

Chairman's Notes

Our biennial **Group Organisers' Conference** being held on **Tuesday 12th May** provides an opportunity for all GOs to get together to exchange ideas and get to know each other in the relaxed environment at the Salomons Centre. For those of you in groups, your GO will be asking you for views on how our U3A is running and seeking suggestions and ideas for improvement so that these can be brought forward to the Conference to enable the Executive Committee to consider in our future planning. If your GO cannot attend please volunteer to come and represent your group. Please let **Sue Henson** know if or not you will be coming or representing a group.

The Annual Handbook is now being prepared. Entries describing each group will be shorter to accommodate the number of groups we have in Sevenoaks; this will also ease the workload on the Publications Team. However, a full description of your group can be placed on the website and can be updated throughout the year should there be any changes. **Please can you respond to Graham Smith as soon as possible.**

A reminder that our **Science Study Day scheduled for Wednesday 10th June**, will be addressing our Future Energy needs and Security. If you would like to come and have not yet applied please do so with the flyer issued in the last Newsletter.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at these forthcoming events.

Bob Ruffles 01732 461348 chairman@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

Meetings open to all

Monthly Meeting

Community Centre, Bat & Ball, 2pm

Preventing Art Theft and Fraud

Vernon Rapley

The speaker is head of Security and Visitor Services at the V&A and was formerly head of the Met's art theft unit.

Wednesday 27 May



Science Group

Monday 11 May

From plants to pills

Trevor Jones

The lecture will demonstrate how nature's Pharmacy has provided not only a number of traditional medicines that were (and some still are) used to treat common ailments but also how a knowledge of ethnobiology has pointed the way for medicinal chemistry to provide new and improved medicines for a wide range of diseases. Examples include the development of modern analgesic drugs based on an understanding of the mechanism of action of opiates and aspirin; synthetic derivatives of natural products now used extensively in the treatment of various cancers; purified toxins from bacteria and fish that are of value in treating dystonia, overactive bladder and migraine; advances in the treatment and cure of malaria based on chemical derivatives from plant extracts.

Oxford Village Memorial Hall, 2pm.
 All Sevenoaks U3A members welcome.
 £2 entry includes tea.

Computer Group

Friday 15 May

Managing Your Computer

Tony Fishpool

Setting Up a New Computer
 Transferring data between Computers
 Speeding Up and Cleaning Your Computer
 How safe is the software?
 Recovery Issues
 Oxford Village Memorial Hall, 2pm.
 All Sevenoaks U3A members welcome.
 £2 entry includes tea.

N.B. Change of date next month due to the May Bank Holiday:

Please send copy for the May Newsletter by Friday, 8 May 2015 (1 week early) to both Linda Young and Magda Sweetland

News and Views

Magda Sweetland

David Jackson

For ten years, David Jackson has been the Group Organiser of **Europe Today**, but he has also been a member of the administrative team, handling the ever expanding database. Here, he talks about his experience.

How did you come to join Sevenoaks U3A?

We moved to Sevenoaks in 1982 and, like a lot of members, discovered that ours was to be a family home in a dormitory town. At retirement, I found that my friends were at a distance. A friend of my wife's mentioned Tonbridge U3A so I joined that in 2003. SDC ran Power Walking in Lullingstone CP, and there I heard people talk about Sevenoaks U3A. One of them gave me the contact details and eventually I joined.

Which groups did you join?

I joined a couple of **Walking** groups, and a German group where the leader was a native German speaker which worked well. That's essential in my view. It is not easy to find a native speaker and enough members at the same level for a language group. And then I joined **Britain within the European Union**, run by Florence Summerskill. Europe was a major topic from the end of the 90s, for about 10 years, and specifically the area of enlargement. Florence ran two parallel groups but when she stood down, it was hard to find another leader, so Richard Bird and I stepped in to keep the subject running.

Has the approach to the subject changed in that time?

We changed the title and tried to extend the coverage. It was first of all **European Affairs** and then **Europe Today**. A Study Group may have to change its scope like that to keep the subject alive. We talk about European countries and their different cultures, as well as the political dimension. The group has moved between 5 to 14 members, and now stands at 9 enthusiasts, but it is good to recruit new blood each year to refresh the points of view. After ten years, I am glad to say a new member has taken over the running of the group, John Harris.

