

From the Chair

Autumn colours at last

It has been a strange summer, and the last few weeks have seen some areas of the country where the inhabitants were feeling they should start building an ark. Mike Leach's entertaining take on the Noah story at our AGM on 19 September seems prophetic. Do our members have the gift of second sight? Possibly it was just the very wet spring which prompted the idea! But it was great fun, and we are ever grateful for Christine and the Play Readers for their very enjoyable interlude. Not just Noah but a new look at Shakespeare's women. Many thanks to them.

We have now seen the baton pass after two of our great committee members (Julia, membership and Judith groups co-ordinator) stepped down after giving wholehearted support to all of us for the past two to three years. In one case, our new Membership secretary, Ponda Thomas has already been very active.

Spotting an opportunity for more awareness raising of the White Cliffs u3a, a team led by Anne Matthews has designed and built a scarecrow which we can all go and see at Walmer Castle gardens for the next few weeks. There is a competition for the best scarecrow, so do go along and vote! We tried on Sunday, but Storm Ashley thwarted our efforts, and we arrived to find the gardens closed. We will persist and hope for milder weather where we can enjoy the autumn colours too.

We were very pleased that most people managed to join the groups they wanted, helped by Bill, Mary, Judith and other committee members. Another computer drop-in session is happening soon and continuing over the coming months. This is not restricted to just using our website and the Beacon portal, so come along if you would like some help with anything.

We have had some great talks and social events, and we have now had a chance to review nearly a year of our trial to spread the events across our whole area from Sandwich to Dover. While Dover is usually quite well attended, sadly we have not had enough people coming to the social events in Sandwich, and not enough help from members to run them, so with effect from the beginning of 2025 we will be discontinuing the Sandwich events. The final two talks of the year will be on the War Poets on November 6 in Deal, at the Astor Theatre before it closes for pantomime rehearsals for the month of December, and a briefing on Fraud Prevention at the Riverside Centre in Dover on November 20th. We will still be having social events in Dover and Deal. Please look out for more news on that.

Although many of us groan about the "C" word, we have already taken bookings for our Christmas lunch at the Courtyard restaurant on 18 December, and our last open meeting of this year will be our Christmas party at the Landmark Centre, Deal, where we will be having a real treat from Sophie Rundle, soprano who will sing a variety of songs, not just Christmas ones.

We are still hoping to fill the vacancy on our committee to replace Judith. We hope you will be inspired to come along and find out more after reading Ellie's Q and A with Judith about her time with us. We miss her, but someone may just be the person to take things forward. Could it be you? Please do get in touch with us if you'd like to have an informal chat to find out more.

Until the next time,

Sue Edwards, chair.

Groups Update

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Group availability

For January, the following groups have spaces:

PAID	FREE
Climate Matters Discussion group Drawing for All Dust off your school uniform French Intermediate Understanding your body Women in Society and History – Dover Writing your Family History We are also taking bookings for a course that starts in April: classical Greek drama.	Book group 1 Book group 3 Bridge Network Chanson Francaise Chess Easy Short Walks Gentle explorers German Intermediate Lunch Club Maths today Time for art WhatsApp social group

If you are considering joining Dust off your school uniform, I have had very good feedback from this term's participants! They are looking at Foundation level - the easy GCSE papers- mainly from new subjects (for example 'Leisure and Tourism' or 'Animal care' which don't need any long forgotten academic content). There is no test pressure!

You can see details for all groups on the website <https://wcc.u3asite.uk/> and see extra detail by logging in by using the username wccu3a and the password you were given. You should be able to join online – any problems contact Eleanor.brooks1661@gmail.com

Group Coordinator

As many of know the previous groups co-ordinator Judith finished her three years in the post and had to step down from the role. This position still hasn't been filled and Ellie is covering it in the interim but will not be able to do that for long. Ellie interviewed Judith to see what she actually thought of being on the Committee and of doing that particular role....that interview follows:

What's it like to be a group coordinator?

Ellie: Judith, thank you so much for making all our groups happen over recent years. What made you offer to do the job?

Judith: Good question! I never wanted to go on the committee, but when I knew we needed someone to support the group leaders, I thought I could do that.

Ellie: Are you glad you offered?

