

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Last month's column was dominated by cancellation of the October 27th Open Afternoon, which was rapidly replaced by an excellent Zoom talk by Janie Ramsay about the scurrilous sons of George III. On November 8th I attended, on Zoom, a top-class Science talk "Dying to be Beautiful" by Dr Kathryn Harkup, about the lethal effects of chemicals in cosmetics - arsenic, lead, and others. Thanks to Zoom and the technical team, Sevenoaks u3a meetings have continued.

On November 24th however, the first real live Monthly Meeting returns (details below) - a "hybrid" meeting which you can

choose to attend, either live in the Bat and Ball Centre followed by a cup of tea and a chat, or on Zoom at home. It will be the first time we have tried this, and the choice members make will inform how we run meetings in future.

Laura Spinney a science journalist wrote "The Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How It Changed The World." I learned about this in the "Peace and Conflict Group", of which I am a member. An estimated 50 - 100 million died worldwide in this terrible post-WW1 pandemic. In "The Guardian" on October 29th, she asks if the next Covid wave will be the UK's last, and says that it is likely that countries will

indefinitely be obliged to host Covid, which technically will become "endemic". The UK is probably among those countries closest to this state, which is why others are watching closely. In the meantime, the rest of the world needs vaccination too, and here in the UK there may be more variants and waves still to come. We need continued collective action. With sensible precautions, booster shots, and testing, hopefully we can eventually navigate our way out of this pandemic.

Dr. Ken Brown
chairman@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

MONTHLY MEETING—NOVEMBER 24TH at 2 pm

We look forward to welcoming you to what will be our first face to face meeting for some time. Seating in the hall will be arranged to allow for social distancing and please feel free to wear a mask if you would like to. Tea and biscuits will be served afterwards. For those who prefer to enjoy the talk from the comfort of their homes the presentation will also be shown by Zoom.

Our speaker this month is Imogen Corrigan, who has visited us before giving talks about Sutton Hoo, Medieval Etiquette and the Searchlight Girls of WW2, which some members may remember.

After a gap of several years we are delighted to welcome her back to give a presentation entitled "The Master Masons – the Men who Built the Cathedrals". In this talk we meet the men who designed the buildings, sourced the materials, ran the site and recruited the work force. Their creations remain to this day, causing us, centuries later, to stand in awe and wonder at their exquisite work.

I do hope you will join us either at the meeting in the hall or on Zoom. The Zoom link will be sent out to all members by email a couple of days before the event.

Barbara Coleyshaw



DECEMBER DIARY

Nov 24th	Monthly Meeting (hybrid meeting)	Nov 24th	Bridge For Pleasure
Dec 3rd	New Members Meeting at SIBC	Dec 8th	Bridge For Pleasure
Dec 8th	Nordic Walking	Dec 15th	Ambling

The deadline for items for inclusion in the January edition of the newsletter is December 15th

NORDIC WALKING

Wednesday, 8 December, 10.30 am

Meet in the Hosey Hill car park on Hosey Hill, 1 mile south of Westerham, TN16 1PL. The walk will be about 3 miles and go through the woods at Hosey Common to French Street and past the Hosey Common underground ragstone quarry. Lunch after the walk will be at the White Hart at Brasted.

Nick White nordicwalking@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk.

AMBLING

Wednesday, 15 December, 10.30 am

Meet at Chevening Church, TN14 6HF. The walk is a little under 4 miles with some hills and marvellous views. This is an open group and all members are welcome. After the walk we will aim to have lunch at the Bricklayers Arms in Chipstead. It will be a busy period and members intending to stay for lunch should advise **Nick White** on ambling@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

BRIDGE FOR PLEASURE

24th November and 8th December, NOT 22nd December

The Group plays at **Otford Village Memorial Hall** on the **2nd and 4th Wednesday mornings** of each month from October to the end of July, from **9.45 a.m. until 12 noon**.

The winner on 27th October was David Record. We were very pleased to have 5 tables on 10th November up from 3 in previous sessions since our restart in September. The winner was Denise Record. Please remember we only have one session in December.

New members are always welcome. We are an "open" group so new players can just come along on the day. We play ACOL in a 'Chicago' format so you do not need a partner. For more information, please contact **John and Sue Christy** on **01732 463911** or by email at bridge@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk.

CYCLE GROUP TRIP TO SCOTLAND

The Cycle Group has members from several local U3As and we usually have an annual "away trip". This year we decided on four days of cycling from Inverness. One of our number, Douglas Howie, had previous experience of that area and agreed to organise the whole trip, and he did a brilliant job for which we were all extremely grateful. There were eight of us in total.

