



Dear Members,

Autumn is here and we are still in the midst of the health crisis with no real end in sight and the number affected with the disease in our area rising slowly but surely. As I write the figure of 92 cases per 100,000 is shown when I search which is an extra 30 cases per 100,000 from this time last week. We are still below the average figure for England, but we are certainly not out of the woods!!

The council are keeping us well informed through their Covid-19 Champion scheme, this includes a weekly written update and a video presentation by Peter Marland, the council leader. Both are clear and concise.

The Trustees held their monthly meeting last Monday and with the government guidelines for Tier 1 clear the Trustees took the decision that MK U3A should remain closed apart from any Zoom meetings (or meetings using other platforms) and indoor and outdoor group meetings limited to 6 members from different households. There is no telling how long we will be in Tier 1 so we will try to keep you up to date with any changes.

We have had feedback from some members about the reduced level of activities that they were able to take part in the last six months. A further item on the agenda was a proposal to increase the membership 'year' for all members by 3 months from your next renewal date, that is 15 months membership instead of 12. This will of course mean that we will have to use some of our reserve funds for any shortfall in our finances. Diana, our treasurer, is providing costings for this proposal and working on our budget for the coming financial year. Our outgoings remain more or less the same with our commitment to The Third Age Trust, our office running costs and maintaining our website etc. We are also providing two free virtual Open Meetings each month which were not in the budget for this year. Amending the renewal system on our website to change the 12 month period to 15 months is quite a complex exercise as we run the membership renewals throughout the year on the month you initially joined and this change can only be achieved through our website developers. We will give you more information on this once it is in place.

The eagle-eyed among you may have spotted that the logo on our website has changed in line with the recommendation from the Third Age Trust. The wording 'University of the Third Age' has been removed and been replaced with the new banner 'Learn, Laugh, Live'. We will be working through all of documentation to make the change in the coming weeks. (If you cannot see the new banner you may have to clear your cache, you can Google how to do this if the process is unfamiliar to you).

The Zoom Open Meetings are still very popular and we would like to send out thanks to Lynne who makes sure there are a wide variety of topics and interesting speakers and Dave who ensures we can all see and hear the speaker. Our choir will be singing for us in December and TAP, the Third Age Players, are in the middle of rehearsing a programme to entertain us very soon. After the Open Meeting on 14th October we tried using 'Breakout Rooms' which is a feature within Zoom which allows groups to meet virtually and chat together. It all seemed to work well, and we will use this facility ongoing.

The Financial Times published a favourable article about Milton Keynes on 27th October which you can still access if you type 'Financial Times Milton Keynes'. Finally, we seem to have shed the idea that all we have is Concrete Cows and Roundabouts!!

Please keep safe and remember the mantra Hands, Face Space.

Best wishes

Lesley Sparks on behalf of the Trustees

Virtual Talks for Members

In October we had two speakers; they were certainly very different and we received differing responses to these talks. I do think what is becoming clear is that some of the talks more easily transfer to the ZOOM format than others.

Our first talk in October was a welcome early return from Simon Gregor who "virtually" walked us from Convent Garden to Bloomsbury, highlighting so much along the way – both entertaining and informative. Again, lots of very positive feedback received about this talk, I particularly liked one member's comment that she "so regrets now missing his previous talk about the D Day Landings having been so entertained by this talk". I am pleased to say Simon has already been re-booked for next year. Another member highlighted, for those interested in London walks, a series of books entitled 'London's Secret Walks' by Simon Miller, Each walk has a map, with places of interest marked, plus text giving details of the main features. To save constantly leafing through the book, larger maps are available online to download and print.

The link below should take you to the map that includes Bloomsbury (the Inns of Court are

included on a different route)

<https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/1085/9500/files/Fitzrovia.pdf?7523288452025421833>

The second talk was from Philip Crane who entertained us with his life journey from Barrow to Baghdad and Back Again. What an interesting life! Lots of information about his working life, building up businesses and the sometimes bizarre turns his working life took, not least with the KGB. And of course – what “Sandra Says”. For those of you interested Philip’s website is www.philipcaine.com

Talks and events which are happening in November

We have two Third Age Players Performances. These are on 4th and 18th of November starting at 2.30 pm.

Wednesday 11th November Adrian Boynton sharing music and background information on the theme of “Music of War and Peace”.

Wednesday 25th November Tom Preston – the title of his talk is Great Lancashire Comedians – a talk that promises some laughs and light-hearted moments

If you haven’t booked yet but are interested then please email vicechair@mku3a.org

Future booked events can now be found on our website <https://mku3a.org/events>

I hope at least one of these will be of interest to you and I must admit I feel particularly privileged to have booked John Fieldsend in January.

