



Chair's Report

Keeping in Contact

In any organisation, much of its success depends upon the quality of communication;
~ sharing information, to keep everyone involved,
~ providing support and personal contact,
~ giving opportunities for everyone to feel connected and to feel valued.

In the current circumstances of National Lockdown, I believe our U3A is providing an excellent quality of communication ~ with the aim of keeping our members informed, involved, connected, valued and supported.

Through our newsletter, our website, our emails, our phone-arounds it is evident that we are keen to contribute to the well-being of our members and our U3A.

Personally, everyone I have spoken with has been coping well in these strange times ~ they are keeping healthy both physically and mentally and feel well supported by family, neighbours, friends and U3A contacts.

In last month's newsletter, I was really pleased to see the great wealth of continued activities that many of our groups are undertaking, and not least the valiant contributions that are being made to support our NHS and Key Workers.

I look forward to reading your contributions in the additional section of this month's newsletter ~ (*check out my little ditty..... ~ purely fictitious, I assure you!!*).

Fond Farewell

I'd like to take this opportunity to bid a fond farewell to two special ladies who have shown great dedication to our U3A since it began in 2012.

Karen Usher was the first Chairman and Margaret Knock was the first Business Secretary. Through hard work and determination, they did a fantastic job setting up a vibrant and successful U3A here at Kings Hill and District.

Karen went on to be our Membership Secretary and the Convenor of several groups, whilst Margaret organised speakers for our meetings and was also a Convenor.

Both ladies are moving away from Kent and they tell me that they will undoubtedly be getting involved in activities with their local U3A. Of

course, we will still see Margaret when she and Kevin visit family here!

Thank You to Karen and Margaret for all your hard work, your enthusiasm and your contribution to our U3A; you will be greatly missed. We bid you a fond farewell and wish you all the very best in your new surroundings.

For your information ~ Mark Richards is our new Membership Secretary.

So ~ until we are able to meet once again, I send Best Wishes to you all.

Melanie Blewer

Groups Coordinator

Once again, I would like to thank all the convenors for their work in keeping their groups in touch and where possible continuing to develop different activities to which members can contribute.

I know from the groups that I belong to that we have been able to hold Zoom meetings, follow online content together, exchange news and photographs, have telephone contact, contribute comments on different themes, complete quizzes, etc. and this activity has been very much appreciated by members.

As I write this the restrictions do seem to be easing, and some convenors may be starting to look at how they might be able to resume meetings in some form. If you are considering this, please do keep me informed so that we can discuss the best way of addressing potential areas of concern.

Elaine Scutt

News from the Groups

Birdwatching

With field trips cancelled due to lockdown, members have been sending in their sightings, with Phil recording the first Cuckoo of the year. We have recently seen a number of Red Kites in passage, travelling through our area with at least six recordings. Two members have reported regular Hobby sightings, see photo (these dashing visitors from Africa would hopefully

have been the highlight of our intended field trip to Grove Ferry).

Our April Waderfest ID photo competition was won jointly by Catherine and Fiona and our Spring Migrant Photo competition was won by Helen and David with a Nightingale photo. We are also running a mystery bird competition where sound clip recorded by members are sent around the group with mixed results! I think we all need to brush up on this aspect of our interest.



John Lambert

Creative Writing

It fell upon me to suggest the subject matter for last month's assignment, which was based upon the word "Frozen" in all its definitions.

The first story related to a family waiting for news of their teenage daughter who had gone missing after setting out on an icy night at Christmas time. Her younger sibling had argued with her before she left, and her father had set out later than planned to pick her up, resulting in feelings of guilt as well as dread. Their fears were realised, as the sister is sent home early from school after counselling, and sees a police car parked outside her house....

One member submitted two pieces of flash fiction. The first poignant tale concerned a widower who had lost his wife through a sudden heart attack five years earlier and was now enjoying a holiday in an idyllic coastal location, while listening to a favourite old tune..a song based on "Endless Sleep", about a lost love calling the listener from beyond the grave to join them for eternity.

The second short story was darker and related to a young girl being tricked into a car while trying to elude a strange man at a bus stop. The car then stops, and the same man gets into the other passenger seat....

An ingenious story featured a husband and wife who were solving crossword puzzles while soaking up the sun on holiday. It transpired that the wife was upset about their adoptive son wanting to meet his natural mother. In order to organise a rapprochement, the twist turned out to be that the husband had compiled the crossword clues himself, which resulted in an agreement to send their son a postcard inviting him to a peacemaking meeting with his mum. The final crossword answer invented by the husband was "Thaw".

