

## SEVENOAKS U3A

### GROUP NEWS MARCH 2021

#### Piano Playing group.

During these times of isolation, have you been eying up that piano in the corner? Would you like a reason to play it again?

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. We take turns to host in each other's houses. Classical pianos only, no electronics.

We intend to re-start as soon as pandemic allows – so, time to practise!

#### Science-Our Universe

What the group is interested in ranges far and wide. It is currently a fast moving field and we keep in touch with the topical headline reports, e.g. Mars landings at the moment, but we try to build a solid base of knowledge from the advances in physics through the last century so we can better see the big picture in which all of this happens. So, it sounds ambitious, but we cover the major advances and their applications from Newton through Einstein to the present and we study the history of the universe from the Big Bang to the far distant future.

We use all media for our study base and since the majority of members do not have scientific training we operate at about the level of the New Scientist and often use books designed for the layman, such as those from Carlo Rovelli which have even been best sellers recently. We do not get into the academic technicalities or maths which underpin all this work.

Historically, we have been active since about 2008 and have visited CERN in 2013, so we have been into the bowels of the LHC, and in 2019 we made contact with university departments in the UK, Glasgow and Portsmouth, which are at the forefront of gravitational wave astronomy

#### 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 chose 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 - late 70s).

#### The Literature Group

We meet in the afternoon of the fourth Tuesday of the month. A member chooses a book and then leads the discussion of it. Novels are selected with particular reference to life in

our own and other societies and as vehicles for ideas. Recent choices have been Girl, Woman, Other; The Tin Drum and A Dry White Season.

### Europe Today Group

Monthly meetings by Zoom have continued for almost year and have enjoyed a range of informative presentations and friendly discussions on topics related to Europe and the EU. All our meetings are well attended and have been a pleasant distraction from the restrictions of lock-down. As would be expected some of the meetings focused on Brexit and the Brexit agreement, but we have also looked at the related issue of devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The topic of the relationship between the EU and the US with regard to the American election was very timely and a recent meeting had a far eastern flavour as we discussed the investment agreement between the EU and China and had a presentation on the parallels between the EU and the ASEAN trading block. For the next few months we will be looking at the twin issues of the impact of the Brexit deal on trade between the UK and the European countries and that of Covid on these countries. Finally we are hopeful for our annual summer lunch get together!"

### 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 group visits for the year as we usually do but then Covid came along and we were unable to fulfil any of them.

Now a decision has been made to try to use Emmets Garden's pre-booking facility in April, followed by a brief stop at the Group Organiser's garden, nearby, assuming the Rules permit it. After that we intend to organise each month's visit one at a time, rather than doing a year at once, and also to stick to more local gardens.

We have vacancies in the Group which will also help us find the minimum number some gardens require before they will open for private groups.

### Italian Conversation

We are a small group of 8 of us who have been meeting for some twelve years or so in each others homes every fortnight. We continue to have very lively meetings of an hour and a half on Zoom speaking in Italian throughout. For the first half hour we catch up with the fortnight's events - where we have been, things done, commenting on local or world affairs and so on, all in Italian. The following hour we usually focus on an Italian text which we read out loud and discuss any unfamiliar grammar structures or words. This year we have read and discussed the works of Alberto Moravia, Umberto Eco, Deledda and others, which we usually prepare in advance of the meeting.

Last Spring/Summer meant glorious meetings al fresco which will now be just a dream compared to 'back to zoom'!

Still, we did have our summer lunch as usual and we are already booked for our Christmas lunch in December. Fingers crossed! Cin-Cin!

## Theatre Studies

The group meets once a month and would welcome anyone who is prepared to host and do a short introduction to the play/production once a year

The plays/productions are necessarily chosen from what is streaming from the NT and RSC and Old Vic and The Kiln. Currently the group is watching and will be discussing the Phaedra by Racine.

## Music Appreciation Group B

JOIN US IN OUR HOMES TO LISTEN TO THE CLASSICS...

This article describes the way we work under normal conditions, which we hope will return soon.

Usually – though not at the moment, sadly - Sevenoaks is full of live music, with the Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonic Society, and the Music Club offering a wide range of orchestral, choral and chamber music respectively. And then there are the other events such as the Great Comp Festival and the numerous jazz and blues events, some linked with the Sevenoaks Festival.