Tell us how members prepare for the discussions.

At the start, this was all paper based. For my first presentation, I read five text books and prepared a script from what I had learned! At the time it was difficult to find much information on the internet. Now of course it is easier, but you need to go deeper than Wikipedia and present the key facts you have learned and your conclusions. We have turned towards taking a single subject for the year,

and can examine that in depth. We have looked at Electoral systems, Medical provision and Education and each member chooses to talk about the country they are interested in. We cross-refer when we can. Each year, I have prepared a digest of facts to avoid repetition of data, and that pulls the facts together in a simple format.

Why do you think members are drawn to this subject?

This is a topic that is in line with true U3A principles of informal adult learning. It requires a good deal of personal research, and then constructing an argument at the end of it to put to your peers. This may be too demanding for recent retirees, who are older than we were at the start of their U3A career. Volunteering at this level may be more difficult now, and that reflects changes in society.

But it's a perennial subject, and many members are keen to extend their knowledge, and understanding of the psyche of European countries. The difference between north and south is a division that's never going to be bridged. We need that knowledge to grasp what is happening in Europe and how that affects us. In the political debate throughout this election, there has been almost no mention of international topics. Our knowledge of other countries is still low, and Europe is quite a distant concept except as a holiday destination. Our Group tries to correct this deficiency.

On the subject of holidays, you came on most of the European trips organised by John Dean on behalf of the Social Events team.

My wife is German, and our family holidays were spent travelling to see her family. That meant our knowledge of other countries was limited and although I travelled to the major cities on business, that was a quick through put, airport to hotel. So travelling around Europe in good company was a wonderful opportunity provided by Sevenoaks U3A, and those trips were brilliantly organised by John Dean. The test is that everyone on the trip was a good dinner companion.

You took over management of the database two or three years ago. That's a key role.

Derrick Shaw had done a first class job in coping with the large database, so that it could meet its ancillary functions. When I took it on, I tried to simplify the number of fields, and set it up so that all the requirements are more easily executed. Apart from checking subscriptions once a year, it is used for running off labels for our own monthly Newsletter, and also there are specific requirements from National Office for the mailing of **Third Age Matters**. When I handed it over to the next database manager, there were seven A4 pages of instructions!

Interview by Magda Sweetland

March Monthly Meeting

At our March meeting Gilly Halcrow gave a talk about the Special Operations Executive. Both of her parents served in that organisation during the Second World War. Her fee was donated to the Dougie Dalzell MC Memorial Trust which provides help for serving and former service people. Dougie Dalzell, who was at school in Sevenoaks, was killed in Afghanistan while commanding a platoon of the Coldstream Guards on his 27th birthday. Members who attended were invited to make their own contributions to the trust and the magnificent sum of £152 was raised. The trust has written to thank those who kindly contributed.

Nick White
Speakers Organiser

News from the Groups

Sue Henson

Cycling Group's 100th Ride

The Cycling Group recently completed its 100th ride having cycled twice a month over the past 4 years. The occasion was marked by a celebratory lunch (see photo below).

New members are always welcome - contact our new leader Patrick Pascall.



Positions on the Executive Committee

Nominations are invited for election to posts on the Executive Committee at the AGM in June.

Further information and nomination forms can be obtained from the Secretary.

Under the revised Constitution, completed nomination forms must reach the Secretary no later than 27 May 2015

Judy Hebert
Secretary

Social Events News

Pam Walshe

Malden and Layer Marney Tower

There are still places on the coach to visit Malden and Layer Marney Tower on May 20th. Those interested should apply on the flyer which was enclosed with the March Newsletter and which can also be downloaded from the Sevenoaks U3A web site

Gypsy

We have been able to take advantage of an offer to U3A groups to secure tickets for Gypsy at a considerably reduced price. A small group will be going to the Savoy theatre on Wed October 14 to see this production which has had 5 * reviews!



Chair of the Social Events Committee

I have been Chair of the Social Events Committee for a number of years and enjoy working with enthusiastic members who come up with good suggestions and are keen to make them happen. We try to plan for the year ahead with a series of outings to places of interest, such as notable houses and gardens, museums, towns, villages and river trips. One committee member takes responsibility for each visit, does the costings, and runs the visit with back-up from another member. There has been a seamless changeover of committee members, all with new ideas, and we have been fortunate in replacing a first-rate treasurer with another excellent one.

