

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

As we enter the second year of Covid restrictions, it is reassuring to know that many groups are continuing to operate using Zoom – even though there is no substitute to meeting face to face. So many groups have submitted news of their activities this month that we have had to carry eight reports forward to our next edition. I would like to draw special attention to the Local Studies group which will be of interest to many of our members, but is in need of a new organiser. Volunteer needed! Our Monthly Meeting on 24th March will be preceded by a Special General Meeting. The Charity Commission has allowed us to hold virtual general meetings for the past few months, but we need to add some extra clauses to our constitution to allow us to hold future meetings, and to vote, by electronic means. The aim of the special meeting is to approve those clauses. Even though the government is hoping to remove all restrictions by 21st June, we feel that there will be insufficient time to organise a physical meeting two days later, and the AGM on 23rd June will therefore be on Zoom.

Nick White

MONTHLY MEETING - APRIL 28TH at 2 p.m.



Our speaker this month is Richard Griffin who will be giving a presentation entitled, “The Queen’s Police Officer”.

Richard served in the Metropolitan Police from 1970 to 2013 when he retired with the rank of Superintendent. From 1983 to 1986 he was the Personal Protection Officer (PPO) for Prince Edward and from 1986 to 1999 he was PPO for the Duke of Edinburgh. From 1999 to 2013 he served in the role of PPO to Her Majesty the Queen, a position known as the Queen’s Police Officer. Her Majesty invested him with the honour of LVO, Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order, on his retirement.

No further registrations are required as Zoom link invitations will be sent to all current Sevenoaks u3a members, and I do hope you will be able to join us on the day for what promises to be a fascinating talk.

Barbara Coleyshaw, Meetings Manager meetings@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

SCIENCE OPEN MEETING - APRIL 12TH at 2 p.m.

Our next **Science Webinar** will be on **Monday 12th April 2021 at 14:00hrs**

From Dioscorides to Darwin - A review of scientific progress from Greek philosophy to the Victorian era by Tim Betts

Tim is a returning speaker who previously talked to us on the history of anaesthetic techniques. Tim started his working life as an experimental pathologist at the Institute of Cancer Research moving to the Royal Brompton Hospital and Cardiothoracic Institute where he became Curator of the Research Facilities. His talk will cover the scientific progress in medical science over the generations.

If you haven't already registered to join these webinars please contact scienceday@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

Bob Ruffles

IMPROVING MUSIC RECEPTION IN ZOOM

Are you having trouble with Zoom audio reception? The Tech team and some EC members have been looking at the quality of transmission of music to Zoom users. Zoom is optimised for voice transmission such that music transmission may not be received in an optimum way.

For our test we linked up with our forthcoming AGM speaker who as a professional harpist, will be transmitting live music using high quality microphones. We therefore wanted to establish the optimum experience for our members. We used a variety of common devices that would represent what our members use from a basic PC or laptop with integral speakers to devices with auxiliary enhancements such as external speakers, headphones or links to TV systems via the HDMI link.

Unsurprisingly, the auxiliary devices enhance reception for the listener but there are also settings within Zoom which can be adjusted to optimise music transmission. The YouTube video explains how to make these adjustments: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEAb4G063sM>. Adjusting Zoom audio settings together with the addition of auxiliary devices will help to optimise your experience when listening to Zoom music broadcasts.

The Tech Team

NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS

RECORDER GROUP



The Recorder group was set up in 2010 by June Farrel, who initially ran two sub-groups, one of experienced players and one of three beginners, two of whom could neither read music nor play the recorder and are both still members of the group. I was one of the latter and was introduced to the mysteries of musical notation via 'Three Blind Mice', causing many giggles in our house. Eventually the two sub-groups merged and for the past couple of years we have had ten members, including an ex-teacher who can play four of the main types of recorder.

Since March last year, under the leadership of Pat Wells, we have met weekly on Zoom. Despite technological limitations to playing, Zoom has been of enormous benefit in mitigating the isolation of lockdown and has been particularly welcomed by the member who has been marooned in Greece since last summer by travel restrictions. She is missing our group with whom she enjoys the same sense of humour, banter and gossip. Indeed, we can spend more time gossiping than playing! Alerted by June, eight of us joined her recently in enrolling for the national U3A (virtual) Winter School for recorders, the nine of us constituting more than one third of the 25 who joined. It has proved to be a rewarding and helpful experience, but also hard work. Over the first four weeks of the five-week course we were provided with the music and a backing track for four pieces, ranging from 'Basin Street Blues' to 'Blow the Wind Southerly'. After each meeting we were asked to send the tutor recordings of our own part for two of the pieces, all the individual contributions then being compiled to give ensemble playing. The final meeting was a grand "concert" when we played the sixteen pieces which we had learnt on the course. Whilst modesty prevents us blowing our own 'trumpets', if you would like a short, free, concert of our compilations then follow the link below.