To help members get more from their concert-going or home listening, there are two Music Appreciation groups in our U3A taking classical music as their theme. Group B 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. We mainly use CDs but other sources (including vinyl and streaming) are used as well. Members help each other with ideas and resources.

You can find more information on our website at <https://www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk/Study-Groups/Group-Categories/Arts-Appreciation/arts-appreciation.html> - then click on "Music Appreciation Group A and B".

For an informal chat about what how we work and some typical programme themes, contact Jeff Lee (Group Organiser for Group B) by email at [musicb@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk](mailto:musicb@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk) or by phone on 01959 525225. I do hope that "Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible..."

## Stock Market Discussion Group

We normally meet at 2.00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month between September and June and during the period of Covid-19 restrictions we have successfully held our meetings on Zoom. The format of our meetings is that, in September each member notionally chooses two FTSE quoted stocks, one of which is retained until the following June and the other has to be notionally traded at least every two months. The person whose notional stocks have achieved the most profit is declared the winner. Each member also predicts what the FTSE index will be in June.

As well as the principal area of the Stock Market our discussions range over a wide spectrum, mostly finance related, and include inevitably Brexit, the political scene at home and abroad, and other forms of investment.

## Photography2

In the last year we have discussed Camera Settings, Camera Accessories and had a practical hands-on Portrait Session. We have also watched and discussed some instructive DVDs. Then, since March we have been busy, and kept in touch with each other, despite the fact that we haven't been able to meet up in a Hall. But each month we have set ourselves a Challenge – Photo Exchange, with a specific theme, for example Colour, Abstract, Autumn and so on. Members have been asked to go

out and about with their cameras and then submit two photos on that theme which are circulated to the Group. Then each member has the opportunity to choose a First Preference and a Second Preference, with comments if they wish.

#### Exploring World Faiths

Before Lockdown we had a visit to a Hindu Temple in Gravesend, a talk on Religious education in Primary Schools, a talk on Judaism, a talk on the Hindu Bhagavad Gita and watched a TV programme on Hinduism. We then had a break during lockdown, and now meet monthly on Zoom, starting with a member's presentation on Confucianism. Humanism will follow, followed by an aspect of Judaism presented by a lecturer who is a member of the Jewish community. All our meetings incorporate lively discussion.

#### Cosmology Group

We maintain a steady membership of about 8-10 and we have morphed from a beginning in astronomy to a group taking on the task of keeping up with developments and, as our knowledge of all the sciences which help us to understand the Cosmos has developed, we now follow the searches for new physics which will be the basis of the subject through this century. This has kept us occupied through the last year and we continue with small Zoom meetings to exchange ideas. And this works well for a group of our size

#### German Conversation

The group goes back to the very beginning of Sevenoaks U3A. It was started by the remarkable Hannah Eady, a survivor of Nazi Germany who believed herself capable of just about anything and took up windsurfing in her 80s. The group was possibly unique in taking place around the lunch table, a simple meal which group members took it in turn to host. A glass of wine helped conversation to flow, just general chatter rather than anything planned and prepared. In recent years we made the sensible decision to 'bring your own', still taking it in turns to host and provide the wine.

With Covid and Zoom we meet from home every week for one session of 40 minutes rather than twice a month for much longer. It isn't the same but it keeps us in touch with each other - and German. There are eight members which we find to be the ideal number for the way we work so there are no vacancies.

#### French - Not Quite Beginners

Our group of French speakers have now been meeting on zoom ever since the pandemic started. During the first lockdown, we actually met every Tuesday morning, but as restrictions eased we took a short break during the summer and then resumed our pattern of meeting twice a month. We take it in turns to lead the session and normally each prepare something to talk about for a few minutes at the start of the session. It used to be a diary of what we had been doing, but as lockdown meant we only had gardening and walks to talk about, we started discussing other subjects. We then use a passage from a magazine or a book which we read and translate. Other times we use a passage that we can listen to and then we take it in turns to read and translate it. We have managed to keep things interesting by covering quite a variety of subjects, from how the French like to take their holidays to annual French traditions. Since we are talking about French, food and drink feature strongly in our discussions.