

Message from the Chairman of Chalfonts U3A

Dear Member,

I do hope that you, your families, and friends are keeping well, safe, and out of harm's way whilst the Covid-19 Pandemic continues to disrupt our daily lives.

On a positive note, things are beginning to improve albeit, with the proverbial two steps forward and one step back syndrome. For that reason, I wanted to let you know what is happening in U3A both Nationally and our very own U3A.

Following advice from U3A National Office, your Committee has been very busy behind the scenes getting the building blocks ready for restarting our numerous activities. Many of the groups have been able to function very well by utilising digital technology such as the Zoom and Skype platforms to hold activity meetings. Our Webmaster, Gary Tomlin has been running workshops to assist those of our members who are unfamiliar with these systems or who are perhaps a little rusty having been away from the workplace for a while.

Some of our outdoor groups have been operating within H.M. Government guidelines to have visits to various venues which are now open. In order to achieve this, our Committee members have been hard at work designing 'Health and Safety Risk Assessment Forms to provide the very best of safeguards for your wellbeing.

The next phase of our 'behind the scenes' building blocks is to prepare for indoor activities.

The Government has now sanctioned the opening of indoor meeting places including Community Centres and Village halls. Public Health England has imposed strict conditions upon such premises to ensure they are 'Covid - Secure'. The 'Covid - Secure' standard is the minimum requirement placed on all such premises to provide a Health and Safety protocol. Such protocols may include separate entry and exit points, sanitisation of commonly touched items and social distancing within the premises. These are just examples and by no means the full extent of conditions or changing rules and guidance. Only this week, it was announced that with effect from **Saturday 8th August** the wearing of face masks will be **mandatory** in all such indoor premises.

U3A National Office have decreed that before any U3A activity can take place at indoor premises a full risk assessment must take place. Our Secretary, Jane is currently writing the Risk Assessment document that will be used in any future indoor activities. **We will let you know once all safety features are in place.**

I am delighted to report that the Chalfont St Peter Community Centre has implemented additional measures to make it Covid - Secure compliant. We have previously used the Leisure Centre for a number of our activities. Regrettably, we are unable to use those facilities in the near future as the company holding the contract to run the centre have taken the opportunity to carry out a refurbishment programme. It is unlikely to re-open until 2021. Our Committee member David Morgan is actively seeking alternative premises that are Covid - Secure for activities such as Table Tennis.

We held our first monthly meeting on Zoom which was a great success. Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday 12th August at 2pm where again, we have an excellent speaker arranged for your entertainment. I have asked our Committee members to host the Monthly meetings from time to time. I hope you do not think I am being idle; it is just that all of our Committee members do a fantastic job and work very hard on your behalf. It is a great opportunity for you to see and hear our Committee members and be able to recognise those who do such a great job running our organisation.

Warmest regards to you all,

Bob Borwick
Chairman.

Editors Update

Hello everyone and welcome to the August edition of the newsletter. Bulb catalogues have started to drop on my doorstep so that means we are moving into the next planting season . Not sure what to think! Sounds like more work!!

The Monthly meeting as Bob mentioned will take place via our' virtual friend' Zoom on Wednesday 12 August at 2pm and we have a speaker who comes highly recommended and particularly of interest for any 'petrol heads' out there but we are assured it is not at all technical ! Jimmy Young will be giving a talk entitled 'The Harley Davidson motorbike and their riders'.

Login details will be emailed out to members and you will be allowed access from 1.30pm.

I have been overwhelmed by the number of stories you have been sending me for 'Members Musings' and this edition sees one in particular that reinforced the situation for many at this time from Zoe Ryle and her Covid-19 experience living in sheltered housing. This brings us all back to earth and the reality of this pandemic, to read about the daily lives of those who have been in lockdown and those caring for them. We also cross the Channel to hear about life at the outbreak of Covid-19 in the Alps courtesy of Helen Slaughter's daughter Julie who lives in France.

Two budding authors from the Creative Writing group run by Denise Beddowes David Brodie and Cecelia Winkett have also shared their skills, Liz Pinfold shares her memories of growing up in Wales post WW2, Sheila Ross with a poem about 'Himself' and Jane Barker on her musical favourites. So put your feet up grab a drink and enjoy their efforts!

Chalfonts U3A Facebook Group . We now have 88 members keeping us posted on events in their daily lives and giving suggestions for us to consider eg cultural activities, updates on local news shops that are open etc. Let's see if we can 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 4.0 million subscribers so let's hope you are one of them.

Meenakshi Westhead has kindly forwarded an update from Beth Poole at Chalfonts Library as some you may not be aware it is now open for business!