We always welcome suggestions for outings and holidays, so never hesitate to approach us with your ideas. After many years of very successful holidays abroad, we seem to be finding it difficult to fill the trips proposed. Do please give us some feedback on this.

I enjoy chairing this committee of cheerful, positive members, discussing future events and reporting back on past ones. My other activities in the U3A take place in theatre group, the gallery group and garden group 2. You may also see me on a stage either outdoors or indoors with the drama group.

Pam Walshe

N.B. If your circumstances or those of someone you know in U3A have changed, please let the Membership Secretary know.

Launch of Meopham U3A

This launch took place on Tuesday 14 April, and was a rousing success! There were 140+ in the hall, which meant it was standing room only. And we haven't encountered that since the launch of Sevenoaks in 1994. There was a real buzz about the day, and a good community feeling in the hall. Although Meopham is not a large township, it is surrounded by a good many other villages such as Hartley, New Ash Green, Culverstone and Vigo, all of which have a sizeable population. Remarkably, Meopham already has 80 different clubs and societies, so the arrival of the U3A is long overdue.

Much of the hard work on publicity was done by members of other U3As : Fran Dunk, Sue Bates, Sylvia Tillotson, Sylvia Stickings, Jenny Williamson and Clover Lawrence. The Chairmen of adjacent U3As also attended and spoke about various aspects of the organisation : the nature of the charity and how it is administered by National Office, how Study Groups are run, the importance of the steering committee and the way it is composed and, not least, the value of the Kent Network in providing practical help and advice to the fledgling U3As. We wish Meopham every success.

The follow-up meeting will be on Tuesday 14 July, 2-4pm at Meopham Village Hall. The steering committee will be taking subscriptions and signing members up to the new groups. If you have friends who live nearby, please alert them. They will be very welcome.

Magda Sweetland
President Sevenoaks U3A

Events open to all

First Friday Lunch

Friday 1 May

The Windmill, Weald, 12.30 pm

To book, contact Pat Smith by Thursday morning 30 April.

Bridge for Pleasure

Weds 13 & 27 May

The Group plays at Otford Village Hall on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday mornings of each month from 9.50 a.m. until 12.15 p.m. The winner on 25 March was Nick White and on 8 April was Sue Christy.

We are an "Open" group, so any new players can just come along. If you need to make contact, call Colin and Mary Butson.

Half Day Walking

Monday 18 May

Meet on the road by the church in Knockholt in time for a 10am start. The church is on the main road opposite the village school, NGR 468589. A five mile walk, hilly in parts, to Horn's Green and along the North Downs Way followed by an optional lunch at the Tally Ho.

Leader : Nick White

The Strollers

Tuesday 19 May

Meet at 11.00 in the car park of the village hall in Ightham. A walk around the village will be followed by an optional lunch at the George and Dragon. Leader : Penny Chapman

Ambling

Wednesday 20 May

Meet in the lower car park of The Vineyard pub, The Down, Lamberhurst (TN3 8EU) for a 4-mile walk around the grounds of Scotney Castle starting at 10:00 am. Leave the A21 and enter Lamberhurst along School Hill and The Broadway. After The Chequers pub on the left veer right into High Street (B2100), this turns into King's Hill, at the top of the hill veer right and the pub is on the right after 100m. The walk will be followed by an optional lunch. Leader: Grahame Lee

Diary

May

Fri	1	First Friday Lunch
Mon	11	Science Group Meeting
Wed	13	Bridge for Pleasure
Fri	15	Computer Group Meeting
Tue	19	The Strollers
Wed	20	Ambling
Wed	20	Maldon and Layer Marney Tower**
Wed	27	Bridge for Pleasure
Wed	27	Monthly Meeting
Thu	28	Jazz Study Morning: Snake Davis**

June

Wed	10	Science Study Day*
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July

Wed	1	St Albans and Garden of the Rose*
Wed	15	River Thames and Syon House
Mon	27	Kent Study Day: Bridges over Time**

* Flyer enclosed

** Flyer with March edition