

Kingston u3a Newsletter

Volume 12 Issue 3

Autumn 2022



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www.kingstonu3a.org.uk

We have a bumper edition for you and it's wonderful to see that many of the contributions come from our members. The trips you've been on – to Chislehurst Caves, Amberley, Pitzhanger Manor and the Peak District – make interesting reading. And we've two more outings planned, to The Vyne in Sherborne St John and to the All England Tennis Club and Museum in Wimbledon.

Speaker Secretary, Mary Hodgson, introduces herself and describes her experiences and interests. 2022 is the centenary of Howard Carter's discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb and Frances Welsh discusses the treasures he found.

It's time to renew your subscriptions. You'll find all the information and forms inside. The AGM is in November and I can't stress enough how important it is that some of you volunteer to join the Committee if we are to maintain the administration and activities of Kingston u3a. Please come forward and help us to ensure the continued success of our vibrant organisation.

Best wishes

Linda Foreman
Chair



Annual General Meeting

In accordance with the constitution of the **u3a**, notice is hereby given that the 31st Annual General Meeting of Kingston **u3a** will take place, both online via Zoom and at the United Reformed Church, at 1.30pm on Monday, 7 November 2022.

Lorraine Hellen
Secretary

We'll send a Zoom invitation to all members who've given us their email address. Up to 100 members can participate online.

If you would like to raise a particular subject at the AGM or have any comments or suggestions, please contact:

Lorraine Hellen
12 Park Road
Surbiton
KT5 8QD

or you can email her at secretary@kingstonu3a.org.uk by noon on Monday, 17 October. We will take questions on the day but advance notice would be useful.

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of AGM 1 November 2021 *
3. Chair's Report *
4. Treasurer's Report *
5. Approval of the Examiner *
6. From September 2023, proposed increase in subscriptions *
(See details of this below.)
7. Election of the Executive Committee 2022/23 *
8. Any other business
9. Date of the next AGM

* Items requiring a vote

Subscriptions: Proposed Increase

Kingston **u3a** needs to increase its very modest subscriptions from October 2023. We shall be asking the AGM in November to approve an increase in the

single membership fee from £13 to £15, and the joint fee from £20 to £24, all per annum, with effect from 1 October 2023.

Kingston **u3a** fees have not been raised since 2010, despite rising costs nationally and locally. We've been able to maintain the rates for so long through careful stewardship by our treasurers, and efficiencies in our administrative procedures.

The capitation payable to **u3a** National Office has risen from £3.50 to £4 this year and will rise again next year by approximately 40p (to be confirmed at the national AGM in October), along with other costs down to National Office.

Please let us know if you'd like more information regarding our own accounts and the many benefits we obtain by being members of the national **u3a**. Our Treasurer, Joy Garvey, would be delighted to have help with the accounts, as we'd like to streamline the renewal process. For this year the process is similar to last year: please see the form in this newsletter and renew now.

Subscriptions

We are, however, keeping subscriptions for 2022/23 at the current level of £13 for a single member and £20 a year for two members at the same address.

Renewals

Please detach and fill in the form at the centre of your newsletter and post it with a cheque as soon as possible. We'll assume those not renewing by

31 December 2022 no longer wish to remain in Kingston **u3a**.

Those members renewing by standing order do **not** need to submit a form. If you wish to start paying your membership this way, just follow the instructions on the form.

Executive Committee: Nomination of Members

We are looking to recruit some new members. Of our current 10 Committee members, two are standing down in November and it is essential we have more volunteers.

Members usually attend six Committee meetings a year and can choose to help with aspects of administration, finance, the database, communications, groups, outings and holidays, membership, the website, or monthly meetings. Help of this kind would be most welcome and training will be given.

Please detach the nomination form on page 4 of this newsletter, or download one from the Kingston **u3a** website, and send it to the Secretary at the address below by noon on Monday, 17 October:

Lorraine Hellen
Kingston u3a Secretary
12 Park Road
Surbiton
KT5 8QD

Please note: All members get a printed copy of this edition of the newsletter, so that they see the AGM and renewal details.