Judith: Actually, I have really enjoyed it! I didn't expect to. I had been retired about 3 years and it felt good to keep my brain ticking over. I felt useful.

Ellie: What would you say was the best bit?

Judith: Getting to know the members and being able to help people.

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Ellie: I've heard it's a hard job?

Judith: Well, each year I have thought about how to streamline the process. Now it's a lot easier. There's still plenty to do, like liaising with group leaders and letting people know when it is time to apply, but I think my IT skills have really helped.

Ellie: Did anything surprise you?

Judith: How much I enjoyed being on the committee. They have become friends so socially it has been good. I looked forwards to going to meetings. I really liked being part of the team.

Ellie: But now you have served your term.

Judith: Yes, but I think that is a good thing. Someone with fresh ideas will come in and bring a new dimension to the role. I might go back on the committee in the future in a different role, who knows, but I am enjoying a break at the moment.

Ellie: We are really grateful to you Judith for the efficient and caring way you have served our u3a. You deserve a rest!

Ellie Brooks Temporary Groups Co-ordinator

Membership

At our last AGM, membership secretary Julia Kent's tenure officially ended, and the members accepted me as their next committee member in this role. Thank you for that ! I just hope I can do half a good a job in the role that Julia did. We thank Julia most heartedly and we wish her the best. I'm glad we'll still be seeing her around at groups and meetings.

To start off my role, I am creating a section in our newsletter to let everyone know what's happening with membership. If there is any information you would like for me to share, please do not hesitate to let me know by contacting me through the website [here](#).

On 11 October, we had a lovely meet and greet for some of our newest members. Committee members and group leaders joined us, so that the new members could ask questions and get to know our u3a a little better. I'll be offering these meet-ups every three to four months and will post these in this newsletter. So for those new members who couldn't join us on 11 October, you're welcome to join us in the future! Please RSVP me though, so I can be sure to have enough biscuits on hand. I will be offering these at various venues across the White Cliffs Country u3a district, and at various times.

Our next New Members meeting will be on Saturday, 11 January 2025, at Walmer Castle's Education centre, from 1530-1630. I will send a personal email invite to the newest members closer to this date.

I'm sure most of you are aware that our annual renewal date is changing from 1 April to 1 May, starting in 2025. So all current members will get a month free this year! We're making this change to move the busy renewal time away from the busy annual tax date. Committee members, Bill and Mary, will be offering IT sessions to help members renew online, should you feel you would like some extra tutorial. Please stay tuned for the dates and locale of these IT sessions.

Check out the October/ November edition of the Eastry Village News and the October issue of the Sandwich Community Ad Magazine for an article about our u3a ! Because we're a charity, these news magazines kindly published our article gratis. We're hoping to publish more articles and advertisement about our u3a in the future. I'll keep you posted as these are put into print.

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Ponda Thomas (Membership Secretary)

Talks and Socials - Plans for 2025

Our monthly talks at the Astor Theatre on the first Wednesday afternoon of each month have been well supported and will continue next year. And in response to popular demand, we shall go on having quarterly socials (quizzes etc) in Deal – currently held at the Landmark Centre. Numbers attending the quarterly events in Dover have also been encouraging and steadily increasing, and we shall go on hiring the Riverside Centre in 2025. However, to try and meet the wishes of those members who aren't free in the afternoons, the Dover events will be held in the mornings and will of course still be open to everyone (not just people living locally!).

Unfortunately, we have now had to reach the decision not to hold quarterly events in Sandwich next year, as the numbers simply haven't been sufficient to warrant the hiring of the venue. It seems that Sandwich is perhaps also better served by other organisations which meet there.

Do look out for listings of what's ahead (see our website as well as regular emails), and we next hope to see you at the Astor on the afternoon of 6th November for a talk about the Poets of the Great War.

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Committee

If you want to know who the current committee members are, all our photos and names are on the website in the member's area.

If you would like to join the Committee, we really need some more help. A lot of us are nearing the end of the time we are allowed to serve on the Committee for and we really need people to follow on when we have to step down. Not all Committee members have to do public facing roles, there's plenty that can be done in the background, and some roles could be shared. I certainly wouldn't be able to stand at the front of the hall and use a microphone, so there are other members of the Committee that pick up those things. We all pride ourselves in getting along with each other and sharing everything. Please do think about joining us if you can.

