

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Every person I talk to at the moment is celebrating the bright sunshine we are now enjoying, after such a dreary May! Many of you are heading off for holidays, both abroad and in the UK, and I hope you all have a happy and enjoyable time.

As we get to the end of this u3a year, I feel we can look back on a very successful one in terms of new members and new groups being established, some of which have contributed articles in this bumper edition of our newsletter. Let's also eagerly look forward to our enjoyable Monthly Meetings, with speakers arranged by the indefatigable Barbara Coleyshaw, which will begin again at the end of October.

Warmest wishes,
Doreen

Doreen Pascall, Chairman chairman@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

This issue covers the months of July and August and is the last one you will receive as an attachment to your email. From September, all the news will be contained in the email itself, with links to fuller information on our Sevenoaks u3a website. For the increasing number of you who read the newsletter on phones and tablets it should be much easier, and there will still be a facility to print it out for anyone who prefers to read it on paper.

AGM REPORT

A well-attended Annual General Meeting on 24 June saw Doreen Pascall elected to serve on the Executive Committee for another year as Chairman. Helen Wood (Secretary), Peter Bradnock (Treasurer) and Jenny Ruffles (Membership Secretary) continue in their existing roles. Paul Frost was also re-elected with a change in role to "IT, Technical and Data Privacy (Technology) Trustee" which includes the required responsibility for Beacon, our membership administrative database which David Lowe has managed with incredible efficiency for many years. Paul will also have oversight of data protection, how we use new technology and will deputise for our Chairman when absent and until such time as a Vice-Chair is identified. Marianne Bradnock was elected with responsibility for Groups Support and Communications. The Committee would still welcome anyone willing to help run our u3a, whether organising trips and events, assisting with publicity and marketing or advising on how to recruit and retain volunteers.

The formal part of the meeting was followed by an entertaining talk by Janie Ramsay, who shared some behind the scenes stories from her life in the antiques trade.

REMINDER FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Please note that membership subscription renewals will be due on 1 September 2026.

The annual membership fee is £13.00 (individual) or £26.00 (joint). If you currently pay your subscription by Standing Order you don't need to do anything. However, if you pay by cheque please send your cheques, payable to 'U3A Sevenoaks', to: Membership Secretary, 59 Chesterfield Drive, Riverhead, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 2EQ by the end of September at the latest. **OR**, if you wish to pay by bank transfer (using your banking app), please contact me and I will forward bank details to you. Thank you.

CONTACT DETAILS If any of your contact details have changed, please let me know so that your records are up to date - we cannot advise you of events/Newsletters/activities if we do not have the correct email/telephone/address to reach you. Enjoy the summer break.

Jennifer Ruffles
membership@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

AROUND THE GROUPS

SCIENCE OPEN MEETINGS

Our next season of Science Open Meetings starts on **12 October** with a talk by Mike Trevethick on ***Stomach Upsets***. We have a range of talks planned and we look forward to your attendance; more details will be given closer to the date. If you would like to help our team with organising these meetings, please contact me using the details below.

Our Science Seminar held on 4 June, AI in Action Today, at The Orchards Events Venue, East Malling, attracted over 100 attendees who represented more than 19 u3as across Kent and the surrounding areas. Further details on the event and the talks offered by three expert speakers are provided in the article below.

Bob Ruffles for the Science Committee

science@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

AI IN ACTION—SEMINAR SUMMARY

The Sevenoaks u3a Science Group held a seminar entitled AI in Action at The Orchard Centre, East Malling, on 4 June. Three aspects of AI were covered in the presentations: AI and Urban Food Mapping for Sustainable Food Production by Dr Howard Lee of Hadlow College; Large Language Models and the Future of Healthcare by Prof Julia Ive of University College London; and Sociological and Ethical Implications of AI by Dr. Blay Whitby, recently retired from Sussex University.

The 100 attendees, drawn from a number of u3as across Kent as well as Sevenoaks, engaged in a lively discussion of the opportunities, benefits and the potential dangers of AI, both now and in the future. Whilst recognising AI's huge potential, concerns were raised about its development being in the hands of an "elite" and their commercial operations; the comparative immaturity of the technology; and the lack of any regulation around safety or constraints on misuse.

For a more detailed summary follow the link: <https://sevenoaks.u3asite.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/AISeminar-1.pdf>



PHONES, TABLETS AND COMPUTERS GROUP

The PTC group has no meetings planned until October, but the Committee feel it is useful to remind members of the ongoing BT programme to digitise land lines, with the deadline for this being set for January 2027. From personal experience, it should not have any real impact for most people, however for those with specialist equipment – such as healthcare pendant or alarm systems – they may find these do not always work after conversion.