MKu3a Facebook Page

This remains a very popular page with lots of interesting and varied contributions from members, membership continues to grow but still not quite hitting the 200 mark. As well as one of our enthusiastic members posting a picture of the day with associated descriptions, we are also seeing Poem of the Day and so many brilliant and beautiful photographs from our talented members.

A reminder to those who may consider joining this group but are concerned about privacy, it is a private group for MKU3A members only and we check on membership before accepting people to the group.

Lynne Button

MKU3A CHOIR



The U3A choir has been “meeting on zoom” for a few weeks now with about 35 members attending. (There is no meeting on Nov 3rd).

Obviously this is such a different experience but we missed the weekly contact and social interaction so it is nice to at least see faces again as we don’t know when the group will be able to meet again face to face. We are getting used to singing in our own bubble, reviewing some of our favourite pieces and starting to think of Christmas. Hopefully we will be able to put on a Christmas Carol Concert via zoom on Wednesday 16th December. The technical side is still being worked through and there will be more details to follow next month but watch this space.

We hope you are all staying safe and well and look forward to you joining us for the carol concert, to bring a little joy into what has been a most difficult year for all of us.

Sheila Staincliffe
Joint group leader

Transport Topics Group

With no hope of restarting the 2020 Transport Topics programme, which was abandoned in March, the Group embarked on it's first Zoom Meeting on October 21st. This was well supported by just short of 20 members when one of the group's members, Mike Allen, gave a presentation on the developing story of rocket power to launch vehicles for space exploration.

A second Zoom meeting is planned for Wednesday November 18th when our member, Stephen Miller, will be giving the second of his planned presentations on the History of

British Airways. This one will cover the second 50 years from 1969 to 2019.

If there are enough members volunteering, we will continue with Zoom presentations until there is a return to a 'new normality'.

New members are always welcome to join us.

David Bowler

Bow Brickhill Women's Institute meets on the fourth Thursday of every month in the Pavilion in Rushmere Close. Due to the current circumstances we have been using Zoom for our meetings.

In September we had a very enlightening talk by the Parks Department. In the month of October we listened to Paul Cox talk about The Bard of Woburn. In November we have our Annual meeting and in December we have our Christmas Activity. That will be decided in November.

We welcome new members and visitors. Further details from Stephanie Warren swarren3@sky.com

Stephanie Warren

From Neill Dewar, three Zoom events from the Thames Valley Network:

No 1:

THAMES VALLEY NETWORK



PORTRAITS OF ELIZABETH 1

A talk on Zoom given by
Prof. Susan Doran
Wednesday 11th November at 2.30 p.m.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is
licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Professor Doran is an expert on the Tudor period, specialising in Elizabeth 1. She is a fellow of Jesus College and an Honorary Fellow of the Historical Association.

Cost to join the meeting is £5 per person payable by either cheque or bank transfer.

The link to the meeting will be sent out a week prior to the date.

Closing date for applications is Tuesday, 3rd November

The event organiser is:

Fay Sinai, 18 Mill Stream Court, Abingdon OX14 5XA
fay.sinai@icloud.com

PORTRAITS OF ELIZABETH 1

Wednesday, 11th November 2.30pm via Zoom

PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK CAPITALS – ONE FORM PER PERSON

I would like to attend this event:

Name.....

Email.....

Telephone.....

I certify that I belong to.....U3A

The fee for the event is £5 per person:

Please complete this form and email to fay.sinai@icloud.com and make payment by bank transfer to:

TVN Events account: Sort code: 20-85-73 Account no: 63159434

Please use reference: ELZ on the transaction

Name on bank account if different to the above.

Alternatively complete the form, enclose a cheque made payable to U3A Thames Valley Network and post to the address below.

I have paid by bank transfer YES / NO I enclose a cheque YES / NO

I would like to receive details of future events by email YES / NO

(Under privacy laws we need your permission to retain your details in order to contact you)

Signature.....

Closing date Tuesday, 3rd November

No 2:

ART versus PHOTOGRAPHY Event Wednesday, 16th December 2020 at 10.30 via Zoom

This event consists of a lecture in two parts kindly presented to us by Keith Appleby. Keith taught Art and Design and Photography before managing a large Creative Arts Faculty and he taught Photography to degree level. He now sculpts three-dimensional work in wood and exhibits regularly with the Oxford Sculptors Group and Henley Arts and Crafts Guild. He is a u3a member so there is no charge for the day. The objective of this event is to provide us with an understanding of the interactions between Art and Photography.

