

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

Our U3A is now using a new membership database (Beacon) which has been made available by National U3A to all U3As around the country.

Last month, for the first time, we started to distribute the electronic version of the monthly newsletter using the members' email addresses stored in Beacon. During these unusual times, this new membership system has also been



very useful in distributing a wide variety of information to members, either directly or via Group Organisers.

However, using the system in this way has highlighted some problems with the information we hold:

1. About half a dozen members who asked to receive the newsletter electronically, did not receive it last month, because the email address stored in Beacon was incorrect;
2. A larger group of members appear to have changed their email address within the last year or so, and this new address has not been recorded on Beacon;
3. About 12% - 13% of our members have never had an email address recorded on Beacon. If you have an email address, and would like to receive this newsletter electronically, plus other useful information, which we circulate to members via email, please let me know.

If you fall within one or more of the above categories, please contact me, by email or by telephone, and let me have your current email address, so that we can add your details to our database, and keep you better informed about what is going on.

David Taylor. Communications Officer

communications@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

While we wait for the green light before we can resume our activities, I have been amazed to discover the power of the latest technology. Our most recent EC meeting was held on Zoom. With everyone's face visible on the screen, a yellow border appearing round whoever was speaking, good sound quality and the ability to display documents it made me realise that many of the journeys that I made during my working life would not now be necessary.



Some groups are already holding virtual meetings and I hope that more will do so once they master the technology. I had to purchase a webcam for £25, but many modern computers have cameras built in. Once the hardware is in place using it is remarkably easy. It just needs the group organiser to arrange a meeting and for members to click on a link.

Work is progressing on the preparation of a new-look members' handbook which is due to be issued in August. We are aiming to issue membership cards at the same time.

We are still hoping to resume our live activities with an open afternoon on 23 September. In the meantime, keep safe.

Nick White

chairman@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

Virtual Garden Tours

Virtual tours of many gardens including Hidcote, Highgrove, Kew, Wisley and Monet's Garden in Giverny are at <https://www.gardensillustrated.com/gardens/gardens-to-visit/virtual-garden-tours-best/>

The National Gardens Scheme provides tours of a number of gardens including two in the Sevenoaks area, Riverhill Himalayan Gardens and Great Comp. They are at

<https://ngs.org.uk/virtual-garden-visits/>

David Taylor

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Virtual U3A Science Meetings

The continued restriction imposed by the Corona Virus outbreak has resulted in some changes to the way in which we operate. Some examples of how we are working are described below.

Our Science Committee are meeting on a regular virtual basis. We have been keeping a close watch on Government advice and we are considering the situation we may find ourselves in at the start of our Autumn programme of talks. These meetings are normally held in the Otford Village Hall Club Room and as our members continue to be in the category 'most at risk' we are concerned that we will not

be able to maintain the social distancing requirements. The Committee are therefore exploring the possibility of running our Open Science meetings as internet based 'Webinars' using the Zoom facility until such time as regular meetings can safely be resumed. This will allow our regular attendees to continue to enjoy our Science talks if they so wish. We will provide further information in due course as our plans develop.

Science Group Discussion 1: Our science group has 12 members. We are now all linked up using the Zoom VC tool and this enables us to meet on a fortnightly basis. We decided at our first virtual meeting to explore possible scenarios post Covid 19. This proved to be a very rich source of study and we

are looking at possible outcomes from various perspectives including changes in the Global Political and Economic Environment, Medical advances, Technology and the Consumer Society. By using the VC capability it does mean that as we are not travelling to each other's homes, so we are therefore making a small contribution to reducing the CO2 emissions, and saving time. Something we had not considered previously.

Please keep watch on our website where we will post information about further changes.

<https://www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk>

Bob Ruffles

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Digital Photography

The last real meeting of our Digital Photography Group 2 was shortly before the lockdown and was a portrait taking session. We all took portraits of each other, and later reviewed the results. These are some examples of our enjoyable session at the Methodist Church in Otford where John and Sue are pictured against the stained glass window.



