

# Kingston u3a Newsletter

**Summer 2021 Volume 11 Issue 2**



## Contents

- 2 New Constitution; Trips & Outings
- 3 Group News; Croquet
- 4 Art Appreciation; Book Clubs
- 5 Book Clubs; Discussions
- 6 Online Learning
- 7 History; Poetry Reading
- 8 Play Reading; Wine Appreciation; Clay Modelling
- 10 Importance of Libraries
- 11 Summer Talks; Monthly Meetings
- 12 Committee Members

[www.kingstonu3a.org.uk](http://www.kingstonu3a.org.uk)

It's a wonderful feeling to begin our summer newsletter on a more positive note. Since 12 April we've at last been able to meet up outside in groups of six, and Gisela Zürcher-Feiß tells us on page 2 that, all being well, she can start planning the first outings, which we'll advertise in August's newsletter.

The date of the next milestone is 17 May so please remember that, before this date and until government guidance sanctions it, we are still not allowed to meet indoors.

We are investigating hybrid meetings (with some members in a hall, others on Zoom) and we need volunteers to test procedures and give technical support. If you'd like to help, please contact me at [chair@kingstonu3a.org.uk](mailto:chair@kingstonu3a.org.uk)

It's good to see that groups are still reading piles of books, appreciating art and artists, discussing a variety of topics, delving into history and tasting wines.

In this issue, too, Jill Smith revels in rediscovering a long-neglected artistic talent while Chris Turner explains how useful he has found our libraries during lockdown and urges us to support them

Best wishes and continue to keep safe!



*Linda Foreman  
Chair*

## Changes to Kingston u3a Constitution

At the Special General Meeting held online on 12 April it was agreed to make the changes which had been outlined in February's newsletter.

We are now allowed to:

- have general meetings online, using such tools as Zoom. This was a change recommended by **u3a** National Office as a result of the pandemic.
- reduce the quorum for general meetings from 10 to 5 per cent as there may not be an affordable hall big enough to hold 10 per cent of the membership. We do not know at this point how many people could be accommodated in the United Reformed Church Hall in future but it will probably be fewer than the previous 150 limit.
- create a category of 'Honorary Member' for very long-standing members who have reached a venerable age or have given long and distinguished service to Kingston **u3a**. Members will be encouraged to suggest suitable recipients of this. Serving Committee members will not be eligible.

The revised Constitution will be sent to **u3a** National Office.

## GAS: Outings and Holidays



A most frustrating aspect of the Covid restrictions has been the cancellation of the holidays and trips organised by Gisela Zürcher-Feiß

and her team.

Although most of us have probably had our second vaccination by now, that in itself is not sufficient to resume all our activities, as long as both the

**u3a** and government restrictions are still in force. To ignore these is unthinkable and, in any case, risks invalidating our insurance.

But there is some hope and Gisela would like to say: 'All being well, the government's Coronavirus roadmap will come to an end on the 21 June. That means all limits to socialising will be removed and we'll all have received our respective vaccination by then. We'll then be able to meet up again in groups in person and go to the places we'd intended to visit before the lockdown. All being well, further details about proposed trips will be given in the August issue of the newsletter.'

## Group News

Many groups continue to meet via Zoom and other online services. Well done those who are able to do so.

Sadly two of our groups have decided to close – Spanish Revision and Wild Flower Walks. If anyone else would like to take on these groups as leaders, we'd be very pleased to hear from you.

Any information relating to Poetry Group 3 would be greatly appreciated.

Things might be opening up soon and groups will be able to resume their activities. Until then please keep to the guidelines and have a good summer.

### Emergency contact numbers

We would like to emphasise the importance of someone in each group, other than the leader, holding all the group information, including emergency contact details, in case something should happen to the leader. We've had several occasions when this has happened and there is general confusion all round. If the coordinators don't know of any problems, they can't help.

**Shirley Miller:** 020 8940 8573  
[shirley.miller4@btinternet.com](mailto:shirley.miller4@btinternet.com)

### Anyone for croquet?

Two years ago, before we were struck by the Covid plague, a successful **u3a** croquet group was set up, using the beautiful lawns of Surbiton Croquet Club along Alexandra Drive in Surbiton.

As we come out of lockdown, croquet



clubs all over the country are reporting a big surge of interest in the game from people looking for a healthy way of enjoying themselves in the open air.