Mary Venables (Media and It)

Third Age Trust (TAT) News and on-line learning events

The Third Age Trust beckons in a new chapter

The Third Age Trust AGM, held earlier this month, saw several momentous changes. They welcomed a new leadership team, with a new CEO, Chair and Vice Chair.

The meeting also saw members vote on a resolution to change the articles of association of the Third Age Trust. This passed with 905 out of 1073 total votes in favour. The Board and staff will now start working towards a new governance structure, which will include a smaller Board, and a Council made up of regional u3a representatives. Both will be in place by April 2025. Further updates will be shared in the coming months.

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Day Trips Programme 2024

Trip to Kent and Sussex on 14.09.2024

Thanks to the hard work of our ever-resourceful Trips team we managed to have 2 treats in one day. It was an early start but worth it to arrive in time for coffee at the Kent and Sussex heritage railway in Tenterden. Steam and acrid black smoke greeted us as we saw an elderly shunting engine being put through its paces in the sidings. But happily, that wasn't going to pull us when the carriages arrived for us to board the train for a leisurely route through woods and fields and past a lot of unrestored rolling stock. It was a good time for friends to catch up or just to watch the scenery go by, passing Rolvenden towards our stop at Northiam. Some of the old coaches have been restored as holiday homes and if you are a steam fan it must be a dream come true to have a close view of the railway. It's definitely great for romantics but there are modern conveniences inside.

At Northiam we headed into Sussex where the coach dropped us off at the first organic winery to be established in the UK, we were told. Sedlescombe Winery is now owned by a larger organisation. But the original son of the house and his German wife worked hard for many years at establishing this winery. Originally the wine was based on German grape varieties to make what was a very niche product. Many years later organic wine is more mainstream and seen as a good contribution towards healthy living and soil maintenance without dangerous chemicals. And climate change has meant that different grapes are able to be grown.

The cellar head was a very experienced woman who had previously worked at Chapel Down, our own Kent winery which is better known. She led us through a number of wines to taste and explained their origins, the style and taste of them. They included one or two which were definitely "marmite" wines which people liked or hated in equal measure. We had a very good (organic, naturally) ploughman's lunch while we tasted. And a chance to walk round the vines and buy some bottles to take home.

This is the last of this season's trips which have been so well organised by our Trips team of Carol, Amanda, John and Marie. They are hoping to repeat their success next year with several more and build on their success. Congratulations to them from all of us who have so much enjoyed our visits. And looking forward next year to more to explore together.

Sue Edwards



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Dotty the Scarecrow

English Heritage at Walmer Castle asked if local organisations would like to make a scarecrow for their Spooky Woodland Walk and the White Cliffs u3a stepped up to the plate.

A working group was set up with Anne Matthews, Jean and Graham Pique, Janice Kitson, Ponda Thomas and Lois Williams. They met three times, and this was the progress:

First a sketch:



Then a dress:



Then labels:



Then a head:



And then we had Dotty!



Dotty was made with plastic bottles, tin cans, body stuffed with hay. All items from the charity shops or members of the u3a. Labels from food cans and made waterproof so that they wouldn't wash away. All the members of the working group contributed so a job well done, I think.

If you haven't been to Walmer Castle to see Dotty yet, please go and vote for her.

If you're not a member of English Heritage, there are twenty complimentary tickets to our u3a so ask at the admissions black trailer.

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Anne Matthews (Member and Dottie Co-ordinator)

This poem is from our of members Anne Cook, we thought you might find amusing and possibly even familiar: -

I overheard someone today
It made me feel quite sick
Describing me so brutally As
the lady with the stick!

I could have hit that woman – she sure got on my wick
She's got a nerve – I don't deserve
Being 'The lady with the stick'

In years gone by, no beauty – but not considered thick
Twas all for naught cos now I'm thought The Lady
with the stick.

The swinging sixties saw me, a mini skirted chick,
Pulling the men – but that was then Now – Lady
with the stick.

How did the years fly by me? It happened in a
tick One bright and bold – now stooped and old
The lady with the stick.

Well bugger them - I'll show them, show each and every prick
There's life here still – you cannot kill The
lady with the stick.