

Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends

How do you feel about the way we communicate with you? I ask this because your Vice Chairman and I recently attended a workshop on communications organised by Kent U3A Network. We heard speakers on the psychology of communication, communication within U3As and joined in some lively discussion on communication with the committee, complaints, newsletters and websites.

It is always useful to exchange ideas and practice with other U3As but each U3A has its own priorities, ethos, interests and constraints. What matters to us in Malling is whether we communicate effectively with you, our members. Do you get all the information you want in a form that you want it? Do you know your committee members and feel that you can approach them with queries, suggestions or complaints? Is there anything else that you would like to see in our newsletter? Or on our website? U3As depend on good communication. In Malling we have over 450 members. About a quarter come to our monthly meetings; others attend one or more groups or come on outings. Never are we all together and so the ways in which you receive information from us really are the life blood of the organisation. If you think we could improve our communications, do let us know. We are always keen to listen to our members and receptive to new ideas but we cannot listen if you do not speak! You can always button-hole one of the committee at our general meetings or get in touch with me or our secretary whose contact details are in the handbook. Finally I wish you all a very enjoyable Easter weekend.

Best wishes

Valerie Willsher

Chairman Malling U3A

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Refreshments

Tea Rota For March :

Jennifer Cradock; Dianne Hiller;
Sylvia Davies; and Wendy Demuth

Early warning for April :-

Gwendoline England; Jean Evans;
Christine Hewett; and Ted Bristow

Brenda Hurd



Meopham U3A have an outing to Ely on Monday 8th May and there are some spare seats on the coach. The cost is £23, covering the coach and a conducted tour of Ely Cathedral. There is also an optional tour of Oliver Cromwell's House. If anyone is interested, they can email David Burkitt for more details.

Monthly Meetings

(4th Tuesdays in Ryarsh Village Hall at 2 pm)

March 28th

'The European Parliament: how it works and who makes the laws'
by Elisabeth Sweeney-Smith

The talk was booked as far back as 2015 and the subject is still very relevant today.



As David Dimbleby said in the early hours of 24th June 2016 – "The British people have spoken— and the answer is 'We're out!'".

Elisabeth will cover the formal processes by which this decision by the British electorate will lead to the UK leaving the European Union. She will also cover the mechanics of how legislative decisions have taken place in the EU during the UK's membership of 40+ years, and about how the EU works in terms of law-making.

Do you know that elected MEPs along with elected Government Ministers from across the 28 Member States of the EU, are the voice of the 505 million citizens and vote on EU law, rather than faceless bureaucrats!? She will explain who is making EU laws and where and who has given them a mandate.

However, it cannot be a talk that veers into the pros and cons of EU membership or indeed anything which could be construed as political, as this is the reserve of elected politicians and not an EU civil servant, as Elisabeth is.

April 25th

'A Wealden Woman's War'
by Penny Harris

The Talk is based on a true story written by a Kent character called Edwina Hall. It starts in the long hot summer of 1940 and involves WW2, spitfires and hurricanes and a love story with a twist. The couple end up running a rural pub in a hamlet with a host of characters who introduce them into the joys of village life and who warn them about the upheaval when "they" arrive. The hop pickers arrive to "do up their 'uts" but also check out the pub and cause mischief. It's a warm affectionate tale of nostalgia for a time when there were 77,000 acres of hops in the U.K.



Imperial War Museum ©

News from the Groups

New Group – Practical Skills



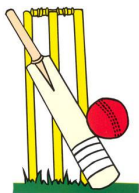
I'm sure that there are a number of members, both ladies and gentlemen who have practical hobbies from which we can all learn something. The hobbies might involve wood, metal, glass, pottery, model making of all sorts and in all materials. It would be good to have a small group so that we can all share tips and tricks from our own

discipline and help each other out with ideas. I envisage that the emphasis will be on the practical rather than the theoretical aspects of hobbies.