10.30 -11.20 Part 1 Art v Photography. In the first part of this talk he will be exploring the relationship between Art & Photography and looking at how the medium of Photography developed from its inception in the early part of the 19th Century to the present day.

BREAK 11.20-1230

12.30 Part 2 Icons of the 20th Century 1900 – 1950. In this second part he will be looking at the key photographers of the 20th Century and how they developed photography into an art form. Questions will follow.

Please book early as numbers will be limited. The closing date is 1st December. The Zoom link will be sent to participants by email 2 or 3 days before the event.

Organiser: Gill Le Du, 71 Shiplake Bottom, Peppard Common, Henley on Thames RG9 5HJ gill.ledu@btinternet.com

Tel: 01189 723664 Application forms can be found on: www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk.

ART versus PHOTOGRAPHY Event

Wednesday, 16th December 2020 at 10.30 via Zoom

PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK CAPITALS – ONE FORM PER PERSON

I would like to attend this event:

Name.....

Email.....

Telephone.....

I certify that I belong to.....u3a

Please return this form to: gill.ledu@btinternet.com

There is no fee for this event as the speaker, Keith Appleby is a U3A member.

I would like to receive details of future events by email YES / NO

(Under privacy laws we need your permission to retain your details in order to contact you)

Signature.....Date.....

Alternatively the form may be posted to the organiser:

Gill Le Du, 71 Shiplake Bottom, Peppard Common, Henley on Thames RG9 5HJ

Tel: 01189 723664

Closing date is 1st December 2020

No 3:

THAMES VALLEY NETWORK STUDY DAYS in 2 Parts, Geology Of The Thames Valley and Why We Don't Have Volcanoes. Wednesdays, November 18 and 25, 2020 from 10.30 to 12.30.

A virtual 2 day meeting using Zoom with Dr Jill Eyers. Dr Eyers studied geology achieving her doctorate in 1992. Since that time, she has lectured for several UK universities including Reading, Oxford and the Open University. Dr Eyers is a regular contributor to archaeological television programmes as well as BBC Radio Oxford, Berkshire and

London and an author of many books and dozens of professional papers.

Wednesday November 18: Part 1 10.20 Join TVN Events Zoom meeting (the link will be sent to you the previous week).

10.30 Introduction: Rock around Benson. An overview of the area using geological maps and some specimens.

11.15 Short break

11.30 In the beginning – The Thames Valley from 500 million years ago to the Ice Age.

12.30 Finish

Wednesday November 25: Part 2 10.20 Join TVN Events Zoom meeting (the link will be sent to you the previous week).

10.30 Life in the deep freeze: 1. what are Ice Ages? 2. Evidence for the Ice Age in the Thames Valley.

11.15 Short break

11.30 Now for something completely different: Volcanoes – what, where and why.

12.30 End

The Fee for the 2 days is £3.00 The day is open to all members of U3As affiliated to the Thames Valley Network – see Application Form.

Organiser: Dr Jane Sellwood, email: janesellwood09@gmail.com

APPLICATION FORM

(Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS)

Name.....

Email.....

Telephone.....

I certify that I belong to.....U3A

The fee for the event is £3 per person:

Please complete this form and email to janeseellwood09@gmail.com and make payment by bank transfer to:

Account: TVN Events Sort code: 20-85-73 Account no: 63159434

Please use reference: GEO on the transaction

(in case of problems try Susan Berry as the account holder name)

Name on bank account if different to the above.

Alternatively complete the form, enclose a cheque made payable to U3A Thames Valley Network and post to the address below.

I have paid by bank transfer YES / NO I enclose a cheque YES / NO

I would like to receive details of future events by email YES / NO

(Under privacy laws we need your permission to retain your details in order to contact you)

Signature.....Date

Closing date Wednesday, 4th November

[Dr Jane Sellwood, 17 Adwell Drive, Lower Earley, Reading RG6 4JY](#)

No acknowledgement will be sent unless a stamped addressed envelope is provided.

'Gardens are for People' with Tom and Sue Stuart-Smith

We are delighted to announce that tickets are now on sale for our Annual Lecture, 'Gardens are for People' with Tom and Sue Stuart-Smith, which this year will be online.

Tom and Sue Stuart-Smith are one of the most internationally distinguished and influential couples in the world of gardens and horticulture. Tom has long been a universally renowned garden designer with public and private commissions worldwide and a string of gold-medal winning gardens at Chelsea Flower Show. Sue has used her career as a psychiatrist and psychotherapist as the basis for her interest in the benefits of gardens for

channelled into one of the most acclaimed garden books for many years, *The Well Gardened Mind*.

