

Hello everyone and welcome to the second edition of the August newsletter. It is usually around this time of year that many of us might be planning holidays or sharing recent adventures with friends. Sadly, this has had to go on hold and the brochures will be put to one side for now. However as we had a gap in our diary (surprisingly !!), we took the opportunity to go camping in Southwold, Suffolk with children and grandchildren this week and managed to survive one of the nights when there were 50mph gales! Fortunately, my husband was a Queen's Scout so I knew he had battened down the hatches and we came out unscathed!

The monthly meeting guest speaker on 12 August had Jimmy Young give us some interesting facts about the Harley Davidson motorbike and also how much they are involved in charity work and supporting local communities. Next month we have Annamaria Dall'Anese a London blue badge guide whose talk is entitled 'Jewels of London's Art Galleries and Museums'. Annamaria has a vast knowledge of London and its history ranging from Roman London to modern day Street Art. Date for your diary is 9 September at 2pm. As it will be 'virtual', passwords and codes will be sent out to members 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

Some good news! We now have guidance for groups to start meeting in person and the yoga group are planning to re-start.

Avis Furness Chairman U3A Thames Valley Network has sent this invitation to circulate to all members. One of the events for this autumn was to be a Quiz Study Day – a talk about the history of quizzes and quizzing and a discussion on how to run a quiz for your U3A, to be followed by a quiz for all the participants, illustrating the points from the discussion. We will treat the event as a "trial run" – to see how it works in practice and to iron out any difficulties that might arise and will start at 2.30 pm on 2 September with discussion about running a quiz, how to find questions, source pictures, PowerPoint presentations, problems, and pitfalls. After a short break, we will hold the quiz itself at 3.30 pm. If all goes well, I will give the 'History of Quizzes' talk the following week, at 2.30 pm on 9 September.

Please could you pass this information on to anyone in your U3A who might be interested in helping us with this trial run, and ask people to email me to say:

1.If they wish to participate in the discussion and quiz on 2nd September, and 2.If they would be interested in the talk on the History of Quizzes on 9th September. I will then reply with further information, and the Zoom link. We do realise that this is very short notice, but if our trial run works well, we will be offering this study day again at a later date.akfurness@aol.com

The number of stories for 'Members Musings' continue to arrive and this edition has some poetry, a Cornish holiday experience, an 'exotic' holiday, a war time memory and a 'lost summer'. Thanks go to all contributors.

Chalfonts U3A Facebook Group . 88 members keep us posted on events in their daily lives and giving suggestions for us to consider eg cultural activities, updates on local news, places to visit etc. Can we make it 100 members! There is a link on the Website's home page to the following page: <https://chalfontsu3a.org.uk/cu3a-facebook-group/> There you will find a link to the PDF with instructions on how to join Facebook and the CU3A group. Gary Tomlin our webmaster can help where there are any questions or issues you may have in creating a Facebook account or joining the group. He has also set up an email address facebook@chalfontsu3a.org.uk. **Computer Issue?** If you are having any

problems with your computer please email support@chalfontsu3a.org.uk and we will try and assist you via email. You can also post your questions on the Chalfonts U3A Facebook page.

A reminder to those of you who haven't already done this. Covid 19 monitoring is being carried out by King's College, Guys and St Thomas 'Hospitals in partnership with ZOE Global Ltd a health science company. They are asking people to Download the Ask Zoe/Covid-19 app and report daily, any symptoms including 'none' to help them track the path of the disease particularly among the elderly. It now has **4.1 million** subscribers so let's hope you are one of them. **Active Covid cases** in South Bucks this weekend is estimated to be **16**.

One of our members Linda Liston, is a volunteer at Milton's Cottage and she wanted to raise our attention to support our local special places.

There may be no better time to read Paradise Lost, written as London was devastated by bubonic plague in 1665. Visit the "pretty box" where John Milton stayed in Chalfont St Giles to be safe. You can go online to miltonscottage.org/visit/ and book for up to 4 visitors. Social distancing will be observed both in the house and the lovely garden. Guides will be on site to explain the history and social implications of the period and answer questions. There is a free carpark at the cottage. This is an independent museum Fees are: Adults £7.00 Seniors (65) £6.00. If you have other local venues you plan to visit by car please share the experience with all of us either through the newsletter or chalfontsu3a Facebook page.