If this appeals to you please contact Richard Meehan by email to register an interest

Cricket Appreciation

The end of March, and already we are hearing the sound of bat on ball as the County cricket season begins. On the day of our March U3A meeting Kent are playing their first match of the season at Canterbury against a Bradford/Leeds University XI, and Surrey are playing Oxford University in The Parks, having already played a friendly against Sussex at Hove. Cricket is underway for the season once again. For those with an enthusiasm for the game, there is a Cricket Appreciation Group for you to join. A small group of 7 of us meet monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 10.30am in one another's homes for an hour-and-a half or so, and we have a full programme lined up for the coming months: a talk on Surrey in the 1950s next month, followed by 'Double Internationals' (those who've played both cricket and football for their country), exploring cricket's suicides (of whom there are surprisingly many!), a discussion on what's happening on the County and Test scene, a visit to the Oval for a day of the Surrey/Yorkshire match, and a look at some of cricket's literature.



We would welcome a couple of others to join us, so if you're interested please contact the Convenor, Derek Carpenter, he'll give you all the details, and you'll be made very welcome.

Digital Photography Group



Trevor Ledamun and Mike Rowe have been members of the Digital Photography group since it was formed and have led the Group jointly as convenors for the last nine years. Due to health problems Trevor wishes to take a back seat, so we are looking for someone to help run the group

and also provide some new ideas for session subjects.

So, please contact:-

Trevor or Mike if you are interested.

Walk London Group 2



The Walk London Group started early in 2015. Since then its members have enjoyed days out in London finding hidden and quirky parts of the capital on walks that have been both really enjoyable and informative. It was inevitable that the group would become extremely popular, so popular, in fact, that

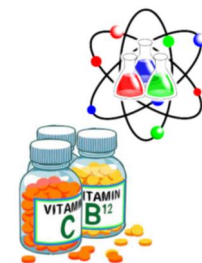
there are now too many members for just one group. So to cope with demand a second group has now been established, known as Walk London 2. This new group plans to hold its walks on the second Friday each month and if you would be



interested in joining the group or would like more information please contact the convenors, Ray or Carole Lawrence.

Science Group

Since this new group started in October we have studied a variety of subjects, drawing on the interests and working skills of the members of the group. Topics have included the life and works of the engineer, William Armstrong, eminent scientist, inventor and philanthropist (whose home was Cragside in Northumberland—now a National Trust property); "What's in Your Food" - in which we learned more about food package labelling and the meaning of the various ingredients, including vitamins and supplements; "Science in the News" - when we discussed the controversial issue of fracking for gas here and abroad; and "Nuclear Power" - which covered the birth and development of our UK atomic power industry from the early days of the Magnox reactors to the present day Pressurised Water Reactors. We have a visit planned to the Incinerator plant at Allington and future subjects for study include the Physics of Energy, the History of Digital Cameras, the Law relating to Science, and the life and works of Sir Isaac Newton.



Reading Poetry for Pleasure Group 2

World Poetry Day is held on March 21st every year, instituted by UNESCO in 2000 with the worthy aim of *supporting linguistic diversity through poetic expression and increasing the opportunity for endangered languages to be heard.*

It was quite a challenge to adopt World Poetry as our theme for March, but we had a very interesting morning looking at poetry from across the globe and across centuries from 13th century Persia, now Iran; Russia; Chile; India as well as more modern, European poetry.

We were all enthralled by poems by Hafiz, the great Persian Sufi master, writing extensively at the same time as Chaucer. His pithy and thought-provoking poetry (in translation of course!) seemed as apposite now as seven centuries ago.

The Hatcheck Girl

Why are there so few in the court of a perfect Saint?
Because every time you are near Him
You have to leave pieces of your Ego
With the hatcheck girl
Who won't give them back – OOOUCH

We enjoyed reading the 19th century Russian female poet Zinaida Hippis writing about sexual and political fulfilment at the time of great unrest leading up to the Russian Revolution, and her later criticisms of the Soviet regime, as well as modern love poetry from a German poet, Jonathan Stefan and the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda; pictures of Indian life and culture from the Nightingale of India, Sarojini Naidu, as well as poetry from WH Auden and Hilaire Belloc.