<https://dick332.wixsite.com/u3arecorders>

Frank Matthews recorders@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

NORDIC WALKING - APRIL 14TH

Wednesday, April 14th. Meet in the car park at Otford Memorial Hall, TN14 5PQ in time for a 10.30 start. A gentle walk of about 2 miles with poles. The organisers will bring a few sets of spare poles. This video may be of interest: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?=&ApY9YPf5sWE>

Nick White nordicwalking@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

HISTORY STUDY MORNING



The Post Modern & Classical History Group held a Zoom meeting on March 3rd with members of the **Taking an Age Group** to hear a talk on Dragon Hall, in

Norwich and the life of Robert Toppes. Our speaker, Richard Matthew, gave a fascinating insight into the story of Robert Toppes who became a member of the mercantile elite and emerged in the 15th century and ran Norwich. His importance has come to light in recent years through the 'discovery' of Dragon Hall, his magnificent trading hall near the river in Norwich. We learnt about his family; his roles as Mayor and MP; his diversifying into property and banking; his political troubles; and the magnificent stained glass window he donated to his parish church. It was an excellent talk which will definitely tempt some of our members to visit Norwich when they can.

Our thanks to Celia Smith for recommending Richard to us. We have continued to hold meetings via Zoom over the last year and we have room for one or two more members in the Post Modern & Classical History Group. Pandemics and plagues may come and go but our u3a History Groups continue to entertain and enlighten our members !

Jennifer Ruffles and Linda Gilbert

medieval@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

MILITARY HISTORY PRESENTATION

On **Tuesday 2nd March** Ken Fowler of our Military History group gave a Zoom talk about his experiences as a wireless operator on Lancaster bombers during the war.

This talk, which was recorded, has been extremely well received by many u3a members. We are therefore trying to upload the video of the talk onto our website, so that some members can enjoy it again, if they wish, and all other members can see it for the first time. Go to www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

AMBLING - APRIL 21ST

Wednesday, April 21st. Meet outside the Kentish Rifleman at Dunk's Green, TN11 9RU in time for a 10.30 start. The walk will be no more than 4 miles at a steady pace. Pubs will still be closed, but it should be possible to stay for a picnic after the walk. The leader will be Tineke Regan. ambling@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

The deadline for contributions to the May newsletter is April 10th to news@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

LOCAL STUDIES - ORGANISER NEEDED

This group, which has been operating for many years, visits and makes studies of local places of interest. The group organiser is standing down and the group needs a new member to take over. The role requires an interest in local places and the ability to make regular contact with group members by email. If you may be interested please contact **Nick White** chairman@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk or **Elaine Elston** groupdev@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

EUROPEAN FILM GROUP

The group meets in the afternoon of the second Tuesday of the month. We watch a film individually, by streaming or circulating DVDs, before a meeting and then discuss it. The member who chooses the film leads the discussion. We spend 12 months or so following a movement/theme. This helps to gain a deeper perspective on attitudes and influences in the film. Currently we are exploring the French New Wave - 1959 to late 70s.

John Clark eurofilm@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

ZOOMING AHEAD

After a year of lockdowns the use of Zoom in our U3A has grown in popularity amongst our members. We have found attendance at some of our meetings now exceeds the 100 participant level allowed in the basic Pro Zoom plan and there is also an increasing demand from Group Organisers to host meetings. The Webteam with EC approval has therefore upgraded to a Zoom Business plan that give us ten licences and the capacity for 300 participants at a meeting without time constraints.

So far we have allocated most of the licences to Group Organisers who host more than one Group meeting and this has reduced the administrative burden on the previous licences, but we do have one spare licence. If you are a Group Organiser managing more than one group, or a member who acts as a Zoom host for a number of meetings, and would like to take advantage of a licence, please let us know.

At some point in the future we hopefully will return to 'face to face' meetings, but Zoom offers us the ability to live stream our talks to a wider audience and this enhancement is currently being explored for the benefit of all our members.

Bob Ruffles webteam@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

SCIENCE - OUR UNIVERSE

The group meets regularly using Zoom. We keep in touch with the topical issues like the Mars landings, but we try to build a solid base of knowledge so we can better understand the big picture. We use all types of media for our study base and often use books designed for the layman. We have been active since about 2008. We visited CERN in 2014, and have had contact with university departments in Glasgow and Portsmouth, which are at the forefront of gravitational wave astronomy.

Stan Williams cosmo@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

GARDEN GROUP 1

February's meeting on Zoom was the first time we have met in any shape or form since our last planning meeting in January 2020. We had set out our timetable of garden visits for the year, as we usually do, but then Covid came along and we were unable to fulfil any of them. We now plan to use Emmets Garden's pre-booking facility in April, followed by a brief stop at the Group Organiser's garden. After that we intend to visit more local gardens. We have vacancies in the Group.