We were based in comfortable rooms in the Premier Inn and some of us had electric bikes this year – we are getting older! We went out every evening to local restaurants.

Day one took us along the South side of the Moray Firth to Elgin, about 50 miles. We stopped for lunch at Brodie Castle, a Scottish National Trust property looking more like a French chateau than a castle. Built in 1567 it is the ancestral home of the Brodie clan, who were granted the land by Robert the Bruce. We returned from Elgin by train and had some difficulty cramming 8 bicycles into a very full 2 carriage train! Fortunately, the conductor was very helpful.

The next day took us to Cromarty on the northern tip of the Black Isle. It lies at the point where the Cromarty Firth, a huge natural harbour, flows into the North Sea. The whole area was used extensively by the Navy in both world wars. In more recent times it has been used by the oil industry and we witnessed many oil rigs in various states of decay. The town itself was delightful with many white painted cottages, some thatched. We had a good lunch in a local hotel and discovered Happy Chappy beer ! On the way back we visited the ancient church of Kirkmichael, recently restored, and enjoyed an excellent talk from the caretaker. These trips are very educational !

Then a less strenuous day – a couple of hours ride to the Tomatin whisky distillery. We had a conducted tour and of course sampled their product! Some members decided to extend that trip with a visit to Carr-Bridge, which is the home of the World Porridge Championship which, believe it or not, has been running for 28 years. The winner gets a "Golden Spurtal" (an instrument for stirring porridge)!

The final day was spectacular. We rode to the northern end of Loch Ness and then steeply upwards into the mountains to the south into really wild and remote country. We passed lochs and forests and the occasional farm, but no habitation to speak of. After a picnic lunch we had a long and relaxing downhill run back into Inverness. Anyone interested in joining the group, which meets twice a month in the Sevenoaks area, should contact me on 01732 452602.

Patrick Pascall

cycling@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk



MILITARY HISTORY

This group which started over 20 years ago covers wars and battles in all periods of history. Members take it in turns to lead a session on a topic of their own choice once a year. We meet, normally in the group leader's house, on alternate Tuesday mornings during the winter. We have dealt with numerous conflicts from the Battle of Thermopylae in 480BC to the Gulf War of 1991. We currently have ten members and could accommodate one or two more. Anyone interested joining the group should contact **Nick White** on 01959 564145 or military1@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

COMPUTER GROUP

In the light of the Covid situation we have decided to cancel the scheduled social meeting on the 20th December. The next meeting will be on 17th January 2022 and will take place using Zoom. Further details will be circulated as soon as possible.

The committee is very short of volunteers at the moment and anyone who is willing to help will be very welcome. We are looking for people with ideas for topics to interest a range of members with varying levels of IT expertise. If you are interested, please contact **Mike Davies** on computing@sevenoaksu3a.org.uk.

MICK TURNER - LANDS END TO JOHN O' GROATS

I bought my E-bike during lockdown last year and initially did short local rides, but as lockdown lifted I found myself doing longer rides all over Kent. I then had the idea of doing a long distance trip after lockdown, and thought of doing some fundraising at the same time. Lands End to John O' Groats caught my imagination, as did the charity Dementia UK, as my late father suffered from dementia I looked for charity organised rides for 69 year olds on E-bikes, but found none. Most cater for groups doing the more direct routes of around 900 miles in two weeks, doing over 60 miles a day, which was more than I wanted to do.

I decided to do it independently, with some friends joining me for the final week, and to follow the Sustrans cycle-friendly routes, 1,200 miles but more enjoyable cycling. The major planning challenge was booking accommodation, which initially I intended to book one week in advance, but I soon realised that the earlier I booked the greater the choice and cheaper it was. I booked the entire 30 days in advance which tied me to a schedule, but as long as I stuck to it it relieved me of any further accommodation decisions.

And so on 14th September I disembarked from the sleeper train at Penzance and cycled 15 miles to Lands End to begin the journey. Cornwall and Devon were hilly, except along the Camel and Tarka trails, and not very well signposted, but the weather was kind and I

even achieved a sunburnt nose. People were friendly and supportive and I found myself attending a classical concert in the park, where people donated to me, staying in a spiritual retreat at Glastonbury (no alcohol), and staying with friends in Bristol (alcohol compulsory).

I stayed at Coalport Youth Hostel in the West Midlands, but the weather turned in Manchester, where I had a warm welcome and free beer from my Irish landlord. A bit of a nightmare leaving Manchester and cycling 9 hours in the rain, arriving in the dark at Whalley.