It was an interesting morning, interspersing, as always, our reactions to the poetry with reflections on our own life stories and culture, recognising that it is against these backdrops that all poets and artists work.

Dianne White

Poetry Competition

In case you failed to notice this in last month's newsletter, Malling U3A is running a poetry competition as part of its 10th birthday celebrations. All entries are welcome in any form from limericks to sonnets, ballads, free verse, rhyming couplets Just don't get too carried away and exceed 30 lines! Entries will be judged by an independent judge and small prizes awarded at the birthday tea on September 2nd. Typed entries to me by the middle of June, please, with your name on a separate piece of paper to preserve anonymity.

Here's one which came a week or so ago:

I Remember, I Remember
(with apologies to Thomas Hood)
I remember, I remember
Joining the U3A
With time to learn and time to laugh
Sweet fullness every day.
The monthly speakers, full of wit
Who open windows in the mind
New friends and interests make me glad
Work days are left behind!

I remember, I remember
Leaving my daily job.
Retirement came, I looked ahead
And left without a sob.
It didn't come a wink too soon
Nor brings too long a day

With meetings, classes, visits, too,
I while my time away

I remember, I remember
The weary days long gone
The wintry mornings getting up
Before the rising sun.
Returning home, the sky all dark
Through wind and lashing rain
Rejoice, my soul, that life here'll bring
Those dreary days again!

Seniors Advice and Information Fair Friday 26th May at the TA Centre in Ditton, Aylesford

Tracey Crouch, MP, has again invited Malling U3A to be represented at an Advice Fair in Ditton, which will be from 10am until 2pm on Friday 26th May. She says: 'The Fair helps ensure Seniors are aware of the services available to them and how collectively organisations can assist older people to continue to play an active role in the community'. Malling U3A has participated in two previous events of this nature, and we are looking for, ideally, two members to sit at our Table for each of the four hours. We will supply all the literature relating to U3A generally and Malling U3A in particular. If you can spare an hour or so on the day, please contact Derek and he will produce the rota. We have gained new members in this way before, and it is all good publicity for us in our 10th anniversary year. Please consider whether you can help.

Emergency Contact Details or ICE (In Case of Emergency)

The recent terrorist incident in London has appalled us all and brought misery to many families. It could have been any one of us on Westminster Bridge – our Walk London group was there not long ago and we have had 2 recent visits to Parliament. Thankfully such atrocities are rare and very unlikely to happen in the Malling area but other incidents could possibly occur: a member could fall and be injured or be taken ill and an ambulance called and at times like these it could be important to have information about family or friends who would need to be informed. Therefore, as a precaution in case of an unfortunate incident, we are inviting you to let us know of one or two emergency contact names and phone numbers. The information provided will of course remain password-protected on our database and will not be used for any other purpose so will probably never be used. It will be there just in case. You may have already given such details to a group convenor but we should be glad to receive the details again so we can keep them on our central database.

You may have already received an email from our Membership Secretary, Carole Lawrence, or you will do so in the near future, inviting you to let her know details of your emergency contacts (please send to caroleinaylesford@gmail.com). It has also been suggested that it might be a good idea to write emergency contact details on the reverse of your membership card and have it with you at all U3A events.

We would appreciate receiving your emergency contact details if you have not already sent them. However, if you think this is all rather OTT, there is of course no obligation on your part to give us this information, it's completely voluntary and entirely up to you.

Study Day Reports—Kent Culture

Our first Talk, **The Italian Influence on The Gardens of Kent** by Dr Ann Kneif, started with Greece. Greek houses had no gardens as we know them, just a few pots and an occasional water feature whereas public spaces included temples, statues, columns, plus walls and trees for shade. There were also botanical and medicinal gardens for use by apothecaries. In their customary way the Romans copied what the Greeks had achieved but with their developing technology and increased resources as the Roman Empire expanded, they were able to develop a classical style of garden.