The Chalfont St Peter community library is open again after an absence of about 4 months, during which many of our customers have been missing their regular visits to collect new books. A lot of hard work behind the scenes by the committee has led to a slightly streamlined but still very welcoming library. To let you know what to expect: The various guidelines which are in place for safe working mean that some facilities cannot be offered at present, such as the daily newspapers and book reservations. However, we are welcoming customers back and the shifts are almost back to their former strength, although we are missing some of our stalwart volunteers who are for various reasons unable to come back yet. The library is now open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday mornings (10 am to 1 pm); Tuesday , Wednesday and Friday afternoons (1:30 to 4:30 pm). Please note we have a short changeover period when the library is closed to allow shift change and cleaning. When you pay us a visit you will be asked to sanitise your hands before entering – the exception is if you are only returning books into the boxes at the front door, from where the books will be quarantined for a period before being scanned. However, there are still lots of great books on the shelves in spite of the slight delay in getting books returned into circulation. At present we have also been asked to take contact details for those browsing the library or

using the public computers – in case a visitor later activates the NHS track and trace process. These data will be stored securely for 21 days then shredded. We have outlined a one-way system in the main library and there are screens from behind which our volunteers will be able to assist you. We still offer public computer use and photocopying/scanning facilities AND we have acquired a card reader to minimise the need for cash transactions – something many customers have been asking for. We are limiting numbers of customers in each browsing area and you may be asked to wait in the garden area for a short period until another customer leaves. So far the system seems to be working quite well and we have rarely had to ask people to wait for more than a couple of minutes. So – pop down and say hello to us.

NGS Virtual Garden Tours update from Jacqui Greenham.

The National Garden Scheme has collated an array of garden tours which provide an introduction and summary of the main features of each garden. The tours on average run for 10 minutes and are located throughout the United Kingdom. Please click on the link [.https://ngs.org.uk/virtual-garden-visits-collection/](https://ngs.org.uk/virtual-garden-visits-collection/)

Sue Medlock also contacted me with an open invitation to any Chalfonts U3A members to visit her garden in Chalfont St Peter. She has recently been showing members of the Garden Visits group round her garden. She and her husband have opened the garden for the NGS for ten years, last time in 2017 and they have managed to keep it looking good in spite of advancing years! Groups of up to 6 people by appointment. Please contact Sue for further details, suemedlock@msn.com

Now over to our 'Members' Musings'.

Zoe Ryle

I have been wondering how many people have been as lucky as I have been when this corona virus had our Prime Minister advising that we all locked down as far as possible. I and 7 others were residing in sheltered housing. Our ages ranged from 85 to 98. We had two managers and one resident kitchen assistant. The managers usually worked four days on and four days off. But from that very first day, those three angels worked every day either as the cook and house manager, or as the kitchen assistant. The other resident member of the staff became responsible for the cleaning and is still wiping all the handles twice a day. We were told very sternly that we were no longer allowed to leave the premises and if we did we would not be allowed to return to the house. So the 11 people were living as a family for three months. We were never under the shadow of any risk. And we have survived happily and are very grateful for the dedicated work from our staff. I hope and pray that all our friends have been as fortunate.

The following 'musing' was sent to me by Helen Slaughter whose daughter lives in France.

It was Friday March 13, 2020, and I was being propelled up the mountain in one of the world's largest cable cars, sharing the steamy air between 200 skiers crammed in goggle to goggle. I was having a great time. Lap after lap, skiing until my legs couldn't ski anymore, it did occur to me at the time, the inappropriate proximity of us all in this enclosed space, when the impact of Covid-19 was making itself felt around the world. Italy had already gone into 'lock-down', yet here we were, 'making turns while the sun shone'.

The French Government soon turned out the lights. By Sunday March 15 all of France's ski resorts were to be closed. By Monday March 16, all schools in France were closed. Then at midday on Tuesday March 17, what felt like the portcullis being dropped, all exercise was restricted to within 1km from the house.

My usual work was quickly replaced by home schooling (in French). A few weeks into lockdown, there was a drive by the community to provide a face mask free of charge for everyone and my local area was calling out for volunteers. So I virtually stuck my hand up, and before I knew it I embarked on a nightly ritual of mask making. (For the record I made 100 in total, a small contribution to the 16,000 which were locally made.) Job well done!

'Himself' by Sheila Ross.

2.8.20

Himself? Dyslexic – a brilliant mind
Gets up at seven. I'm a bit behind!
Off round the Common. Full of Morning plans
He can do anything well, brain, or hands
Mr Fixitt, Solvitt, Inventit too
leaves us all standing; nothing he can't do!
His brain is much better – all well-refined
Fashioned, not rationed, so clever his mind!
Seventy-five years I have known this Man
Always surprises me with what he can –
Do this and do that; anything at all
Anniversary soon. Life is a Ball!