Existing Groups.

Cryptic Crosswords Bob Leven informs me that the group is full and he receives many enquiries from would be cruciverbalists which he has to turn down. If you would like to form, or be part of a new group, he would be happy to help with suggestions for setting up and content. crypticcrosswords@chalfontsu3a.org.uk

Flower Arranging Last week via Zoom a number of us tried our hand again at 'Ikebana "arranging flowers" or "making flowers alive" and is the Japanese art of flower arrangement. It is also known as *Kadō* "way of flowers". Eileen Powell shared her thoughts on using this form of expression.

I personally found it a very creative way to help me appreciate how to use the shape of the flowers and foliage. Pippa demonstrated the technique and then we all got started. I was thinking about angles, the height, and the message I wished to portray. A common but not exclusive aspect present in *ikebana* is its employment of minimalism. Some arrangements may consist of only a small number of blooms interspersed among stalks and leaves. The structure of some Japanese flower arrangements is based on a scalene triangle delineated by three main points, usually twigs, considered in some schools to symbolize heaven, human, and earth, or sun, moon, and earth. Being able to continue flower arranging on zoom has been really fun as we continue to learn new techniques. I have included Pippa's information re the word *ikebana* and its meaning to the Japanese.

The tradition dates back to the 7th century when floral offerings were made at altars. Later, they were placed in the *tokonoma* (alcove) of a home. *Ikebana* reached its first zenith in the 16th century under the influence of Buddhist tea masters and has grown over the centuries, with over 1,000 different schools in Japan and abroad. *Kadō* is counted as one of the three classical Japanese arts of refinement, along with *kōdō* for incense appreciation and *chadō* for tea and the tea ceremony. The colours of some flowers are considered unlucky. Red flowers, which are used at funerals, are undesirable not only for that reason but also because red is supposed to suggest the red flames of a fire. An odd number of flowers is lucky, while even numbers are unlucky and therefore undesirable, and never used in flower arrangements. With the odd numbers one avoids symmetry and equal balance, which are actually seldom found in nature, and which from the Japanese standpoint are never attractive in art of any description. *ikebana* often

emphasizes other areas of the plant, such as its stems and leaves, and puts emphasis on shape, line, and form. Though *ikebana* is an expression of creativity, certain rules govern its form. The artist's intention behind each arrangement is shown through a piece's colour combinations, natural shapes, graceful lines, and the implied meaning of the arrangement.

New Experiences. 8 members were really excited last weekend to be taking part in the first new experience since lockdown travelling to Swansea for 2 days of adventure. On day 1 we climbed up what appeared to be a completely sheer rock face. Not only that, we were responsible for anchoring the rope to keep each other safe if we fell. There were several falls, especially after a heavy downpour made the rocks very slippery, but we persevered and surprised ourselves by how far we managed to climb. Abseiling down was easier but just as scary. On Day 2 we tried gorge scrambling – manoeuvring up and down fast flowing rivers by climbing and battling the currents in the river. The highlight was crawling behind a powerful waterfall and then leaping into the water. Everyone was very brave and up for the challenge. Hopefully some more new experiences will be happening soon. Angela Cranston convenor.

Now over to our 'Members' Musings'.

Cornish Musings from Elizabeth Hill

Three holidays cancelled since Easter, so when our daughter suggested we use their second home in Cornwall, we accepted gratefully. We have visited Cornwall many times and love it. When the sun shines, there is nowhere better in my opinion, however, sunshine is not guaranteed!

Their 16th century stone farmhouse is in a tiny hamlet in north Cornwall. Picture postcard pretty from the outside, inside it is, shall we say, 'challenging' for us 'wrinklies'. The floors downstairs are slate and very uneven. Every room has a threshold, and it is always a step up or step down. The doorways are low, so my husband now has a groove in his forehead. The stairs are lopsided and have very deep treads. The floors upstairs all slant, so you feel drunk when you are not. Then there is the Aga. Now I know Aga people adore their Agas, but they are definitely an acquired taste. Want a piece of toast.....plan ahead! (No, they wouldn't thank me for a toaster: I bought them a Nespresso machine after an earlier visit, and they much prefer their stove-top coffee pot! And yes, they do use a toaster and a Nespresso machine in London!)