The setting for the next tale was beautiful Sorrento. A couple on holiday were planning their excursions and soon visit Pompeii, which makes a lasting impression on the wife. She stores the images of the petrified remains and reconstructions of the figures frozen in horror and wonders what they must have felt at that fateful time.

On a lighter note, we had the story of a writer who had omitted to undertake any food shopping in the past three days and was starving but found her cupboards, fridge and freezer lacking in provisions. She checked the packaging of the remaining items for ingredients and found herself rejecting them all in turn due to ethical reasons until she found herself tucking into the one remaining item – a tub of ice cream!

The last story concerned a company that provides Cryogenic facilities finding themselves under investigation by the DTI for possible contravention of FSA rules as well as US regulatory action over sanction compliance. This was pushing the company towards insolvency until strings were pulled with the Attorney General and Department of Commerce – the reason related to how many famous and influential people were on the list of clients to be frozen, including senators and movie stars!

The suggested subject matter for the coming month will revolve around the word "Midnight".

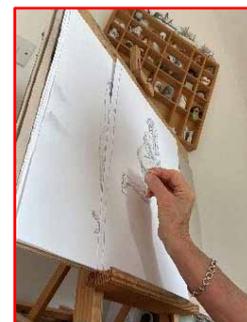
Paul Chapman

Digital Photography 1

We have continued to keep in touch with each other by posting news and photos on WhatsApp and contributing to our own SIG newsletter.



It is amazing that despite the restrictions we are under, we are all a lot more upbeat than at this time last month. One of our topics last month was "Working from home" as depicted in the accompanying two photographs.



Our themes for the next few weeks are the colour Purple and anything beginning with R.

Cathy Sargent

Digital Photography 2

Great efforts are being made by the convenors to maintain contact with their groups, and Ian, our convenor, is no exception. With members experiencing different degrees of lockdown, it was simpler to limit the options, so he chose Flowers as the subject this month.



Obviously not the self-raising or plain types that have been in short supply (I know it's not spelt like that, it just amused me) but

the garden varieties which are plentiful and easy to access.

Next month it's Sunshine, so hopefully, that will brighten your day. I hope you enjoy the pictures taken.

Brenda Powell

Flower Arranging

Another month in lockdown so Julie and Tina, our convenors, decided to organise a Zoom meeting. We entered "the room" on time, but it took a while to see everyone via their video link. For most of us, it was our first time.



The meeting went well, and we discussed how we would go forward in the next few months.

Our contributor for next month was chosen - always interesting to eventually see what style of arrangement they will decide to do - and we had our usual chit chat.

All in all a great success.

Brenda Powell

Gardening Group 2

The recent lockdown has seen a considerable amount of work being done in the garden. From landscaping and building to potting and planting, the group has been exceptionally busy. This photograph is of Jill's wonderful garden.



The only thing we miss is the good food and company that we usually have at our monthly meetings.

Thanks to Elaine we've had the virtual tour of Chelsea and a quiz from Pat to amuse us.



For Garden Day the other Sunday, it was suggested that we make a headdress and you can see our beautiful

May Queen and her version.

Marion May

Garden Visits

Garden Visits group has been advised about RHS Chelsea available online. Wherever possible, I send links to virtual gardens. I also distribute quizzes with a garden theme.

Pat Bell

History of Kent

As a group we cannot let this year's VE Day Celebrations pass without a mention despite the cancellation of all major events to comply with the government's guidelines to Stay at Home and Stay Safe, which meant that most of us were restricted to the garden.

If however, you are in a neighbourhood with a community spirit, you might well have looked out to see many houses with flags or bunting and during the afternoon heard some of the forces favourites such as (There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover and We'll Meet Again and other songs by Vera Lynn.

So far this year the History of Kent group has been seriously restricted in its activities but remain confident that the present lockdown will come to an end at some point.

John Mourné

London Walks 2

It will come as no surprise when I write to say that we HAVE NOT undertaken any walks in London recently!

However, Jim Spellane coordinated a London Lockdown Quiz for us all, featuring questions relating to the different walks we have undertaken over the last couple of years. Here are the results:-

First Place = Pat and Richard Bowles,

Second Place = Sue Kitney,

Third Place = Deborah Langworthy.

I guess it was more of a 'walk down memory lane'; but I thoroughly enjoyed re-visiting such interesting places in our great capital city. Thank you, Jim.

