

CHAIRMAN’S COLUMN

First and foremost, I would like to invite ALL Sevenoaks u3a members (Su3a) to the Open Afternoon (OA) at the Bat & Ball Centre (B&BC) on October 27th at 2:30 pm. All Group Organisers (GOs) have also been invited. If you are one of the substantial number of members who does not belong to one of our 93 groups, this is your opportunity to talk to the GO of a Group that might interest you. Even if the Group you favour has no vacancies, the GO may start a waiting list, and you can also talk to Executive Committee members who will explore starting a new group. The first new Group since I became Chairman, French Conversation, is starting on September 16th. For cricket fans Ray Leathers will be at the OA ready to recruit for a new Group, Walking Cricket (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GcOn73XLzg>).

Last month I asked for volunteers and I’m delighted that Ken Robinson responded. He has taken on the role of Hall Manager, preparing for monthly meetings in the B&BC, one of those vital “behind the scenes” roles without which Su3a could not operate. I am writing to members who offered to help in the January 2019 “Members’ Survey”, reviewed in this newsletter. I am seeking to build up the administration of our u3a. If you feel moved to help, please email me so we can work out how you can contribute. **Covid-19 is still with us and we must proceed with caution.** I have written to GOs with “Covid-19 Comments”. Although since July 2021 Government Guidance allows any number of people or households to meet inside, without social distancing, the

advice is still that the risks of close contact be taken into account. You should ensure that you are at least 2 weeks clear of your second vaccination. GOs and their Group members may agree to use hand sanitizer and masks. The size of a private living room will be taken into account, and risks of transmission mitigated by having windows open, while keeping comfortable by wearing warm clothes and perhaps having the central heating on. It may be that for your group, continuing to meet using Zoom is the better option. Having a Covid-19 test is a reasonable precaution to ensure you are not infectious. Covid-19 can present in ways you may not expect so if you feel at all unwell stay away from the meeting and get yourself tested.

Dr. Ken Brown
chairman@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

ELAINE KNIGHT-ELSTON 1951—2021

We do not normally post obituaries to members in our newsletters but we are making an exception as we have never in our history had an active EC member pass away whilst in post. It is therefore with regret that we have to announce that Elaine died on Saturday 4th September after a long illness. Elaine



was an active member of the EC as the Group Development Officer and was elected to the post in 2019. She had been actively involved in the Group Development team since 2014 and supported our U3A in many ways. She was also very active in Otford village affairs, being a member of her local WI, a volunteer at the local library helping with IT training and also a volunteer in the local charity shop. She was still an IT lecturer at North West Kent College in Dartford.

In her role as Group Development Officer she was working until the last week of August with our Chairman and a small team to implement the forthcoming Open Afternoon on the 27th October. The best tribute we can give to such a valuable member is to support the Open Afternoon and recognise the hard work Elaine put in to ensure its success.

OCTOBER DIARY

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| Oct 11th | Science Open Meeting - Various Missions to Mars — Prof. David Southwood | Oct 13th | Nordic Walking |
| Oct 20th | Ambling | Oct 27th | u3a Open Afternoon |

RESUME OF 2020 MEMBERS SURVEY

Sevenoaks u3a February 2020 Members' Survey – report to the membership – delayed by Covid.

An Executive Committee (EC) Planning Workshop on July 30th 2021 reviewed these results, which I now share with you. First, I would like to thank members who responded to the survey. There were **152** replies, only **17%** of our membership, so results should be treated with caution. A Su3a survey in 2015, and a recent National Survey, show that our membership has a typical gender and age distribution. Unlike many other u3a's, we continued with some activities throughout the pandemic using Zoom technology.

We currently have **93** groups, down 30% from a peak of **128** in the 2015. Membership, now around **900**, has dropped slightly over the same period.

There were comments about the need for:

- more friendliness to new members;
- fuller engagement with digital technology;
- and more member engagement with committees.
- A number of members do not participate in any activity.

All these issues will be addressed by the EC. Members who did respond were actively engaged in Groups, Meetings or Social Events. **32** new interest groups were suggested and will be followed up. Introducing and maintaining new groups and activities enables us all to enjoy a successful and vibrant u3a, but requires members to volunteer to help.

The full report of the Su3a Members' Survey is in the Members' Info section of our website at <https://www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk/Members-Info/Publication-Survey-Analysis--October-News.pdf>

Dr. Ken Brown Chairman

October 2021

NORDIC WALKING

Wednesday 13th October 10.30am

Meet at the Pheasant Plucker (formerly the Woodman) TN14 6BU, on the B2042 at Goathurst Common. The walk will be about 3 miles through the adjoining woodland. Lunch for those members who wish to stay will be at the Pheasant Plucker.