In response to this, Surbiton Croquet Club is offering two taster sessions to **u3a** members who would like to try the game. These will be held on Friday, 28 May and Friday, 4 June. They'll be for two hours, both starting at 1.30pm. If you are interested, please email Margaret Packer at [mapacker@hotmail.com](mailto:mapacker@hotmail.com) or call her on 020 8977 9728.

Thereafter the club will run a six-week course on Fridays at 1.30pm, starting on 11 June. This will cost £36 for the entire course and will include both coaching, equipment and coffee or tea.

Of course the arrangements are dependent on whatever Covid rules are in place at the time. Let's hope they don't interfere with our plans.

Croquet is an enormously satisfying game and the Surbiton Croquet Club is one of the largest in the country and, in normal times, it offers a wide range of social activities.

**Gavin McFarlane**



**Art Appreciation al fresco: Janet Holland, Fran Thurling and Stephanie Leitch**

## Group Reports

### Art Appreciation 1

We've been keeping on our artistic toes with a monthly Zoom with a varied menu as we all choose a topic each time. Recent subjects include works by Alfred Sisley and Camille Pissarro, William Powell Frith, Rebecca Louise Law, Beeple (digital artist Mike Winkelmann) and Arabella Marshall. In April we did manage a small group meeting al fresco.

**Fran Thurling**

as Hiroshige, Artemisia Gentileschi, Dame Laura Knight, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye and Paula Rego. We've tried to diversify a bit and looked at themes, for instance 'Light'. At the last meeting we picked, at random, the year 1910 and it was interesting to see what you find starting with a blank sheet of knowledge. We anticipate being able to choose sufficient subjects to share till we can – soon, hopefully – get back to the galleries.

**Eva Garland**

### Art Appreciation 2

After an exciting Zoom Christmas party, with dressing up, quiz, music and storytelling, rinsed down with a small glass of something bubbly, we had a few weeks off. Our January and February meetings looked at individual artists such

### Book Club 1

I believe that my book group was one of the first to be started by Kingston **u3a** back in October 1998 and one of the founding members still attends our meetings. During the past year we've communicated mainly by email and



phone but really appreciate meeting face-to-face which we've done twice in the garden.

Recent choices which produced animated discussions were *The Wall* by John Lanchester, a good dystopian fiction showing us a world that could become a reality and deals with climate change and immigration. We read this just before the pandemic. Then it was *The Shepherd's Hut* by Tim Winton, according to the *Sunday Times*, 'a finely nuanced picture of a damaged yet not defeated youngster nearing adulthood ... modern Australian Huckleberry'. *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens was part murder mystery, part coming of age novel, an excellent evocation of the marshlands of the North Carolina coast and its inhabitants.

**Jane Hoyland**

## Books: New Malden

Since our first online meeting in April last year we've read and discussed online: *Milkman* (Anna Burns); *Drive your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* (Olga Tokarczuk); *Lincoln in the Bardo* (George Saunders); *The Mirror and The Light* (Hilary Mantel); *The Luminaries* (Eleanor Catton); *The Other Hand* (Chris Cleave); *Christodora* (Tim Murphy); *The Salt Path* (Raynor Winn); *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (Christy Lefteri); and *It Can't Happen Here* (Sinclair Lewis). In May we'll be reading Marieke Rijnveld's *The Discomfort of Evening*.

We've all had our favourites and enjoyed some fascinating discussions

but perhaps the two we liked most were *Where the Crawdads Sing* (Delia Owens) – the story of a girl growing up alone – and *Circe* (Madeline Miller), a retelling of the Greek myth. And some of us even managed to understand Italo Calvino's book *If On a Winter's Night a Traveller*.

**Chris Cheek**

## Book Group: Surbiton

We've kept going on Zoom during lockdown and one member joins us by phone. Nearly everyone has read all the books and most of us have written a review to share with other members. I like writing reviews as it concentrates the mind. We've read lots of modern fiction and some from the 30s, 40s and 50s. Our one true classic was *Northanger Abbey*, which most of us had read as teenagers, so it was fun to read again as grown-ups. All our books have been fiction bar two. We've read 31 women authors and 21 men; only two were chosen twice, Maggie O'Farrell and William Boyd. We've chosen our books democratically. Everyone does a little research and puts forward three titles to members and we vote. I have a democratic power of veto, which I've not used as yet. We all enjoy our group and have missed meeting up in person for a lively discussion of our recent read.