And then there is Me! A bit random? Yes
Gets up at eight. Well – that's anyone's guess
I drift through the day, and pootle about
Eighteen weeks here? We are not going out!

Jane Barker shares her musical thoughts.

For most of this year I have been living increasingly inside my head as the range of things I normally do is so restricted .Inside my head I'm composing My Desert Islands Discs list .I love music (opera excepted!!) , though I have no talent for it. My school day violin lessons did not nurture or bring out my creative flow, they merely assuaged my parents middle class aspirations for me. There are so many songs I would love to include on my list – I've not even started to try and cut it down to the 8 permitted by custom. Two which really stand out for me are "Summertime" – the version sung by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong . I just love her voice – so controlled, perfect pitch and yet somehow with a hint of melancholy .I'm not so keen on Louis' singing, but the arrangement of the song more than makes up for it .I have been listening to this song all my adult life and I just love it. All versions are interesting but this one is still the best. And from my youth "Spirit in the Sky" by Norman Greenbaum . It makes me want to get up and dance – again the arrangement captures me and reminds me of dancing around in front of the telly whilst watching to Top of the Pops in the late 60's and early 70's and trying to ignore my grandma sitting disapprovingly (or so it seemed to me) in her chair in the corner . I'm not religious so that is not one of its attractions though it's a pretty uplifting message.

Sweet Sixteen by David Brodie

You sometimes do stupid things when you are sixteen.

I was in Moscow in 1962, at the height of the Cold War, on a so-called cultural exchange when it happened. Browsing in the famous GUM departmental store, I felt a slight nudge followed by "Have you any money"?

in a strong Russian accent.
My immediate reaction was to answer "No" because the currency exchange as we entered the country had been thorough and exacting. Then I remembered a five-pound note in a back pocket and pulled it out, only to find that the questioner had disappeared. Five minutes later he was back and whispered, "Don't show the money; meet me in the toilet". A few minutes later I was 35 roubles richer, some five times the going exchange rate!

After a hurried, stilted, and uneasy conversation, I agreed to meet later that night, planning to sell any of my spare clothing. Confiding in a fellow student, we arranged to go together, if nothing else for moral support. I had arranged to meet our contact at midnight in nearby Gorky Park - yes honestly, the park of the same name as the Cold War thriller! We cautiously left our hotel wearing several layers of clothing, planning to sell everything we could manage without.

The air of expectancy and anticipation was electric as we walked in the poorly lit streets towards our rendezvous. Nothing happened at first and then out of the shadows came our contact, slowly, slyly, and

constantly checking in every direction. Clothes were stripped off, handed over and exchanged for an unbelievable stash of roubles. We strolled back to the hotel, totally unaware of the serious consequences of our action, but buoyed up by cascades of adrenaline, coupled with sheer naivety.

The next morning, reality hit us hard, not so much the concerns of criminal action, but simply the large amount of surplus cash now in our possession. We just had to find a way to lose this embarrassing and potentially dangerous new-found wealth. We travelled everywhere by taxi, ate caviar, and drank champagne. In restaurants we devoured the most expensive dishes, even resorting to the local delicacy of bear steaks.

After three weeks in Russia, we left the country with numerous, costly souvenirs and when the currency exchange was complete, had apparently spent no more than £30. As the steamer headed into the Baltic from Leningrad, it was an incredible relief to know we were outside the three-mile international boundary and free from Russian control.

I picked up a paper from the purser's office and with help translated the front-page headline. 'Students arrested in Moscow for possession of foreign clothing'. Sweet, stupid sixteen!

The Telegram by Cecilia Winkett

The hotel receptionist handed us our room key and, 'a telegram for you, senhora'. We looked at each other and slowly opened the envelope.

It had been only three days since we had celebrated our marriage in the village church. It had been a glorious day, and everything had gone off without a hitch. Well, almost everything.

The marquee had been put up in the garden several days before the wedding amidst much bustle.

Unknown men were shouting to each other and a very strange, large, white, flapping 'something' was appearing. What was the family dog to make of it all? This was supposed to be his garden but now it had been invaded. Chico had many friends in the locality and many houses that where he would find a welcome so he thought he would leave home and go visiting. He chose his moment carefully and when no-one was watching to call him back, he slipped off. He had left home before but usually returned for his tea – but not that day - nor the next.

We drove round calling and searching but with no success. We had often had a phone call 'We've got Chico. We'll keep him here until you can collect him'. But this time, no call came.

There had been a deluge the night before the great day and the rain had made huge pools in the roof of the marquee and the canvas was sagging. My father and I were up and out early with brooms, pushing the water off the roof. The water sloshed off the roof soaking the sides and the grass. Every time we heard the phone ring we stopped, but there was no news.