And it is QUIET, so unbelievably quiet. My husband and I have only been here with the family before, so have never actually 'heard' the quiet before. To someone who lives (except in the early weeks of lockdown) with the ever-present drone of the M25, it is extraordinary how LOUD the quiet is!

After the recent heatwave, the fact that it has rained and been windy most of the time, hasn't bothered us. I never want to be that hot again. We have had wonderful cliff-top walks and stopped to gaze at the everchanging sea. We have eaten the best seafood in restaurants which are much quieter than usual because of social distancing, where the staff have been masked, and the cutlery comes in sealed packs for our protection, but the food has been as wonderful as ever. We have sat, well wrapped up, on a windy beach, and watched the surfers perform on their boards, until the lifeguards, impressively and efficiently, emptied the sea and put up the red flag. We have read our books, and at times even forgotten the pandemic.

We have sent photos of the rough seas to our daughter who is holidaying with her family in Andros Greece, where the temperature is in the 30s, and the sky and the sea are blue. Her photos are gorgeous, and I am sure they are having a wonderful time, but I feel very lucky to be in wild and windy, beautiful, and bountiful Cornwall.

Wartime musings (from Janice Buchanan)

In 1940 our house and thirteen others in Shenley Avenue, Ruislip was destroyed by a landmine while all the families were sheltering in the communal shelter in the local park. We had to be relocated. My mother had been raised by an aunt and uncle in Abingdon and that is where we went then ending up in Boulter Street in St Clements, Oxford. Our landlady was called Mrs Otter and to she looked like Old Mother Riley. Facilities were minimal – the bath was in the kitchen and served as the kitchen table when out of use. We lived there with my mother and sister and my father came down at weekends. During the week he served as a fire warden in the city of London. We looked forward to his arrival on a Friday evening and he would come up to our bedroom as soon as he arrived to kiss us goodnight.

During that time I attended nursery school and I remember that we had a nap in the afternoons on little camp beds with grey blankets edged in blue. As I was so young and couldn't read, I had a candle on my blanket instead of my name. We slept in the school hall which was divided by huge doors which folded back and one day I caught my hands in the doors as they were being pushed back. If I think about it now I can still feel the pain! At the bottom of Boulter Street was the River Isis. One day my cousin David (six months younger than me) came to play and he wanted to see if his toys would float. So down to the river we went armed with Teddy, Bunny etc. and flung them into the river. Sadly, they couldn't swim and had to be rescued by a very irate mother and aunt.

Another neighbour was Mrs Bull who had a lovely daughter Judy and we loved to visit because they had a pet parrot. We also made friends with another family, the Nowells, who had children of similar age and these two families became lifelong friends in subsequent years. I look back now and realise how traumatic things must have been for my parents, losing their home and having two small girls to raise. In one house in Headington, the landlady was an ogre and if we were playing in the garden, she wouldn't allow us to come in the back door to the house, but insisted my mother lifted us in through the window. My mother complained to the billeting officer who did rehouse us and promised to replace us with a family who wouldn't stand any nonsense from the ogre. I often wonder how things shaped up after that.

In 1943 we were moved back to the Ruislip area and attended Bishop Winnington Ingram School,. The short walk to school with our gasmasks our constant companions was enjoyable, and we quickly made friends with the neighbourhood children. Some families kept chickens or rabbits to supplement the wartime rations. We had an amazing garden and a REVOLVING SUMMERHOUSE! The Biggs family next door were very kind and probably quite comfortably off as they had a maid. They also had a goat and he would try to eat the shirt tails as they hung on the line. Grandfather Biggs was a very keen gardener and in those days' horses were a frequent mode of transport, so he would go out with his wheelbarrow and collect the free manure they left on the road. When he had emptied his load he would give us a ride in the wheelbarrow, but you can imagine how my mother felt about that when she was confronted with our soiled clothing. In the back yard of the house we had an old-fashioned mangle and we used to help hold the sheets up as they were pushed through the rollers and always told 'Mind your fingers!'. In the back living room we had a Morrison shelter, so we were well protected from the air raids. When the lady of the house wanted to reclaim her home we were sent to Pavilion Road in Eastcote and remained there until Shenley Avenue was rebuilt in 1947.