Mike Davies

computing@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

ART –PAINTING 2 GROUP

The new Art - Painting 2 group has been meeting in Sevenoaks on the 1st and 3rd Thursday mornings each month. It is now well established with a mix of ability from beginners to accomplished amateur artists. We share tips and techniques in a friendly and supportive atmosphere and welcome new members to join us. Some of the group are pictured here painting en plein air at Ide Hill recently.

Email art2@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk to find out more.



SINGING FOR FUN

The Singing for Fun Group continues to thrive. They have full membership, save for male singers. Altos and sopranos are both currently in healthy numbers, but one or two additional men would not go amiss (excuse the pun). Here is a photo of some of our group taken recently when we entertained residents at Chipstead Cheshire Home.

Any males who might consider joining should contact the Group Organiser **Ray Leathers** at singing@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk for a visit to one of our meetings - and a little fun.



SCIENCE DISCUSSION GROUP

Over the past year, the Science Discussion Group has explored a wide range of topics, both from a historic and from a current perspective. The talks are chosen, researched and presented by the members. As an example, we have looked at the work of Lord Rayleigh and William Ramsay, the History and Development of Telescopes, Water and Sewage Treatment, Health and Wellbeing, and Animals and the World. For the coming season we will continue to address other scientific topics. We hold our meetings in the Otford Methodist Church Hall on the first Monday of the month and if you would like to join the group, please contact me.

Bob Ruffles

sciencediscuss@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

PEACE & CONFLICT GROUP

Our Peace and Conflict Group embrace a much wider area of interest than just military battles. Recent global events give us a rich environment for exploring the reasons and consequences of conflict. Factors such as politics, sociology, economics and technology are considered, leading to a wider view of how they shape the world in which we live. The topics are chosen by the group members and over the past year we have addressed Verdi and the Italian State, Prussia & the Weimar Republic, European Values, St Nazaire Raid (Operation Chariot), Jersey, the Franco – Prussian War, Range Wars – Opening up the Wild West, and the origins of the US-Iran conflict. For the forthcoming season we will be addressing an equally diverse range of topics. We hold our meetings in the Otford Methodist Church Hall on the second Wednesday afternoon of the month and if you would like to join the group please contact me.

Bob Ruffles

peaceconflict@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

RAILWAYS GROUP

Ever wondered why Cramptons Road is so-called? At the June meeting of the Railway Group, our visiting speaker Roger Johnson explained it all. Thomas Russell Crompton was a prolific Victorian engineer who left a lasting mark on the infrastructure of his native Kent and Sevenoaks. In 1859, he was appointed as the contractor for the Sevenoaks Railway, even providing substantial personal capital to fund the project's completion and buying 81 acres of land at Bat & Ball. His efforts led to the 1862 opening of the line to Sevenoaks, a route that was eventually merged into the London, Chatham and Dover Railway system. His locomotive designs were revolutionary for the time but more suited to – and therefore more commonly found on – the better-constructed and better-maintained continental railway systems. The picture shows a French example, instantly recognisable from the single pair of large driving wheels.



PICKLEBALL

This new group is continuing to meet on a **Monday morning** at the Weald Church Hall, and would (still) welcome some more players. The **cost is £7 per session**.

To learn more about why everybody is talking about pickleball, please visit our group page at https://sevenoaks.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/pickleball/

If you're interested in playing, contact **Tim Carter**, the Group Organiser, at pickleball@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk.

GALLERIES GROUP

The Galleries Group recently visited the David Hockney 'A Year in Normandie' exhibition at Serpentine North. The show includes a 90-metre-long work, created from iPad drawings joined together, which focusses on the colours and changing rhythms of the seasons during Covid 2020 at his studio in Normandy. It is inspired by the size of the Bayeux Tapestry, but also draws from his knowledge of Chinese and Japanese scroll paintings



On discovering that the café was closed for a private event, a member of the group knew of a Polish restaurant in Exhibition Road, and we had a deliciously different lunch there.

James Abbott McNeill Whistler at Tate Britain will be our focus in July.

SPEAKER AT THE MAY MONTHLY MEETING

Our speaker at May's Monthly Meeting, Gilly Halcrow, brought to life the heroic and chilling story of this little-known secret WWII operation linking Shetland, Scotland and German-occupied Norway. Run by Norwegian sailors and the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), it used innocent-looking fishing boats to ferry resistance agents, weapons and radios into Norway while rescuing refugees and agents. In the depths of winter, in the stormiest of seas and under cover of darkness, the small fishing boats left the safety of Shetland to deliver their valuable cargoes to coves and fishing ports 200 miles away along the coast of Norway.

Read a full summary of this excellent talk at the link below.

https://sevenoaks.u3asite.uk/u3a_notices/the-shetland-bus/



The next edition of the newsletter will be in September. If you have any items you wish to include in that edition, please send them to news@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk by **August 20th**.