Janice Clark garden1@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

MUSIC APPRECIATION B

This group meets in members' homes on the fourth Monday afternoon (2-4 pm), to listen to recorded programmes prepared by members or run on a "pick and mix" basis. We contribute what we can, whether we know a lot or a little. We don't claim to be experts but we always enjoy listening and exploring music and sharing our tastes. There are nine places in Group B and we have ONE VACANCY at the moment, and whether you listen to the odd bit of Classic FM or attend live symphony concerts, you'd be most welcome to join us. You can find more information on our website.

Jeff Lee musicb@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

KNOLE U3A HOLIDAY TO BATH/WELLS

Had enough of being locked down? Knole U3A has vacancies for this holiday. The trip will include half-board at a 4-star hotel near Bristol, guided tours, varied visits and a boat excursion.

For details, please contact **Margaret Thorpe** on 01732 460307 or email margaret.thorpe@btinternet.com.

DIARY

Mar 24th	Special General Meeting 2 p.m. — followed by Paul Laundy—"A Talk About Hong Kong"	Apr 12th	Science Open Meeting 2 p.m. From Dioscorides to Darwin - by Tim Betts
Apr 14th	Nordic Walking— 10.30 a.m. start	Apr 19th	Computer Open Group Meeting 2 p.m. - Better Use of the Internet
Apr 21st	Ambling—10.30 a.m. start	Apr 28th	Monthly Meeting 2 p.m.— a presentation by Richard Griffin—"The Queen's Police Officer"

COMPUTER GROUP

We will be holding a virtual meeting using Zoom at **2 p.m on April 19th**. The format will be a presentation by members on **Better Use of the Internet** followed by questions and discussion. Any member who wishes to join the meeting will be very welcome. Anyone who has already given us an email address will be invited automatically, but others should send an email to **Mike Davies** at computing@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk so we can send a link to join the meeting.

U3A FACEBOOK GARDENING GROUP

National U3A has a private group on Facebook which aims to bring together all gardeners around the country. It describes itself as a group :

- for U3A members who like gardening;
- for people who would like to like gardening;
- for people who would like to know more about gardening; and
- for people to pick each other's brains about plants and identification of plants.

If you would like to join the group, go to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/837676779927352>

COMPUTING — LEARN MY WAY

Learn My Way is a website of online courses for beginners and has a number of free courses on the following subjects:

- Using a Computer or Device;
- Online Basics;
- Office Programs;
- More Internet Skills;
- Online Safety;
- Improving Your Health Online;
- Managing Your Money Online;
- Public Services Online

Go to <https://www.learnmyway.com/subjects>

U3A EYE

National U3A are running a rolling fortnightly project to encourage members to take and submit pictures of their surroundings during this unprecedented time. They post a different theme each fortnight and invite you to submit your photo on that topic. This is not a competition and it is not about your photographic skill – what they want from you are interesting photos, possibly different ways of viewing things, anything which has captured your imagination or caught your eye.

At the end of every fortnight they will choose and publish up to 15 photos. All you need to do is upload your photo.

Please only submit **one photo** per person. Your photo should also **not** include any people.

For more details about the fortnightly topics for your photo, please go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes/u3a-eye>

THEATRE STUDIES

The group meets once a month and would welcome anyone who is prepared to host and do a short introduction to a play/production once a year. The plays/productions are necessarily chosen from what is streaming from the NT, RSC, Old Vic and The Kiln. Currently the group is watching and will be discussing the *Phaedra* by Racine.

Vicki Joyce theatrestudies@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

PIANO PLAYING GROUP

We are a small group playing mostly classical music at all levels above beginner—able to play a prepared piece each month in a relaxed atmosphere where mistakes are very acceptable as we, hopefully, improve. Classical piano only, no electronics. We take turns to host in each other's houses and will restart as soon as the virus allows.

Tony Buick piano@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

U3A ONLINE LEARNING EVENTS

These events include items from the National Gallery, Royal Institution, Guildhall Art Gallery, and the British Library (for which there may be a charge). National u3a are also offering a number of workshops, webinars and interactive sessions delivered by members for members, which are free to join. These are in high demand and spaces are limited, particularly for those with an interactive element. For more information and to book for these events go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

A NEW USE FOR OLD LAPTOPS

An appeal has been launched by the Community Action Group of Sundridge and Ide Hill for old laptop computers. It is their latest initiative to support the communities of Sevenoaks, Edenbridge and Tonbridge through these difficult times and is aiming to help as many children as possible to be able to use a laptop for remote learning, which is so important for their education.

If you have an old laptop in the house you can donate it by contacting Martin on 07785 342096 or info@sundridgewithidehill.co.uk. A local computer wizard, Scott Harris, (07779 285839 or scott@myitwizard.co.uk) has volunteered to renovate your old machine and make it suitable as a school resource. The old hard drive will be removed and either returned to you or destroyed by Scott, so there are no security risks involved. A new hard drive will then be installed at a cost to the group of £21 (donations happily received !).

The laptop will then be made available to schools in the area in conjunction with the Laptop Library in Sevenoaks, who will take the computer and loan it to schools/pupils. No profit will be made by any party on any of the machines. Please help if you can. Your old laptop is much more valuable than you might think.