Before the war we lived at no. 49 Shenley Avenue and next door to us at no. 51 was the Buchanan family who went to Scotland after the houses were demolished. In 1957 I married Bill Buchanan who had once upon a time been my next-door neighbour. C'est la vie.

Exotic by Denise Beddows

'Shall I book us in at The Claremont again this year?' Edna asked her sister, Maureen.

'I've been thinking we should try somewhere different for a change,' Maureen said.

'Well, there's The Grand. It's dearer but it's nearer the seafront.'

'I was thinking, maybe, somewhere other than Bournemouth.'

'Not Bournemouth? But we've always holidayed in Bournemouth, since we were kids.'

'But we're no longer kids, Edna, we're pensioners. We haven't got many holidays left in us. Maybe we should go somewhere a bit more ... well ... exotic.'

'Bognor Regis?'

'Bugger Bognor! And bugger Bournemouth! I was thinking of somewhere really hot and really exotic. Banjul for instance.'

'Banjul? Where's that?'

'The Gambia, Africa. Deserted beaches, fine, white sand that slips sensuously between your toes; palm trees, warm coastal breezes, young men with lithe bodies and dark, smouldering eyes. They like older women, there, Edna.'

'Africa? What with my freckles, and your feet?'

The Banjul hotel was not unlike The Claremont but with air-conditioning. The maid who showed them to their room turned down their beds. Edna thought she saw something black and cock-roach-shaped slip back under the sheet, but the maid said it was just a leaf and stamped on it before throwing it out of the window.

The sisters ventured down to the hotel dining room for lunch. The room certainly had an exotic air. Maureen said it was the palm oil in the burners under the chafing dishes. Edna said the smell turned her stomach. The sisters scrutinised the dishes on the buffet table. All looked nicely arranged but they didn't actually recognise anything. The Maître D explained this was 'bush meat'. He pointed out the roast pangolin, the filleted tree snakes, and the stuffed and boiled baby monkey, whose brain was displayed alongside in a little glass dish set on ice. To accompany the meats was boiled okra and mealy meal, and there was sago for dessert.

Needless to say, the sisters could eat nothing. Having consumed the little packets of peanuts they'd been given on their flight, they decided to walk to the local Market in search of food stalls. But the market comprised mainly butchers' stalls, piled high with fly-blown corpses of various jungle animals, just like those on offer at lunch. Next, they headed for the beach, which was every bit as beautiful as the brochures had promised. Donning sunhats and sunscreen, they settled down on the sand.

Edna took out her Martina Cole, whilst Maureen dived into the latest Phillip Pullman. Soon, however, the beach Romeos began to arrive.

'Hello, Lady. You want I come to your hotel room, do jig-a-jig?'

'I BEG your pardon?' Maureen exploded, 'jig-a-what?'

'You want hot sex with pretty boy?'

Maureen's gaze took in the young man's appearance, from his gnarled muddy feet up to his rotting brown teeth and all revolting points in between. She grabbed her beach bag.

'Edna, we're leaving.'

The sisters managed to get the last two seats on that evening's flight back to Manchester.

'Well, I never did,' exclaimed Maureen, as they strapped themselves in.

'Buggar Banjul!', added Edna.

This poem written by **Sheila Ross** was for Sam and Dave a lovely couple who got away for a weekend to Nowhereland. The first time in weeks and weeks.

8.8.20

We are in the middle of Nowhereland
Here is stillness; here is quiet, and peace
We have travelled back into History
Standing stones, and buried bones – atmosphere
Feel the ghosts, and listen with mind, and ears

Flint and Thatch, Thatch and Flint – both are still here
Oak door with decorated wrought iron
Teasels welcome you when you both arrive
Down the meandering path to the door The
long grass sighing its' welcome today
Red-tiled shaped roof will keep us both so safe
Tucked away from the world – here – for a while
Just be. Just be. Drift, sail effortlessly
Breathe the past in, breathe the calm, time to pause
Reflect. Reflect. Be circumspect. Absorb All that it
offers you for peace of mind.