John Anthony



John Ward



Sue Ward



Photo: Reg Oakley



Photo: Jenny Gosling

During the lockdown we have still been exchanging photos by email, which has been a good way of keeping in touch, and commenting on each other's photos. Here are some lovely examples of spring which we can enjoy during the lockdown.

We hope to turn this photo exchange into a light-hearted competition with no formal judging – each person just votes for their favourite picture

Celia Smith

A few helpful points from Dave Simmons to help us through while we are stuck at home

1. Take one day at a time. Focus on the present. Don't get caught up in negative thought cycles and "what ifs".
2. Ensure that you make contact with at least one other person each day.
3. Make yourself a timetable and set up a daily routine. Make the weekend special.
4. Stay informed and up to date with the Coronavirus news but regulate your screen time, particularly before you settle down at night. Don't become obsessed with the virus statistics.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS (CONT'D)

Ambling

In view of the government restrictions it will not be possible to resume ambling in the near future. We will though be back walking and pub-lunching as soon as we are allowed. In addition to ambling I am proposing to start a new group in conjunction with Ian Galletti of Knole U3A for Nordic Walking. This involves walking with poles. It is a wonderful form of exercise in our lovely countryside. Watch this space.

Nick White



Shall we play?
Pamela Murphy



Land's End
Pamela Murphy



Lighthouse
Wendy Lankester

Art

After a very successful Art Exhibition in May 2019, and many people asking for another one this year, we had made arrangements for the next one to take place in Seal Village Hall the weekend of the 75th anniversary of the end of World War 11.

Of course we had to cancel this, but we have been asked to hold it at the October U3A special meeting – all being well.

Pamela Murphy

How Theatre Studies survived during lockdown

The last 3 contrasting and potentially controversial plays of the season had been chosen for viewing and discussion by the Theatre Studies group:

Tony Kushner/Durrenmatt's *The Visit* at the National Theatre for April

Stef Smith/Ibsen's *Nora: A Doll's House* at the Young Vic for May

Hannah Khalili's *A Museum In Baghdad* at the Kiln Theatre for June

Three of us managed to see *The Visit* (all 3 hours 20 minutes of it), two received a message that the play had been cancelled on the day they were due to see it, and the rest missed out altogether. A few copies of the written text were available to circulate.

What should we do? We decided to proceed as normal – with one member giving an introduction, followed by individual responses from everyone – but via email [Not all had or liked ZOOM and it seemed important not to exclude anyone.]. The meeting had been 'salvaged' – but more than that –

was judged worthwhile, successful, informative and very enjoyable.

The May play proved more problematic as only one person had seen the chosen play (described as 'challenging' in its staging and deployment of actors.) Reluctantly we decided to abandon that text and look instead at what the NT was showing on screen on line. One member who years ago had played the part of Sir Toby Belch agreed to do the introduction and *Twelfth Night* made a lively and provocative choice. Some members had seen a large number of previous performances, a couple had never seen or read the play and very few had seen the specific interpretation of it with Tamsin Greig as Malvolia amongst other gender bending changes. One advantage of live screening for a week was that the play could be seen more than once, an opportunity seized by at least three members of the group, with results benefitting everyone.

The choice of our June text didn't look too attractive for reasons to do with

timing, availability of play texts and personal preference. Although years back in our second year (2008/9) a few founder members had seen Tennessee Williams' *A Street Car Named Desire* at the Donmar, most had not seen the more recent interpretation at the Young Vic with Gillian Anderson playing Blanche. Two members quickly offered to do different kinds of introductions and we look forward to discussing it in June

Of course we missed the spontaneity, quick exchange of views, repartee, humour, argument and changes of mind which a live meeting allowed us (as well as coffee and biscuits) but we gained some very extended, thoughtful and detailed observations on the plays which email encouraged; there was also perhaps more time to reflect on alternative views. Most importantly as a u3a study group, dependent on getting to the theatre and actually seeing plays, we kept going during the lockdown.