**Lorraine Hellen**

## Discussions: Talkback

Our group's discussions centre on topical issues. I usually look at the



**Surbiton Book Club enjoying 5 degrees: Lorraine Hellen, Jan Goodyear, Barbara Leach, Mary Mercy and Caroline Cunliffe**

newspaper and if we were meeting today, say, I might choose for starters 'Cities of the future will belong to the young' or 'Need a favour? Why older people are your best bet'. Then our discussions go off in various directions. Last summer we met outside in the garden and will do so again this summer. In between I've kept in touch by telephone.

**Stephanie Leitch**

## **Discussions: Online Learning**

Our group has now grown to five from various backgrounds and we have been studying a variety of subjects over the last year. We choose a short course from the FutureLearn website, usually advertised as four to five weeks, needing a few hours each week to be fitted in at any time of day (or night). We convene every fortnight on Zoom to discuss what

we have learned, help each other with tricky bits, and suggest other interesting resources. The online lecturers are usually from well known universities. The process of choosing can be animated but is always amicable. When we are nearing the end of a course, we each choose a shortlist for the next. Often there is a topic which stands out and gets a consensus vote.

Courses we've completed include: Understanding Biological Energy, Working Lives in the Factories and Mills, The History of the Book, and others on Genetics, Economics and Forensic Archaeology.

A recent course was on the Weather with presenters from Reading University and the Met Office. I now understand those pressure charts and cloud formations rather better. I had a voucher left over from Christmas and decided to

treat myself to a new toy. The lecturer had shown us an infrared thermometer which can be used to take the temperature of most things, including the garden and clouds, but **not** people as there is a laser rangefinder.

**Linda Foreman**

## 17th-18th Century History Group

Our group has been holding lively meetings on Zoom throughout the lockdown, helping us to put current concerns in perspective. Members take turns to lead sessions. The session leader circulates a note ahead of the meeting, or gives a talk on the day, with the aim of stimulating discussion. Topics often give rise to email discussion before and after the meeting. We have recently covered the Growth of the British Navy; Bristol and the Slave Trade; Vienna and the Hapsburg Monarchs; the Enlightenment and Age of Sensibility; James Boswell; Mozart, Child Prodigy, on Tour; Sir Hans Sloane, Collector Extraordinaire; and Benjamin Franklin, Citizen of Philadelphia.

We're continuing by Zoom for the moment and will meet in person when it is safe. Forthcoming topics include: English Society in the Time of Dr Johnson; the Royal Society; Political and Religious Sects in Cromwell's Time; the American War of Independence; and the Origins of the US Constitution. Enquiries to Martin Power, telephone 020 8942 8106 or 07891 415878 or email [drmartinpower@hotmail.com](mailto:drmartinpower@hotmail.com)

**Martin Power**

## Women in History

We do 30- to 60-minute talks, followed by questions and generated discussion. We often use shorter segments on a broader topic with maybe four or even five speakers in one session. This has been popular and encourages those who are daunted by the longer sessions. We recently did this with Pandemics across the Centuries – not a cheery morning, you might think, but it actually ran over two sessions and was effective and much enjoyed. Similarly with DNA and Family History, we shared the scientific with the more personal and incorporated many interesting reminiscences. Recently several of us listened to the Third Age Trust talk on the Garrett sisters.

In May we are linking up via Zoom with Canadian librarian/lawyer Amy Kaufman of Queen's University Library, Kingston, Ontario. She'll be speaking to us about Women Writing Women's Rights: The Beginnings of Women's Law Books in England, from Married Women's Property Reform to Suffrage.

**Diane Wilson**

## Poetry Reading Group 1

We have continued through lockdown, initially via email, then through Zoom meetings. We meet every fortnight, with a prearranged theme for the poems, for example 'Departure/Leaving'. We then come to our meetings with examples which reflect the theme, sometimes very obscurely. Under the theme 'Sun/Moon', we read Sylvia Plath's *The Moon and the*

*Yew Tree* and Thomas Hardy's *The Sun on the Bookcase*. We enjoy our poetry readings and look forward to actually being able to meet again round a table.

