seven Mile Lane and after 200 yards left into Teston Road which goes through Offham. There is a large Spadework board on the left just after Offham village. Lunch afterwards at Spadework.  
Leader Ann Matthews ☎ 01732 456512.

### First Friday Lunch

The Woodman, Otford, 12.00 for 12.30. Contact Norna Munson ☎ 01959 523076 to book. All are welcome. No Lunch in April - Good Friday.

### Friday 2 March

### Bridge for Pleasure

### Wed 14 and 28 March

The Group plays bridge at Otford Village Hall on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday mornings of each month from 9.50am until 12.15pm. The winner on 25 January was David Record and on 8 February was Geoff Howson. The group is an 'Open' group, so any new players can just come along. If you need to make contact, please call Colin and Mary Butson on ☎ 01732 458356

### Reminders:

Flyers about the following events will be posted on the Website: [www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk](http://www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk)

- **Active Ageing Conference** East Grinstead
- **Family History Study Day** Ash
- **Photo Competition** - 'Seasonal Britain'
- **Theatre Workshop** Piccadilly Theatre, London
- **Welcome Trust Lecture** - The Royal Society
- **National Choir** - register of interest
- **Study Afternoon on Shakespeare** - Stratford
- **Edward Elgar** 'Master of the King's Musick' full study day in Worcester
- **Shared Learning Project with Eltham Palace**

### Diary

#### March

Fri	2	First Friday lunch
Mon	12	Science Group Meeting
Tues	13	Coffee Morning, The Bullfinch
Wed	14	Bridge for Pleasure
Thur	15	Jewish London visit**
Mon	19	Computer Group Meeting
Tues	20	The Strollers
Wed	21	Ambling
Mon	26	Half Day Walking
Wed	28	Bridge for Pleasure
Wed	28	Monthly Meeting

#### April

Mon	2	Finances in Retirement (Knole)
Wed	18	Science Group visit to Kew*
Mon	30	Opera: Kent U3A Study Day**
Mon	30/4	May York trip

#### May

Wed	9	London Docklands*
Thu	24	Jazz and Blues Study Morning*

#### October

Mon 15-Sun 21 7-day tour of Sicily\*\*(New dates)

\* Flyer included with this Newsletter

\*\* Flyer included with January Newsletter

**Editorial team:** Magda Sweetland, Linda Young, Robin Tonge and John Spurway