For both, a major source of inspiration for their careers has been the garden they have created together through their married life at The Barn in Hertfordshire, and their talk will weave together the fascinating story of their garden, family and their working lives.

Tickets

The ticket price includes the online lecture followed by a live, interactive Q&A with Tom and Sue. In addition, thanks to the generosity of our [Media Partner](#), each ticket purchase comes with a free digital copy of *Gardens Illustrated* the most stylish and influential garden design magazine in the UK.

Join Tom and Sue from the comfort of your home at 7pm on Wednesday 11th November. Tickets are £25

[Book your ticket now](#)

Outstanding October openings

There is still lots to enjoy in our gardens as we move into October. [Green Island](#), Essex (pictured) is a plantsman's paradise packed with stunning Autumn colour while [Sulby Gardens](#), Northamptonshire hosts a 'celebration of apples'.



Down in the South West, [Trebartha Estate Garden](#) in Cornwall features ponds, streams, cascades, rocks and woodlands.



In the South East, [The Old Vicarage, Washington](#), East Sussex (pictured - photography credit: Judi Lion) enjoys uninterrupted views of the North Downs and many pockets of interest, while in Surrey you can enjoy a stunning, mature woodland garden at [Ramster](#).

Sandra Adkins

Covid-19 App

Do you know about the C-19 Symptom Tracker App which was started by Kings College London researchers, back in March, I believe, and has more than 4 million people logging in daily to report their symptoms (or none)? It is led by Professor Tim Spectre, head of the Department of Twin Research at St Thomas's Hospital, which is how I came to know about it. (My twin and I have been part of their cohort for more than 20 years.) They were the first group to recognise loss of taste and smell as a symptom of Covid.

An extract from their website:-

"By using this app you're helping and contributing to advance vital research on COVID-19. By combining your reports with software algorithms, we are able to predict who has the virus and so track COVID infections across the UK and now other countries. Your daily reporting is also being used to generate new scientific understanding of the very different symptoms the virus causes in different people. We are also studying the way that risks vary between individuals because of their own personal characteristics."

They would love more respondents, of course, so just in case you want to join them, I have put the link below, or you can download the App on your phone. The logo is C-19 and has a dark blue background.

<https://covid.joinzoe.com>

Janette Taylor

Hats for the Homeless

If you are likely to have any hats ready in November please would you ring me on 01908 616465 to arrange collection. No need to worry about social distancing - if you put them in a carrier bag and we arrange a mutually convenient time for me to pick them up from your doorstep, that usually works quite well. Thanks to all who are still knitting. There should be a lovely amount for Lesley to pass on to her contact.

Keep safe, keep calm and carry on knitting!

Shona Hall

I am currently sending out a 20 Question Quiz online every few days and when I receive your answers I e-mail you the correct answers back. If you would like to participate in this please send me your e-mail address and I will include you. missquiz@sky.com

Pat Hodges

IT Carrying on Regardless

During these unusual and challenging times four IT groups from the outset of Covid19 have successfully continued with their sessions, from home, using video conferencing software. There are even some significant advantages, coffee breaks are far more flexible and you can dunk your favourite biscuits. No travelling, saving fuel, dress code more flexible, and join the session languishing in your favourite chair! Why didn't we do this before?

Each group runs their sessions using a mix of presentation software, screen sharing, and the lost art of talking. The sessions are generally pre-planned with specific topics many of which are requested by the members.

We are all enthusiastic groups of PC, Laptop and smartphone users with varied levels of experience. From those new to computing to those more experienced we all exchange knowledge, ideas, tips and personnel experiences, even between the four groups (via the group leaders) with a view to keeping up with the latest software, updates, security risks etc.

Each of the following four groups specialise in specific areas, Computer group in Microsoft based systems, MacOS in Apple PC and Laptop systems, and iPad in Apple iPad's and iPhones and there are some vacancies in each of the groups for users at any level. To become a member of one or more of the groups is a one-off Fee of £5.00 to cover the shared annual cost of the Video Conferencing Software (we are using Webex which is a more secure system than most). The £5.00 will last until either we are able to return to normal in a meeting room or to next October 1st 2021.

To join any of the four groups just go to the MKu3a website, select your interest group and where it says 'Group Leaders' click on the email address and send us your details and we will respond with joining instructions. As with all groups, your first session is a taster session which is free.

Computer Group

This group session is at 10:15 am on the Second and Fourth Thursday of each month.