Melanie Blewer

Makers of History

Looking back to the 2019 BBC series on Icons, when viewers were asked to vote for their preferred Icon from different categories, individual members of our group voted for their top 'Leader' and top 'Activist' from the following final candidates from the programme:



Leaders: Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela, Franklin D Roosevelt, Margaret Thatcher.

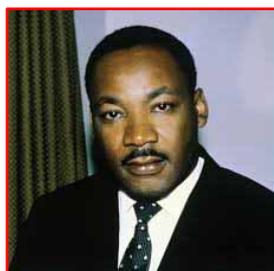
Activists: Mahatma Gandhi, Helen Keller, Martin Luther King Jr and Emmeline Pankhurst.

Nelson Mandela was the clear winner from the 'Leaders' category with Winston Churchill second, while Martin Luther King Jr won for the 'activists,' with Mahatma Gandhi coming second.

The link for the programme is <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/xfhZH9qWPt1G8F2mbN2fVc/meet-the-icons>.

A comment received on our winner, Nelson Mandela, included this: *"Mandela kept the hatred and desire for revenge in check and despite his own imprisonment and mistreatment showed no personal bitterness for what had happened in the past but looked to creating a better future."*

A comment on our winner, Martin Luther King Jr, stated: *"he endured so much with dignity, during and after, and achieved so much for his people and is regarded worldwide."*



We will be selecting two more winners from different categories from the programme next month.

Joan Warren

MOTO

I run the quiz team for Moto and have been sending out a weekly quiz sheet to keep members busy.

Pat Bell

Petanque

Sadly, there is no change to our position regarding playing Petanque. Although Petanque is one of those sporting activities that are now able to restart playing, the restart is only applicable to those under 70 with no underlying health issues, and only singles matches are permitted under the no social gathering position.

The instructions issued by Petanque England are very clear. Even the singles games can only take place if the players follow the restrictions, which mean the players must keep to the 2-metre rule at all times, you must not touch your opponent's boules, each player must have their own boules and their own coche, which is to be used when that player is the first to play in an end, each match has to be played such that the 2-metre rule can be adhered to between adjacent matches.

All these restrictions have meant that the Kent Petanque League summer league has been cancelled, with people now pinning their hopes on the winter league taking place from October.

I have no idea just when we will be able to restart; my crystal ball has gone on strike.

As soon as restrictions are lifted, I'll let you all know.

Take care, stay safe, and I look forward to seeing all the Petanque SIG members when restrictions are lifted.

Mike Thomas

Rock and Pop "Those were the Days"

We could be re-titled 'These ARE the Days' as we've been enjoying ourselves during the lockdown.

In the last weeks, we've moved from a monthly gathering to a daily email interaction; we agreed at

the start to keep in close touch and exchange 'notes'!

We found the public '30-Day Song Challenge' which we took up with gusto, and started throwing in the occasional book review, then TV and film reviews too, the odd Quiz, challenge etc.

We couldn't stop after 30 days, so on 1st May we started on a daily favourite Artist(s) round going from A-Z, sometimes adding memories of our choices, even the occasional photo and a video or two from those who played in groups in their callow youth.

After Frank Zappa, and Zager & Evans, we started back at the letter A for favourite songs, which we found has a rich vein of great songs.

We've also noted the nature and wildlife (some less desirable) emerging around us, and kept each other abreast of our gardening exploits, with tips like where the best bedding plants are, and we know well what goodies are being offered at Spadeworks.

The only cloud on our wide-ranging horizons has been the recurring internet connectivity problems experienced by several of us.

Other than that, you could say we're having 'The Time of Your Life' to borrow from Jennifer Warnes and the letter T.

Thanks to Spotify where we've shared playlists - it wouldn't be the same without you.

New members always welcome

John Russell

Quilting and Sewing

Some of the quilting and sewing group are continuing to meet via Zoom, which we found is a good way of keeping in touch.

Also, several members are now making face masks, which have been passed on to various vulnerable people and key workers.



Dianne Kerry

Singing

Joy contacted all the regular members and then convened a meeting of the Singing SIG over Zoom – and we all had a hilarious time.

When you see those videos of choirs all singing in unison over Zoom, it's not quite like that!

What you see (like the new Rolling Stones video) are compiled later because otherwise there is a time

difference in what you sing and what you hear – but we had a great time anyway.

Well done Joy for trying, and it sounds like we're doing it again next week!

Julian Smith

Wine Enthusiasts

This month we held a fun "10-minute wine quiz" where there were 10 wine-related questions, each accompanied by four possible answers. Although results were not asked for, a number of the group responded with their scores and said how much they had enjoyed the challenge.