Lost Summer by David Owen

Let me be absolutely clear right from the start – we consider ourselves amongst the luckiest group of people in the country during the pandemic. We are retired, we don't have a mortgage or a job or a growing family to worry about, we're pretty healthy and active and apart from the Darwinian aspects of the Corona Virus targeting us, and the minor inconveniences of wearing a mask whilst shopping, we actually suffer very few direct, really negative aspects to our lives; the only exception being the early lack of physical contact with our grandchildren. Of course, it isn't all sweetness and light and our lives have been a mixture of light and shade over the past few months – good news and bad news if you will.

A large percentage of our social lives revolve around boating; we have a boat as do a lot of our friends. We spend time cruising with friends on the River Thames with occasional forays to London, Rochester, Ramsgate and, once, as far as Paris. The boat club of which we're members provides an active social life with a variety of events being held every month. Last year we spent more than 90 nights onboard. So, the scene is set!

Good news. Over the winter we had upgraded our boat with a new tv, a new fridge and replaced all the old teak decking on the bathing platform. **Bad news.** Just before the weekend allocated to wash and wax the boat ready for the start of the season we went into lockdown and more bad news, the boat club was closed indefinitely so a lot of our social life was cancelled. **Good news.** We were invited to join some friends on their boat to go to Dunkirk to attend the 80th commemoration of the Dunkirk evacuation in May, followed by cruising to Ostend and Bruges. **Bad news.** We went into lockdown across Europe and the event was cancelled. We sat and sweated in the garden and on our balcony during the glorious weather in early summer. **Good news.** In June and we were allowed to travel further afield but not to stay away from home overnight. **Bad news.** During this period, the weather was mostly awful, wet, cold, and miserable so apart from a weekend spent cleaning the boat and two single day trips, we didn't get any use from her.

Good news. Early July we went to Devon to stay with family (socially distanced of course) and further good news, we planned to cruise downriver from our home marina to meet with friends who intended cruising up from Windsor and have socially distanced BBQ's in remote riverside locations. **Bad news.** We hit a submerged obstacle near Dorchester-on-Thames which damaged the rudder housing and we had taken the leaking boat to Wargrave to be lifted out of the water and repaired.

Good news. Ten days later (glorious weather at home), the boat was repaired and lifted back into the water. **Bad news.** Although 90% of the leak had been cured, there was still a minor leak, so it was back to Wargrave to have the boat lifted out again. **Good news.** The engineers said the final repairs should take no more than 3 days. **Bad news.** The marina said they couldn't lift any boats for at least ten days as it was their planned maintenance time for all their cranes – more glorious weather at home. **Good news.** The boat was lifted, and the engineers confirmed the repairs would only take the planned three days. **Bad news.** Marilyn was given a date for a long awaited hospital appointment (I suppose that should actually be good news!) but were told that we both must isolate for the next two weeks which means we can't get

back to the boat the end of August. At the time of writing, we are self-isolating having just enjoyed a week of fabulous weather with temperatures in the mid 30's when we could have been away on the Thames. So, a long-term weather forecast for you. Early September will be characterised by snowstorms, hurricanes, floods, droughts, fog, high winds and, probably, nuclear war!!! **Anybody want to buy a boat?**

Days of Frank's Life. This piece of work by David Liston has been published by The University of Buckinghamshire as part of their series of 'Lockdown Stories'

Today is the 21st June, the longest day of the year, the 80th day of the lockdown. Frank stood in front of the bi-fold doors looking out to a clear blue sky.

He looked out to his postage stamp of a garden and admired the various plants, trees and herbs within. The roses and hydrangeas were in full bloom. Soon, the bees will buzz as they collect the all-important nectar from the blossoms.

At eight o'clock in the morning, it was still cool, just 14 degrees Celsius, but the forecast temperature would rise to 30 degrees today.