This group has 4 vacancies

MacOS Group (New Group)

This group session is at 09:15 to 10:15 on the First Friday of each month

This group has 5 Vacancies

iPad group 2

This group session is at 10:30 on the first Friday of each month

This group has 5 vacancies

iPad group 3

This group session is at 2:00pm on the first Monday of each month

This group has 6 vacancies

The Groups look forward to seeing any new group members in the future.

Alan Lashbrook

Bridging the Gap - Life with Bridge in Lockdown

There is an ancient Chinese curse that, and I paraphrase, extols us to live in interesting times. And 2020 has certainly been interesting and challenging for us all. The lockdown has meant that we have not been able to come together to meet at local bridge clubs as we have all been so used to, so I am sure that we are all so grateful that we are able to play bridge online. Whilst the facility to both practice and to play bridge has been available for several years, the recent pandemic and associated lockdown has led to a

considerable rise in use of online bridge platforms. As we may be using virtual platforms more going forward, I thought I would share some of what I take part in which will give an indication of what is available. This is not a comprehensive review of everything that is available but a lay person's overview of the platforms that I have accessed to date.

The main online platform I have used is Bridge Base which although American, has players from all over the world. There are a wide variety of tournaments, many of which are completely free to take part in.

I, like several other county members play in the four main daily tournaments run on Bridge Base by the English Bridge Union (EBU) and there is also a faster game available should you wish and also a game for less experienced players. Master points are awarded for all games and the cost is now \$2 per session. To play, users need to set up a credit which can be done by credit card or pay pal with the exchange rate varying and is dependent on different providers. I am a member of the Acol club on Bridge Base and play in some of their tournaments which are free. There is also an opportunity to play teams on Tuesday evening which is enjoyable. I am involved in the organising of the teams matches

As well as actual games, there are now more and more online bridge advice tutorials that can be accessed, At the start of lockdown in March, I started watching Bernard Magee seminars which were originally free. A member's club has now been set up for which there is a monthly subscription of £13.99. This does, on the face of it, seem a little expensive but equates to just over £3 each week which is less than many players were paying for club sessions. From user statistics, it seems that many took advantage of the initial free broadcasts and there is still a weekly free seminar and the original free weekly seminars are available on You Tube. For the subscription member's club there are about 650 members of all skill levels and many arrange to play together. There are also forums within the club where members can ask Julian Pottage specific bridge questions and David Stevenson questions on laws and ethics. In addition, every fortnight there is a seminar with eight set hands and these are available to play at different times on Bridge Base and these can also be downloaded for users to play individually on the site or as I do, I download them to play at home on my computer with Q Plus Bridge software. There is a video explanation available for each hand. In addition to these I:

- follow Andrew Robson's daily bridge podcasts. Each cast is around five or six minutes long, they usually contain useful information. There is a monthly subscription for the podcasts and currently the charge is £9.59 per month.

- am a member of Abbey Smith's Bridge Club based at Drayton Parslow, running three virtual weekly bridge sessions and which has a team in the Wessex League. Bedford Bridge Association's virtual teams league is now under way with six teams involved.

An exciting new development is RealBridge which to me, is as close to actual face to face bridge as we are likely to get for some considerable time. The difference to other sites is that players have video and audio that means users can see and speak to their partner and opponents, and there is a virtual bidding box to make bids. The other difference to Bridge Base is that as in normal bridge, the partner of the bidder alerts or announces any bids which require it. The EBU ran their Autumn Congress on the site. I understand that several bridge clubs including Milton Keynes are taking advantage of it and are starting to run sessions on it. Given this, I imagine that its popularity will grow and more opportunities to take part in virtual sessions will be available.

Many other bridge sites are available such as FunBridge and Bridge Club Live. I personally have no experience of these platforms but as far as I am aware, they function in a similar way to BBO.

As can be seen there are plenty of opportunities to take part in bridge activities. I would urge those who have not yet done so to consider some of the options. Whilst the thought of accessing bridge online might appear daunting, much of it is intuitive and there are often other users available to help if needed. The likelihood of normal club session restarting before later next year is perhaps unlikely so this might be the way in which as a bridge community we can continue to come together to play. None of us knows how long restrictions will remain in place and then perhaps even when lifted, several players may be uncertain about returning to clubs. Given this, consideration may have to be given for a mixed approach where clubs run sessions which also include players online. This would enable those who are, for various reasons, not physically at the club.

So, let's hope we all stay safe and well and may we soon be living in less interesting times.

Stewart Pye

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Please refer to the website: **www.mku3a.org** for statements concerning **MKU3A Policies and Guidance** on all aspects of our administration **including Data Privacy , Disclaimers and Copyright**

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