We shall be running further wine quizzes, and even if you are not a member of our group, you are most welcome to be included on the circulation list. Just contact me on johnwdirect@gmail.com and I will be very happy to send the wine quizzes to you.

Please remember, all our wine quizzes are just for fun, and you are not asked to reveal your score, unless you feel you would like to, because you answered every question correctly!

John Warren

UBA Interactive

MAKERS OF HISTORY

are inviting you to have your say!

They voted for their favourite icon taken from the 2019 BBC TV series, 'Icons', taking just the categories of 'Leader' and 'Activist'.

As you will see from Joan's article which lists all candidates and provides a link to the series, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr were the winners. Perhaps surprisingly, Margaret Thatcher and Franklin D Roosevelt scored 'nil points'.

Please vote for your preferred candidate – we might have a very different result (or maybe not!). Please use this link <https://forms.gle/eZeoCWwH22ERwdUP6>.

Voting will close midnight Monday, 22nd June and the results will be announced in the next newsletter.

Joan Warren

Members' Platform



John and Dolores Philbrick

VE Day

Even in lockdown, we decided to celebrate such an important event.

A poem by Alice E. Chase

I have always thought this poem very apt in this day and age! **Vernon Stewart**

My hands were busy throughout the day
I didn't have much time to play
The little games you asked me to,
I didn't have much time for you.

I'd wash your clothes; I'd sew and cook,
But when you'd bring your picture book
And ask me please, to share your fun,
I'd say "A little later son".

I'd tuck you in all safe at night
And hear your prayers, turn out the light.
Then tiptoe softly to the door,
I wish I'd stayed a minute more.

For life is short and years rush past.
A little boy grows up so fast.
No longer is he at your side,
His precious secrets to confide.

The picture books are put away,
There are no children's games to play.
No goodnight kiss, no prayers to hear,
That all belongs to yesteryear.

My hands once busy now lie still.
The days are long and hard to fill.
I wish I might go back and do
The little things you asked me to.

Strange Birds

Laurie and Barbara Frowde were wondering if anyone else on Kings Hill had noticed these birds or was it a one-off?

"When we were walking last week from Silver Ball roundabout along the top left of Gibson Drive,



we saw a parrot-like bird flying from ground to tree. I believe it was a Sun Parakeet. I think last year I saw an ordinary parakeet of the type prevalent in South London, but can't be sure."

Hopes of a Nation

A poem by **Tudor De Silva**

Battered country slowly crawls
As the long days of summer dawns

Slowly but surely moving with time
Cautiously stepping one at a time
Battered country slowly crawls
As the long days of summer dawns

As Daisies carpet meadows bright
and Hawthorn bloom in clouds white
Battered country slowly crawls
As the long days of summer dawns

With golfers stepping on manicured greens
Gardeners tending to toms and beans
Battered country slowly crawls
As the long days of summer dawns

With deaths falling and R below one
Undoing the locks one by one
Battered country slowly crawls
As the long days of summer dawns

Hopes of a nation slowly grows
Beating away the past woes
Counting for its rightful glows
As the long days of summer dawns

The Lockdown Blues

as experienced by **Julian Smith**

This lockdown has added significance to me as I am still recovering from treatments for myeloma, which kept me fairly isolated throughout 2019! You might think 'well, you should be used to it by now', but it's not like that at all because I was looking forward to my own private lockdown ending, not deepening! The U3A and other groups have kept me occupied though, and these are some of the things I get up to...

Guitars – before last year I ran the U3A guitars SIG and still keep in contact with some of the previous members. In lockdown I'm practising most days, updating and 'publishing' the songs that we do – and recently I added a drum machine to my studio,

so I'm working out appropriate rhythms for all our songs. I have also rigged up an old Yamaha keyboard, that had been consigned to the Grandkids corner, and am learning to play that again. I also mess around using my PC as a recording studio – such fun!

U3A Rock and Pop SIG – this group is very lively in lockdown – exchanging up to 30 emails per day (yes – per day!) as we work our way through the A-Z of popular music. Every day we circulate our choice of act and track. There was a lot of competition on 'R' day for the Rolling Stones (and some even tried to squeeze them in under 'S' as well!).

Life Drawing – some of my U3A friends also (used to!) go to the Adult Education Centre on Wednesday mornings – and this week I'm tutoring a WhatsApp group where we circulate poses, do our drawings, then send back photos of our work to the group. That is working very well and will extend that way beyond the term dates and into the summer.