Frank returned to his kitchen, where he opened the fridge and took his morning breakfast ingredients. It would be the same as every day, with strawberries, raspberries and blueberries accompanied by fat free Greek yoghurt. It might seem boring and repetitive, but he enjoyed his morning fare. He loved the way the scarlet and maroon colours contrasted with the indigo. He added the yoghurt to his pile of berries. It looked like he was at the top of a ski slope, gazing down at the cacophony of multi-coloured rocks below. In a month's time, he guessed, he could pick his own raspberries. The canes had grown tall and, with the weight of the fresh fruit; they needed support. Frank wished that his own strawberry plants had come to fruition. But the birds had eaten them. He had been told blueberries are easy to grow, but Frank did not have the room. His tomato plants were coming on. Already there was a mix of new tomatoes, ranging from beefsteak through cherry tomatoes, but they were green at the moment. With more sunshine and proper feeding, they would turn red and ripen very soon.

Frank opened the bi-fold door. He felt a rush of cool air, running through his newly shaven beard, coursing through the creases of his face. Frank stepped onto his patio. In the sky, he witnessed the vapour trail of an airplane. It must have flown over a few minutes ago, he mused, as the trail dissipated into a cirrus like path of condensation. Whilst he was still admiring the trail in the sky, Frank realised he had not seen a plane for weeks. He smelt a car pass by on the road beyond his garden. He didn't hear it, but the unquestionable whiff of exhaust fumes drifted on the breeze.

'Traffic is such a rarity these days,' he reminisced, 'it has improved the air quality without doubt.' Just standing there, keeping still, he became acclimatised to the rising chill of the York stone patio. Frank witnessed the birds resuming their visits to his feeders, with their calls providing a sublime orchestral backdrop.

He made sure the birds had enough seed on which to feed and they appeared to appreciate that fact. Many tits, robins and finches visited his bird feeders. The blue tits were particularly messy as they rushed to take as much as they could in as short a time as possible. They swooped in, landed on the perch, munched, and disappeared into the nearby laurel hedge in a few milliseconds. Then they were back, chasing each other, playing a game.

All of this was much to the delight of the two pigeons, who Frank christened 'Mr & Mrs Hoover'. They waddled in the garden, waiting for the seed droppings. They did not go hungry.

Occasionally, a squirrel would hurtle up the pole containing the bird feeders, turn itself upside down to take some seed. But the magpies would swoop in and frighten the squirrels away. Frank thought it interesting, the hierarchy of the animal kingdom. Squirrels would acquiesce to the magpies, who would be frightened off by the blackbirds. Pigeons would go on their merry way unperturbed and the small birds would flit in and out, somewhat nervously, as gaps became available on the feeders.

Frank turned to face the wall of his bungalow towards the climbing rose. There were many roses blossoming, maroon in colour as it emerged, before turning into a powerful bright yellow as the flower

matured. Frank extended his hand to take a branch as he leant into the rose. He caught the aroma of its blossom, only to flinch as the spike caught his finger drawing a speck of dark blood.

Frank laughed at himself as he sucked the blood from his finger.

Back inside the bungalow, Frank sat at his dining table. He took his spoon and plunged it into the bowl, disturbing the ski slope of yoghurt and creating an avalanche amongst the berries.

The first taste caused Frank to roll his eyes upwards as he appreciated the exquisite variety before him.

The soft sweetness of the raspberries followed by the firmness and subtle flavour of the strawberries.

Then the juicy burst of the acidic blueberry. All of this was wrapped in the silky cloak of the Greek yoghurt, cold on his tongue.

After his breakfast, Frank brewed a cup of coffee. He used only Arabica beans as he was particular about his coffee. Frank knew the scent of the coffee was one of the pleasures of life as he sensed its ingestion through his nose. Whoever could make the taste as wonderful as the fragrance, surely, would make a fortune. Next on Frank's schedule was a walk through his garden. Stepping back outside, he traversed his patio and walked along the gravel path, crunching his shoes as he went to the far side. It was only 15 metres down to the majestic white ball of the hydrangea flowers. Then another 15 metres across, passing the cotoneaster trees, towards the stone bird bath. Turn left again and it's 15 metres past the acer and purple buddleia. The final leg is another 15 metres past the jasmine bush, more blooming roses, and the sharp blue irises. The total circumference of the garden is 60 metres and 25 laps makes 1500 metres. His daily exercise.