By the Renaissance, Italy was leading in European garden design and Grand tours were being undertaken by aristocratic young Englishmen who returned having seen Italy's romantic, formal gardens. The formality was adopted and extended in France at tremendous cost but England did not follow the fashion to any extent. The landscape architects "Capability" Brown, William Kent and Sir Humphrey Repton in the eighteenth century designed and implemented schemes devoid of formality and geometric shapes, as "nature abhors a straight line".

Partly because of this and our different climate there are only a few Italian Gardens of large scale in England. Kent has a few, the biggest and best being at Hever Castle near Edenbridge. It comprises a four-acre walled garden containing a superb collection of statues, sculptures, pillars and appropriate Mediterranean plants, beneath its pergola. Leeds Castle's terraced Lady Baillie Garden was designed with an Italian Garden theme and it succeeds with pillars and sculptures amongst appropriate planting. The adjacent Culpeper Garden with its medicinal plants may be based on a Greek or Roman design, but it lacks the other contents of a true Italian Garden

It seems the Greek house's influence is still apparent as we nurture our pot on the patio.

Dr Kneif gave an interesting and well illustrated lecture, which was appreciated.

The second lecture **Dickens in Kent, by Christoph Bull**, was delivered by a speaker who obviously loves his subject. He even lives in the village of Chalk, just along the road from Gad's Hill Place which Dickens admired when a child, bought as a home in 1856, and where he died in 1870.

We learned that Charles Dickens must have been a remarkable man and fitted at least two lives into his fifty eight years. He was born in 1812 in Portsmouth where his father John worked as a Navy Pay Office Clerk. In 1815 he was posted to Somerset House and the family moved to London, but as the war with France was ending John was transferred to work at Sheerness and Chatham Dockyards. The family took up residence at 2 Ordnance Terrace, Chatham (still there and proudly wearing a plaque).

Charles started school at the age of 9 and augmented his formal education by exploring the dockyards and Rochester with its Castle, Cathedral and bridge crossing the Medway. Also, his mother Elizabeth gave him daily lessons in reading, and his father took him on walks and boat trips that opened up the history of the area.

Dickens looked back on the years in Chatham as the idyll of his life and at the age of 10 made his

memories of the years in Kent into a treasure trove in his mind. For the rest of his life he enjoyed taking friends to walk over the territory he had known and loved so well.

The landscape and towns of Kent gave him settings for many of his books. The Pickwick Papers is partly set in Rochester, the unfinished Mystery of Edwin Drood centres on its streets and characters, and Great Expectations lives in the streets and houses of Rochester and describes the Medway Marshes.

Christoph Bull gave an entertaining illustrated lecture which was very enjoyable.

Geoff Beale

Study Day Afternoon

After lunch on our study day, we were given a musical treat. We met Lizzie and Christine, a folk duo known as **Fiddle and Faff**.

They showed us songs which encompassed examples of different aspects of Kent culture and life. As well as songs and musical pieces, they introduced us to their instruments, two of which were very unusual.



The first was from Sweden and was called a **nychelharpa**. This is a keyed fiddle, very different from the conventional fiddle which Christine also played.



The second one was rather like a double bass, but shaped like a giant mandolin. This was called a **mandobass** and is actually a bass mandolin. Lizzie also played a double bass.



Many of their songs told tales of the struggles of ordinary Kentish people in history, commenting upon social issues and championing various causes. These ranged from a song about dispute over imported wheat in Swale in the 1800's, to one telling of the fate of the Kent miners in the 1980's when their pits were closed and their livelihoods lost and on to the recent 'Operation Stack'. Many of the songs were traditional but arranged by them whilst others were new songs, written by Lizzie and Christine themselves. It was obvious that they were passionate about Kent and its heritage and in both preserving traditional music and also composing new material which can be added to the existing Kent repertoire. Hopefully these new songs will last well in to the future

Eric and Norma Diston

April Newsletter:

Copy is required by Easter Sunday, 16th April
Please send material to the Editor, Mike Rowe at
mike.quintain@gmail.com