Into the Lakes and an attack of sciatica which I managed to allay by avoiding the worst of the hills and taking painkillers. I even managed a trip to the cinema.

Across the border to Gretna Green and I am now getting used to cycling all day in the rain. They say you can get used to anything. Glasgow was the most cycle friendly city I have been through, with a clearly-marked route by the river Clyde, and then a hilly day to Killin, where I had to stop and re-charge the battery at lunchtime in a café.

A sunny day with stunning views of Loch Tay into Pitlochry, where I'm joined by an old cycling friend. We cycled one day in the rain, then two days to Inverness, managing to fit in a trip on the Strathspey Steam Railway.

In Inverness we are joined by another cycling friend, and I am bitten by bugs in a hostel.

The next day we end up doing 69 miles after taking a wrong turn, which turned into the longest day of the trip. It then rained all day to Tongue on the North Scottish coast, but we dried out and dined well in our traditional Sutherland hotel. Then the penultimate day to Thurso, where we left our panniers, and on 13th October cycled the 20 miles to John O'Groats and back. We celebrated with champagne with our landlady and then had our final supper.

Next day back to Inverness and the sleeper back to London. I can thoroughly recommend this trip to anyone crazy enough to attempt it.

Mick Turner



To date Mick has raised £1,800 online for Dementia UK, plus any other money he was able to collect en route.

NATIONAL U3A EVENTS

LEARNING EVENTS

Many online events are being delivered via the Zoom video conferencing/webinar platform. There are some '[How to Guides](#)' and '[Online Tutorials](#)' for using Zoom that may assist you if you are not familiar with this tool.

For example, 3 talks via Zoom scheduled for late November and December are :

- **Why Did the Spanish Armada Fall ?** - Nov 30th
- **The Geology of Sedimentary Rocks** - Dec 2nd
- **Astronomy—What's Out There ?** - Dec 7th

For more information, go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

MATHS CHALLENGE

Take part in the weekly maths challenge, with problems and puzzles set by Gordon Burgin, Andrew Holt, Rod Marshall, Ian Stewart and David Martin. If you would like to share your ideas on how to solve these puzzles, please join the learning forum or discuss within the u3a and interest group. They have just reached week 80 of the Maths Challenges and all the previous weeks challenges are available to view.

For more information go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes/maths-challenge>

EXTREME KNITTING & CROCHET

Are you a crocheter or a knitter looking for a challenge? Maybe you took it up during the past year or maybe you have been crocheting or knitting since you were a child. Whichever it is, we want to see your most ambitious and unusual creations and those you are most proud of. It might be a giant design, or something tiny. You might have depicted your family members in wool, or used a new stitch you have learnt to create a bouquet of flowers. We are challenging you to have a go at something ambitious and to show us your creations. To find out more go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes/extreme-crochet>

U3a EYE

National u3a are running a rolling project to encourage members to take and submit pictures of their surroundings during this unprecedented time. We post a different theme each fortnight and invite you to submit your photo on that topic. This is not a competition and it is not about your photographic skill – what we want from you are interesting photos, possibly different ways of viewing things, anything which has captured your imagination or caught your eye. For more information go <https://www.u3a.org.uk/201-learning/571-u3a-eye>

To submit a picture go to <https://u3auk.wufoo.com/forms/z1yozfoh06yv7xb/>

CUISINES OF THE WORLD

Calling on the specialist culinary skills of the u3a membership, a spotlight will be thrown on different world cuisines - sharing recipes, tips, tricks and stories. You are invited to try the recommended recipes, in the hope that you will be transported by your tastebuds.

If you have a passion for a particular cuisine, especially if you have family recipes or if you have lived in the country, [let us know here](#).

Recipes from East Africa, France and India & Pakistan can be found at <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes/world-cuisine-cookery-challenge>

PAINT OR DRAW

National u3a are running a monthly challenge to encourage people to paint or draw a piece of artwork, then take a photo of their work and submit their pictures via the [online form](#). They will be posting a different theme each month and inviting u3a members to submit photos of their creations on that topic. The current challenge is "Landscapes".

This is not a competition and it is not about artistic ability – what they want are interesting pictures, possibly different perspectives on everyday scenes or objects, anything which has inspired you to paint or draw. Go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes/paint-or-draw>

The items mentioned above are only a snapshot of the events being run by National U3A.

For more information about other projects, including Online Events and Online Tutorials, please go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events>