Hospice Art Group – I was referred there last year, and they have been fantastic – with a Zoom group now running on Thursday mornings – we spend more time chatting than 'doing art', but that's the main reason for it anyway!

Computer games – OK I'll admit it, there are a couple I play – not least of which is Elite: Dangerous – anyone else a player out there?

Grandkids – how we miss them! Every night we have a video chat with them after the government briefing, which I now take with an accompanying glass of good wine (after being teetotal for 13 years!).

We are so lucky to have the Internet and this technology during this pandemic – it's a lifeline for my mum, as she can order her food deliveries (at 90!), and keep in contact with us using her tablet and laptop.

Linda has become Head Gardener – and our garden is looking a bit like Sissinghurst – the weeds are having a hard time this year!

Photography and Birdwatching – we get regular updates from the convenor about sightings in the area, and I'm out in the garden getting some good shots of the blackbird (who is nearly feeding from our hands), the robins, starlings and magpies that regularly visit. We did have some visits from little furry friends, so we had to stop feeding the birds on the ground.

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## Lockdown Musings of a Wine-aholic Wine Enthusiast

When the weather outside is sunny and hot  
Hooray, I say, It's wine-o'clock.  
*(Red, White or Rose?? My favourite is a chilled Italian Gavi)*

I start each day with an exercise routine  
I'm lively and energetic, enthusiastic and keen.  
*(Followed by a sit-down and a cool glass of Viognier)*

I walk through the countryside around and about  
Such beauty in nature ~ there is no doubt.  
*(Washed down with a cheeky Chianti on my return)*

Self-isolating in my house on my own  
I chatter and laugh with friends on the phone.  
*(The conversation flows nicely with a glass of Chablis)*

Walking to and fro as I mow the grass  
Soon it'll be time to fill that glass.  
*(Maybe red today ~ a smooth French Merlot)*

When the gardening and sweeping chores are complete  
I'll rest in the shade, on my garden seat.  
*(It's Rose time ~ with a Pinot Blush)*

Some days I feel lazy and just read a book  
Can't even be bothered to get up and cook.  
*(Cheese and biscuits, washed down with Shiraz will suffice)*

I celebrate birthdays with family on Zoom  
Raising glasses of good cheer across the 'online room'.  
*(The Bubbly is flowing nicely today)*

When I venture to the shops, with my list in hand  
At the shelves of wine, I stop and stand.....  
*(.....and I muse..... just how many bottles would be considered an ESSENTIAL purchase?????)*

Very good cheers to one and all.

**Melanie Blewer**





### KHaD U3A Information

#### Monthly General Meetings

Regular monthly meetings are cancelled until further notice, due to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

#### Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

The Special Interest Groups may meet at various places, and often these are in a member's house to avoid fees for hiring a venue.

However, due to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, SIGs are encouraged to meet "virtually", using Zoom, WhatsApp, or other similar apps for groups. If this is not feasible, then convenors should keep in touch with their group members by regular telephone calls.

If you wish to join a SIG, please contact the Groups Co-ordinator and the convenor before you attend a meeting.

See the website for a full list of SIGs and contacts, and watch the Newsletter for their latest activities.

#### KHaD U3A Website

[www.kingshillu3a.org.uk](http://www.kingshillu3a.org.uk) (Ctrl+Click)

#### Membership Enquiries

[membership@kingshillu3a.org.uk](mailto:membership@kingshillu3a.org.uk)

**Newsletter** - SIG reports and photos deadline: Friday before each General Meeting.

**Editor: Don Bone** - [newsletter@kingshillu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@kingshillu3a.org.uk)

#### KHaD U3A Committee

##### Officers:

|                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Chairman           | <b>Melanie Blewer</b> |
| Vice Chairman      | <b>Elaine Scutt</b>   |
| Treasurer          | <b>David Murray</b>   |
| Business Secretary | <b>Maggie Holmes</b>  |
| Membership         | <b>Mark Richards</b>  |

##### Other Roles:

|                     |                                      |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Groups Co-ordinator | <b>Elaine Scutt</b>                  |
| Speakers            | <b>Linda Read and<br/>Sue Watson</b> |
| Welcome             | <b>SallyAnne Clarke</b>              |
| Hospitality         | <b>Brenda Pretty</b>                 |

**Plus: Maurice Chittenden** **Jan Pamplin**  
**Don Bone** **Jeanne Couch**

**Co-opted members:**  
**Mark Richards**



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