Kingston u3a Executive Committee

Nomination form for members 2022/23

Up to 12 members can be elected at the Annual General Meeting on Monday, 7 November 2022. Eight of the 10 existing Committee members are willing to stand again.

We welcome new recruits. Members serve for at least a year, renewable each year for a maximum of six years to ensure a healthy turnover.

If you wish to stand for election at the AGM, please complete this form and return it by noon, Monday, 17 October 2022 to the Secretary: Lorraine Hellen, 12 Park Road, Surbiton KT5 8QD.

Nominees, proposers and seconders must be paid-up members of Kingston u3a.

Please note: You can also email your nominations to Lorraine Hellen at secretary@kingstonu3a.org.uk but please make sure that you have the permission of your proposer and seconder and their membership numbers.

	Name of Member (Block capitals)	Member Number	Signature
Nominee			
Proposer			
Secunder			

Mary Hodgson: New Speaker Secretary

After a childhood in Yorkshire and higher education in Paris and Lancaster, I came to London aged 25 with a degree in French, a husband and a baby. By the time my son started school I was a single parent, so the obvious career choice was teaching, which I did for much of my working life, interspersed with periods as a charity administrator, in special needs housing and child protection. Evenings and weekends I enjoyed being outdoors, working on my allotment, walking or cycling.

Post retirement, many of my most memorable and enjoyable experiences have been through volunteering. Through the Barnes-Le Pecq (France) town twinning, I undertook to exchange groups of artists. Benefits to me were a subsequent interest in art and making life-long friends in both Barnes and Paris. I still find art endlessly intriguing and challenging, and often spend Saturday mornings out sketching locally with the Twickenham Art Circle.

On a trip to India I volunteered through a local charity to work in a state primary school and a neighbourhood playgroup in rural Rajasthan, so had the privilege of invitations to some of the locals' homes and ceremonies.

I found out about the **u3a** when looking for an art tutor, and Butler Gaythorne (RIP) of Richmond **u3a** was a perfect advertisement – humorous, knowledgeable, helpful. I too started a



group in Richmond **u3a**, Gallery Visit and Lunch, usually in London, with additional longer visits to Liverpool, Glasgow, Bradford and Lille – all with the good company of **u3a** members. I enjoyed regular games of French Scrabble at the Hurlingham Club. Plus a film, followed by a discussion and a curry at the Watermans. I also joined Kingston **u3a** when I moved to live in Ham and the holidays organised by Gisela were always a pleasure.

So the **u3as**, and volunteering, have enriched my life enormously, and I'm happy to take on the small role of Speaker Secretary. I would welcome your comments on my selection of speakers, and your suggestions and recommendations of potential speakers. You can email me at:

speakers@kingstonu3a.org.uk

Mary Hodgson

Group News

Sadly two groups have had to stop meeting for the moment because new leaders are needed. If you would like to lead the Architecture group or the Talkback group (discussion of topical issues), please contact the group coordinator, Sybil Hickman: 020 8546 8440.



A Visit to Strawberry Hill

Francesca Cura, leader of MOTO 3, recently arranged a really interesting visit to Strawberry Hill for the five members of the group.

Some of us had already been there several years ago, before the renovation of the author Horace Walpole's summer residence had been completed. We were very impressed. He bought what was little more than two cottages in 1747 and transformed them into his idea of 'a little Gothic castle'.

On the left you can see us admiring the beautiful ceiling of the Long Gallery.

A café is available and there are gardens leading to the riverside. It was a very worthwhile and enjoyable visit.

To find out more about Strawberry Hill, take a look at the website:

www.strawberryhillhouse.org.uk/

Vivienne Douglas

Gardening

We get inspiration and encouragement when we hold our monthly meetings in a member's garden and go on visits to National Garden Scheme Open Gardens. In May we met at Ann Tennant's home and kicked off celebrations with a Jubilee tea, during which we had a quiz to match the flag of Commonwealth countries to their national flowers.