**Carol Richards**

## Playreading Groups

Playreading groups 1 and 2 have merged for the duration and we have been Zooming since last June. We can't borrow playsets at the moment so six of us have been reading mainly Shakespeare, as most of us have complete sets. My set was inherited from my mother and she would be delighted at the amount of use it's getting, although shocked by the reason. We've read five Shakespeare plays, usually over two monthly meetings. We also tackled *The Real Inspector Hound* by Tom Stoppard, which some of us already owned and some purchased. A number of short plays have been written specifically for Zoom by two members of Tetbury **u3a**, who have provided them in return for a donation, and these have proved entertaining. Playreading by Zoom has worked well and has been fun but we hope to try some plays in the garden when it gets warmer.

**Jacqui Humphreys**

## Wine Appreciation Group

During lockdown the biggest challenge we faced was getting us all tasting the same wine at a meeting. But this has worked well and we've been tasting our way around the world using our monthly Zoom meeting. We've been to South

Africa, tasted Waitrose cut-price bargains and had two sessions on lesser known red and white grapes. It's fascinating how many different tastes there are even from the same grape and equally how some people love a taste that others don't like at all. While Zoom works well, the group is really looking forward to meeting in person – hopefully this summer.

If you are interested in joining us, we have vacancies, so just contact Bob Higgins at [bobhiggins@virginmedia.com](mailto:bobhiggins@virginmedia.com) for details and information. You don't need any prior knowledge, just the desire to be introduced to some different wines. It's fun with a bit of learning and some very good company. Now we are all vaccinated, bring on the summer rosé and sparkling tastings.

**Bob Higgins**

## She Came, She Saw ... She Conkered



This isn't entirely a Covid story as I was already feeling the lack of creativity since giving up art because of failing sight. My niece suggested clay modelling and I jumped at the idea because I like the smell and feel of clay and had a bit of



success with it when I once tried it at Morley College long ago. She had a block at home which she gave me the next time we met.

Getting started with any art project is always the hardest part and I'd had the clay for some time before I actually opened it. What to make? My first idea was coasters and little dishes. I hadn't got very far with either when, seeing all the lovely, shiny conkers outside on the pavement, I decided to try making some. It then dawned on me that, as a former amateur botanist, the natural world should be my focus. And so I progressed to acorns and leaves.

But initially it was conkers. I'd never realised how diverse they were. I modelled them on actual conkers and spent many hours sanding them to the corresponding shapes. I then applied many coats of paint and ink before I was satisfied. It was frustrating at times: they often looked right when wet but wrong when dry. Finally I varnished them. I must admit even I could only just tell the real ones from mine by touching them. It gets easier as time passes because mine don't lose their gloss.

Acorns were my next focus. Being small they were very fiddly and creating their cups was tricky. But the stalks defeated me and I resorted to using real ones. What I remember most about the acorns is the trouble I had matching the colour which changes as it dries out. Some of those acorns have up to four coats of paint on them. They were very

frustrating and I resolved never to make acorns again.

In between conker and acorn days I was out collecting loads of leaves and preserving some of them for reference. This gave me another focus when I was out and about and renewed my interest in botany.

Next I began moulding various leaves, trying to make them contoured rather than flat and marking the veins. Stalks were particularly problematical. As



my clay leaves are much thicker than real ones, real stalks would be disproportionate in size. Clay leaf stalks, on the other hand, are very fragile. I've experimented reinforcing them with bits of cocktail sticks and even real leaf stalks but that's something to work on when I start again with this year's leaves.

In the meantime I've been making pots, coasters and dishes. It's a nice change to have the freedom to make them whatever shape and colour I choose.

I mentioned sanding briefly with regard to conkers but everything has to be sanded before it is painted. Sanding is pure joy. It's absorbing, relaxing and generally easy. You don't need an apron, brushes or water – just sandpaper. Best of all, unlike the other stages of modelling, success is virtually

guaranteed. In fact it would be hard to make anything worse by sanding.



Finally, another satisfying aspect of this venture was using all the art stuff I'd collected over the years. It bugged me when I saw it unused in the cupboard. Apart from the clay I lacked only varnish and I've since learned that I can make my own with PVA glue and water.

I'd love to hear from anyone who feels inspired to try clay modelling, or to receive tips from more experienced modellers.

**Jill Smith**

## Use It or Lose It!

### Get reading and support your local library says Chris Turner

Whether it's *The Splendid and the Vile*, charting Churchill's first momentous year (1940-1941) in office as PM, Kate Atkinson's new Jackson Brodie novel or Ryszard Kapuściński's masterful analysis of the fall of the Shah of Iran (all books I've recently borrowed), your local branch of Surrey Libraries will provide. You'll be as surprised as I was at the broad and eclectic range of books available.