It turned out to be the hottest day of the year and by the afternoon and the time of the wedding the sun had dried the canvas and the grass, and we were left with fresh, warm, sweet-smelling air. The flower beds were full of carefully chosen scented plants. Everything was ready and waiting.

We did not speculate about what could have happened to Chico. We did not mention him but in the midst of all the busyness and the comings and goings we waited and listened for the phone.

At last I left to go to the hairdressers. This involved my hair being put up and securely fastened as it had to hold my veil. No flimsy floating organza veil but a pure silk mantilla. It was quite an operation and took quite some time.

Unbeknownst to me, while I was away, a man had called and given my parents Chico's collar which he had found by the roadside. They, and my matron of honour, decided that they were the only people who needed to know this news and all enquiries about his whereabouts were successfully fielded. The unspoken worry hung in the air.

After the ceremony all the guests walked home from the church to start mingling and chatting. It was a wonderfully joyous occasion. The best man gave an excellent speech and then opened all the gold envelopes containing congratulatory telegrams from those guests who had been unable to attend. After all the photographs, the speeches, and the toasts we drove off to start our honeymoon, happy and relaxed, but with a shadow behind our eyes.

I had sometimes teased my husband-to-be about proposing to me so that he could become a member of Chico's family. He had not been allowed a dog of his own as a child and had immediately lost his heart to ours.

Returning to the hotel after a long, hot, relaxing day on the beach, the receptionist handed us a telegram. We looked at each other and slowly opened the envelope – unfolded the paper and smiled. `Chico home safely, love, Daddy`

Liz Pinfold has some childhood memories of Wales.

After WW2 there was a shortage of homes and my parents and I in 1947 lived in a rented room in a semi-detached 1930's house in Shrewsbury for six months after I was born. We then moved to a small village, Cross Lanes, about ten miles south of Wrexham shortly after my first birthday. There was only one shop, a general store owned by Mr Evans, hence the name "Evans Stores", and a small Methodist chapel.

It was a very quiet rural setting, with two farms surrounding us, and plenty of woods in which to walk and see the wild flowers, many in the hedgerows too. I remember starting primary school in the larger village of Marchwiel, at the age of four and a half. My mother had already taught me to read, but as she did not drive she put me on the public bus along with other children. It was the norm in those days!! The journey was not long and took us northwards towards the direction of Wrexham.

My mother spent the rest of her day on household chores. My father was a commercial traveller (after he was demobbed from the army). He covered the area of mid and north Wales for Morgan Edwards and Sons, a grocery wholesaler. We only saw him at weekends.

I was an only child until nearly ten, so I had no siblings to keep me company but my mother made sure I played with Margaret, a farmer's daughter, and three children whose parents left South Africa for political reasons: they were against apartheid which began in the early 1950's. There was also a little girl called Yvonne who lived in the house next door, whose father worked for the Milk Marketing Board.

My memories of my Victorian primary school in Marchwiel are still very real. We had outside toilets in a single storey building set along one side of the playground. There were two separate sections for boys and girls. Each had a row of toilets with a wooden long bench for the toilet seat. It was pretty grim and dark. The toilet paper was often cut-up pieces of newspaper held on some string. The school room was filled with four wooden seated bench desks, with ink wells, linked together with wrought iron frames. They all faced forwards towards the teacher, not like the arrangements in many schools today.

We had a very strict regime, with a lot of rote learning. One of the lighter moments was on St. David's day when we went in for the morning school in a home-made National costume. I wore a dirndl skirt (from my ballet dancing lessons in the ballroom of the Wynnstay Hotel, Wrexham, on Saturday mornings), a white school blouse covered by a woolen shawl, and a tall black pipe hat (not quite a witches), to look the part. We had school assembly where we sang Welsh songs, heard poetry reading (I had learnt some Welsh at school), and then adjourned outside to the playground for dancing displays and some organised games. We returned home after lunch time with a daffodil.

When I was about six, there was a bus driver's strike for about a fortnight. Our headmaster arranged for a group of us who did not live in Marchwiel, to be frog marched in a line by a teacher each day to and from the nearby Halt station. We caught the steam train (I remember those small compartments with dark velvet covered seats with wooden surrounds, and push-up-and-down windows controlled by strips of leather and brass detail, and a long corridor to walk along to reach your place), to our destination. About half a dozen of us alighted at the Cross Lanes Halt, which was quite some distance from the centre of Cross Lanes village. Most of our mothers met us there for our walk home.

We left Wales in the summer of 1954 to live on my grandmother's farm in Cleeton St. Mary, near Ludlow, Shropshire. My father had changed jobs! Eventually we moved to Birmingham – quite a contrast in environs for us all.