Contact : nordicwalking@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

AMBLING

Wednesday 20th October 10.00am

Meet at the Pheasant Plucker (formerly the Woodman) TN14 6BU, on the B2042 at Goathurst Common. The walk will be 4 miles through the adjoining woodland. Lunch for those members who wish to stay will be at the Pheasant Plucker.

Contact : ambling@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

BRIDGE FOR PLEASURE

We finally restarted bridge at Otford on the 8th September and had 3 tables – probably not too bad for our first turnout, especially as it was a beautiful summer's day and some people must have been tempted to do something outdoors on what was forecast to be the last really warm day for some time. Congratulations to Ann Mills, our first winner for 18 months !

We will be running another extra session on 22nd September and thereafter the new season begins with the usual sessions on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month hopefully from October to July 2022. For information contact **John and Sue Christy** on 01732 463911 or email bridge@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

A SENIOR'S VERSION OF FACEBOOK

For those of my generation who do not, and cannot, comprehend why Facebook exists : I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook, while applying the same principles.

Therefore, every day I walk down the street and tell people what I have eaten, how I feel at that moment, what I have done the night before, and what I will do later and with whom. I give them pictures of my family, my dog and of me gardening, taking things apart in the garage, watering the lawn, standing in front of landmarks, driving around town, having lunch, and doing what anybody and everybody does every day.

I also listen to their conversations, give them a "thumbs up" and tell them I "like" them. And it works just like Facebook. I already have 4 people following me : 2 police officers, a private investigator and a psychiatrist.

CHARITY BIKE RIDE FOR DEMENTIA UK—LANDS END TO JOHN O’GROATS

Last month we included an item about u3a member Mick Turner, who had just walked the entire length of the coastal paths around England and Wales. In that item it was mentioned that Mick would be attempting a cycle ride from Lands End to John O’Groats.

Mick will be starting this 1190 mile (1913 kilometre) ride on September 14th and is hoping to complete it by October 14th, so, by the time many of you read this, he should be well on his way. For safety reasons he will be using the Sustrans routes rather than conventional main roads, which makes the overall journey about 350 miles longer.

Mick is doing the trip specifically to raise money for Dementia UK.

If you would like to make a donation it will be gratefully received.

Please go to www.justgiving.com/fundraising/MickTurner70



WEBSITE NEWS

The website is being updated with the latest information we have on each group. We have in many cases used the brief headline that was provided for this year’s Handbook.

However, if Group Organisers wish to add a more comprehensive statement to their web page please let us know. Also, if you have a relevant photograph reflecting your group activity this would be most welcome as it helps to keep our website up to date.

Contact webteam@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

COMPUTER OPEN GROUP

Unfortunately, the Committee has been compelled to cancel the talk via Zoom which was scheduled for the 18th October. At the present time the committee is very short of volunteers and if this situation is not resolved our future is bleak.

Therefore we would ask all members to consider helping out on the committee in any way they can. Computer expertise is not essential. This need not be an onerous task, as we meet a maximum of 6 times a year and, if anyone feels that committee work is not for them, we would be happy to receive ideas for future talks. Attendance at meetings is not essential. One of the main problems the committee has is in identifying things that would be of interest to a cross section of the membership, not least, since technology is changing so quickly.

If you feel able to help please contact the Chairman of the group **Mike Davies**;

Email : computing@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk.

YOUR u3a NEEDS YOU !



To volunteer to serve tea and cakes (no cake baking involved !) on the **Open Afternoon** on **October 27th** in the **Bat & Ball Centre**.

Sign on with :

jennifer.ruffles@btinternet.com

SINGING FOR FUN

Because of Covid the group have had to change their meeting location. From the beginning of October (the first meeting of the year) it will be:

The Otford Methodist Hall

All the other details for the group remain the same.

Laurence Hickey singing@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

BOOK CIRCLE WEDNESDAY

Mary Arthur and Chloe Witchell have taken over the day to day running of this group. If you wish to contact the group using the email address in the latest handbook (bookswed@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk) your emails will be forwarded to Mary and Chloe. New members are welcome in this group.



The **Nordic Walking** group in the Lime Tree Walk on Fairlawne Estate, Shipbourne on 11th August.



The **Ambling Group** on the North Downs above Kemsing on 18th August.



Walking Group 1 in Penshurst Park on 20th August.

NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

Please send items to be included to news@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk by 10th October.