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LONDON STUDIES GROUP 3

The inaugural trip of the new London Studies Group 3 was to the **Postal Museum in Clerkenwell**. We travelled to Farringdon Station independently but the whole group of six met up at the museum, which we hadn't realised is at the infamous Mount Pleasant sorting office.

Thrillingly, the first activity was a 15-minute ride on a loop of the narrow-gauge underground Mail Rail, which was used between 1927 and 2003 to transport millions of items of mail between sorting offices in London. Mount Pleasant was roughly in the middle of the route, which stretched from Whitechapel in the east to Paddington in the west.

We saw some of the old stations and mail trains, and there were audiovisual displays showing how chaotic and busy the railway used to be. Every station had a cat to catch mice.

The actual Postal Museum is across the road from the railway. It explains the history of the postal service and telephones, and has an impressive collection of both green and red mail boxes. We were amused by a 1936 GPO film "The Fairy of the Phone", which explained how to answer the telephone: never just say "Hello"; give the phone number and your name. That's exactly how I was taught to answer the phone as a child. It seems strange that, not long ago, both the postal service and landlines were central to all our lives, but have now been replaced almost entirely by new technology.

Lunch was tasty and excellent value at a traditional pub, The Anchor, and we then made our way back to the train by bus or on foot.

If you like exploring new places in London why not join the group?



BRIDGE FOR PLEASURE

Next Sessions :- 8th and 22nd July, then a 2 month break and restarting on 14th October

The Group plays at **Oxford Village Memorial Hall** on the **2nd and 4th Wednesday** mornings each month, from October to the end of July, from **9.45a.m. until noon. *Please arrive by 9.40.***

Our last 2 sessions have had 11 and then 17 players, so numbers are still quite variable.

The winner on May 27th was John Christy. The scores on June 10th were so low that no one wanted to claim the winner's recognition! Presumably the cards were all quite fairly distributed across the tables.

New members are always welcome. We are an Open Group , so new players can simply come along on the day. We play ACOL in a Chicago format, so you don't need to come with a partner or to attend every time. We change partners every 4 hands, so you will experience partnering four—or occasionally five—different people during the morning.

We ask that players are of at least an intermediate standard and know the standard ACOL bids and responses. We can supply a basic ACOL bidding crib sheet to anyone who thinks they might be a bit rusty.

For more information, please email John **Christy** at bridge@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk.

OTHER NEWS

SPAM ALERT

How to spot and avoid email scams

We want to alert you to a recent increase in scam emails targeting our community. Some of these fraudulent emails pretend to be from fellow u3a members, particularly targeting those who have a dedicated Sevenoaks u3a email address.

Scammers often harvest names and email addresses from public spaces. To help protect you, our policy is never to publish personal email addresses or phone numbers on our website, in newsletters, or in other public documents. Please take a moment to review the guide below on how to protect yourself.

How to Spot a Scam Email

- **Check the Sender's True Address:** Don't just trust the display name.
- *On a computer:* **Hover** your mouse over the sender's name to see the actual email address behind it.
- *On a phone or tablet:* **Tap** on the sender's name to expand the details and view the full email address. Does it look legitimate, or is it a random string of characters?

- **Be Careful with Links:** Before clicking any link:

- *On a computer:* **Hover** over the link to see the destination URL.
- *On a phone or tablet:* **Press and hold (long-press)** the link for a second to bring up a preview of the actual web address without opening it. If it looks strange, do not tap it.

Red Flags to Watch Out For

- **Urgency or Panic:** Messages demanding immediate action, making threats, or offering things that seem "too good to be true."
- **Vague Greetings:** Generic openings like "Dear Member" or "Hi Friend" instead of your name, often accompanied by poor spelling and grammar.
- **Unexpected Attachments:** Never open attachments (like unexpected invoices or receipts) that you were not anticipating.

A Note on Your Spam Folder

Major email providers have recently strengthened their security filters. While this helps stop scams, it also means that **legitimate u3a emails are increasingly ending up in Spam or Junk folders.**

Please remember to check your Spam folder periodically to ensure you haven't missed any important emails. If you find a legitimate email there, mark it as "Not Spam" to train your provider for the future.

If you wish to learn more about how to secure and protect your devices, look out for the sessions organised by the [Phones, Tablet and Computing Group](#) which will restart after the summer break.

A DAY OUT AT THE FAIR

Over 40 organisations, including our own, took part in the Health & Wellness Fair on the 30th May on the Vine. On a fine day, we had a great time meeting friends, potential members and the Town Crier. A big thank you to all those who helped represent us on the day.

Find out more about the Health & Wellness Initiative on the following link:

<https://sevenoakstown.gov.uk/health-wellness/>