It's been during the 12 months plus (thus far) of lockdowns and Covid-19 that I've been reaping the full benefits of my

local Molesey branch by taking advantage of Surrey Libraries' admirable Click & Collect arrangement, currently (during the pandemic) free of charge for any reservations made. There's also a Surrey Libraries branch in the Dittons as well as in Esher and Ewell. As for Kingston, its library service was more restricted during the various lockdowns but on 12 April all seven branches in the borough reopened for browsing. You can search online – Kingston's website is more user-friendly than that of Surrey Libraries – and 'place a hold' on your choice of book.

I admit that, although I've always been a member of my local library, wherever I've lived, I've neglected to use it enough. I am an avid reader, of both fiction and non-fiction – I'm a member of Kingston [u3a's](#) 17th-18th Century History group – and must have spent a small fortune buying books, my shelves at home groaning under the weight. However, as a recent retiree, I've been forced to re-evaluate my finances. My apologies, Waterstones.

How does Click & Collect work? Merely join the library, which takes just minutes online, search for the book (or books; up to 20 at a time) and reserve your title, first making sure you've selected the format you require, whether print (paperback or hardback), an e-book, e-audio or audio format on CD discs. Shortly, your online account will alert you to the fact that the book is either available to pick up or is in transit from another branch. In this case you'll receive a further message, within a

couple of days or so, that your book is ready to pick up from the (Covid-safe) branch you will have nominated when you registered with Surrey Libraries.

Happy reading! And don't forget, you'll also be helping to safeguard the future of your library, part of a nationwide network that is such a significant yet undervalued contributor to our communities. Now, time to catch up on my current fascinating books focusing on the American War of Independence for a forthcoming History group presentation ...

Subjects include:

- Visual Arts in the Roaring Twenties
- Germany's Weimar Republic
- Wallpapers in the 1920s and 30s
- F Scott Fitzgerald in the 1920s
- Twenties Jazz and the Great American Songbook
- Paris in the 1920s: Art, culture, fashion and society
- Classical Swing in the Roaring Twenties

BAUHAUS

### Further information and registration

For dates and details of the talks and the speakers, please go to the Summer Programme Flyer at:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/files//london-region/docs/summertalks2021flyer.pdf>

## Summer Talks: May–August

JAZZ

ART DECO

London Region of **u3a** has a programme of fortnightly online talks on the **Twenties** – Mondays, 5-6.30pm.

To register please click on the link for the appropriate talk within the flyer.

PARIS

## Monthly Meetings

Here are the dates for the next few monthly meetings. Until we can resume our meetings at the United Reformed Church, the talks will take place online via Zoom.

Date	Topics/Speakers
10 May	<b>Footsteps in Summer: John O'Groats to Land's End – Russell George</b> When early retirement beckoned, Russell embarked on the gruelling 950-mile journey from John O'Groats to Land's End. <i>Footsteps in Summer</i> is the diary of this epic walk.
7 Jun	<b>Baked Alaska or Mexican Chilly? Climate change explained – Nick Cook</b> Nick, a former research scientist, talks about the history, science and politics of climate change.
5 Jul	<b>The Changing World of Broadcast Media – Pat Mitchinson</b> Pat takes a satirical look at topics such as broadcast media, social media and new technology.

## Kingston u3a Executive Committee 2020/2021

### Registered Charity No. 1011295

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## Change of Address

Please send updates to:

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32 Howard Road, New Malden  
KT5 4DP or email him at:  
[database@kingstonu3a.org.uk](mailto:database@kingstonu3a.org.uk)

## Newsletter Contributions

Tell us what your group has been doing or the visits and holidays you've enjoyed. We'd also like to receive stories, poems or short reviews of books, plays, films or exhibitions. Contributions should be no more than 500 words but there's always room for

shorter items too. Photos (in .JPG format, please) help illustrate your contribution but don't forget to send the names of people shown in them. Send photos as separate files and not embedded in a Word document to:  
[communications@kingstonu3a.org.uk](mailto:communications@kingstonu3a.org.uk)

## Distribution

The newsletter is posted out in early February, May, August and November. If there are any problems concerning the newsletter, please contact Susan Hinchsliffe at:  
[communications@kingstonu3a.org.uk](mailto:communications@kingstonu3a.org.uk)