Vicki Joyce

These Group meeting on Zoom at the moment will welcome new members

European Film Studies. eurofilm@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

Literature Group. literature@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk



SOME SUGGESTIONS FROM OUR MEMBERS



This might sound strange but let me explain. When we go on 'fly and flop' holidays my husband is content to sit on a sun lounger and read. I can do that for about three days and then I have 'ants in my pants' and have to find things to keep me busy. Over the years I have developed a strategy – I take a set of exercises I can do in a hotel room, I wander round the grounds, looking at the plants, shrubs, trees and wildlife. I chat to people and try to take interesting or unusual photos. We also have crosswords and Sudoku with us. It keeps me busy and it keeps me occupied. It stops me driving my husband mad!

When we first found out that we were going to need to lock ourselves away from three months, I was really cross and miserable for several days at having my life so disrupted. I realised though, that I was just making it worse for myself and what could I do to change my attitude? That's when I

came up with the idea of 'holiday'. For us, a holiday is a break from normal routine, we have fun, we try to eat well, to enjoy ourselves and to relax and follow a slower pace of life. We keep in touch with the family via WhatsApp and the internet. We send postcards. We live in a bit of a cocoon, a bit separate from the outside world. We live for today – maybe make plans for the week but certainly we don't look much further ahead. So now I hope you can see the similarities.

Fun, you might say, what sort of fun? Small bits of fun; for example we had a picnic lunch in the garden at the weekend. It was cold and we needed two fleeces, but we called it 'out for lunch' and sent a photo to the family (We do like eating out!). I happened to find some balloons in the cupboard and sent a few to my small grandson. They were a big success.

We are trying to eat healthily, lots of fruit and vegetables. We spend a bit longer on meal preparation and presentation (on holiday we eat out all the time). We are planning a Hanami Japanese cherry blossom festival picnic under our flowering cherry tree when it comes into flower, complete with blue plastic on the ground and sushi to eat. Mad it might be but it will be a laugh.

I phone friends to keep in touch that

way. Some of our U3A groups have gone online, not possible for everyone, or all groups but it has worked with some.

We are trying to be kind to ourselves, reading our books if we fancy it, instead of doing the chores, sitting in the sun or near a sunny window when the weather co-operates, or drinking coffee and reading the paper. I am also setting myself some little projects, this week a cupboard to sort out, next week a shelf in the garage. Nothing necessary, nothing urgent, but it is something I can pat myself on the back about when it's done.

Finally, let me introduce you to the concept of random acts of kindness – you can do this in three ways:

- * A random act of kindness to a stranger
- * A random act of kindness to someone you know
- * A random act of kindness to yourself.

The hardest of these is the last one, the random act of kindness to yourself. So go on and think of something kind to do for yourself today. And, if your stay at home isn't a holiday, what is it then and how can you make it more enjoyable?

Sue Christy

GO WILD

Go Walking in Lockdown – good for your health if you stick to the rules. 2m isn't enough when walking behind others – keep at least 5m back. Most gates can be opened without touching them with your hands (knees, elbows, sticks to lift latches), but stiles are not so easy; you may like to wear gloves. Enclosed paths can be a problem – back off before entering if you see someone coming. If you must pass someone uncomfortably close, preferably turn your back on them and let them pass you.

Car parks serving walkers are generally closed, but here are a few ideas that don't rely on those, and which don't require you to use your hands for gates or stiles.

There is plenty of space in **Knole Park**, and generally fewer people on the east (Godden Green) side, but you will need to cope with a gate to get in; most have no latch. There's some parking in The Rise or in St Julian Road.

Oldbury Hill - popular, but room to get out of others' way. Some parking on Styants Bottom Road, or (you'll have to cross the A25) use the Crown Point access road (plenty of space); the Sevenoaks end of this also gives access to the next suggested area.

The woodland-covered ridge above **Seal Chart** and going past St Lawrence Church is great walking territory. Between Godden Green (parking on the road) and Oldbury Hill you can walk anywhere without encountering any obstacles.

The **Sevenoaks Common** area at the South end of the town (access from Weald Road, Gracious Lane etc) is not large, but, again, you can wander without impediment. It's relatively flat, and you can easily extend your walk into Knole Park.

Charles Hebert