Margaret Stroud



(l-r) Diana Pirgon, Doreen Chambers, Margaret Stroud, Debbie Dobbs (Group Leader), Margaret Harold and Fiona Maccoll

Photo courtesy of Ann Tennant

Train Group Visits

Leader Lionel Beer tells us about two recent outings made by the group

Chislehurst Caves

On Friday, 22 April the Train Group met late one morning at Waterloo Station for the half-hour ride to Chislehurst. It was only a ten-minute stroll to the Cave Shop, Museum and Café. The café serves drinks, snacks and hot food at reasonable prices. The sun came out and some of our group of 15 picnicked at the tables outside.

At 2.15pm we assembled outside the caves for our exclusive tour of the tunnels. Inside we were offered hand-held hurricane lamps as only focal points are lit by electric lights. Near the entrance is a cruciform chapel with a dome at the centre. The tunnels in the chalk vary in height and width, some just head height and others large enough for a Tube station. If you looked carefully, you could spot broken black nodules of flint (sometimes used in flintlocks and tinder boxes) in the chalk. A few ammonites and fossils have been found there, too.

The origin of the tunnels is unknown but, following the 1666 Fire of London, there was a need for lime for building with brick and stone. During WW1 part of the system was used to store munitions from Woolwich Arsenal. In WW2 it was used as an air-raid shelter, said to have housed underground up to 15,000 people. During this time there was a

hospital cave, surgeries, shops and a post office. Mail was delivered to numbered bunks. From the 1950s to the 1970s parts of the cave system were used for dances and all kinds of concerts – jazz, pop, rock and skiffle. Mushrooms were also grown in the caves, although the tunnels were remarkably dry. At one point there is an esoteric carving on a wall, dating back to 1995. Unfortunately photography is not allowed in the caves.



Chislehurst Caves plaque
Warren Bennett, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#),
via Wikimedia Commons

After the 45-minute tour some of us stopped for tea outside and I chatted to the owner, Darren, who told me that the Mines Inspectorate visits annually. When I asked about the total length of this complex maze, if the caves were joined end to end, he estimated it would be well over 12 miles. So plenty of scope to get lost in the dark ...

There were no hitches en route, admission was only £5 a head and

members said they had enjoyed their day out. And Chislehurst is in the Freedom Pass zone.

Amberley

Seven of us met up at Wimbledon for a tram ride to East Croydon, where we could catch the Bognor Regis/Chichester train.

The open-air industrial Amberley Museum is in a huge chalk pit, a short walk from Amberley station. A kind receptionist allowed us a group discount, which we all appreciated. We were ready for an early lunch, which we ate outside on the balcony in pleasant weather.

After lunch we boarded an historic green bus (Southdown souvenir ticket provided) which took us to the other end of the quarry. (Yes, it is a huge site.) We were in time for the two-foot-gauge train ride round the edge of the site, which is now heavily lined with trees. Haulage was a Hunslet diesel, as steam loco Polar Bear (from the Isle of Man) was locked in the shed.

You can see about 48 items and volunteers demonstrate various crafts. The lime kilns dominate and mention must be made of the railway exhibits, which include a Mail Rail train with accompanying film. Where else can you see a piece of Surrey Iron Railway (opened 1804) plateway? The flanged rails were mounted on stone blocks so that a horse could walk between the (4ft 6in wide) cast iron rail plates.

Two of our members had a ‘school reunion’ as both their fathers had served in Burma in World War 2.



Our group told me they had enjoyed this day trip.



I-r: Margaret Harold, Sue Scott, Janice Kruger, Jan Goodyear, Maureen Kiddell, Margaret Stroud, Lionel Beer (group leader), kneeling down in front of the Hunslet locomotive.