



Newsletter No.74 December 2020

Christmas message from the Chairman.

Dear Members,

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones well.

This year has been difficult for us all and we are very grateful for the support you have given and continue to give to our wonderful organisation, CHALFONTS U3A. Thank you for bearing with us as we have had to respond to the ever changing guidelines from the Government and U3A National Office to ensure your safety throughout this Pandemic.

Whilst some of our active groups have been put on hold and adversely affected, a large proportion of our members have been able to continue their activities through the magic of 'Zoom'. A total of twenty- one of our groups are continuing to partake in their subject activity via 'Zoom'. The very nature of some of our activities do not lend themselves to video conferencing but that has not stopped a further twenty- two of our groups using this method to meet up and keep in touch during these confining times. Video conferencing (VC) has been a lifeblood to U3A's across the Country. We have been able to continue our monthly meetings with talented speakers holding forth on a myriad of interesting, fascinating, and often humorous subjects. In the summer, we held our first ever Annual General Meeting by means of VC, and although we embarked on it with a great deal of trepidation, it turned out to be a great success. As our numbers grow it may well be the way forward for the future.

One of the resolutions passed at the AGM was to review in January 2021 the subscriptions for the ensuing year due to the suspension of CU3A activities during 2020. Your Committee and in particular your Treasurer, are working hard to fulfill that resolution to the benefit of existing full members next year. We endeavour to bring you some positive news in January.

As the Government restrictions and lockdowns continued unabated, our Newsletter Editor, Eileen Powell, picked up the pace and began producing the Newsletter fortnightly. Eileen introduced 'Members Musings' which went down a storm and in the model of 'esprit de Corps' our members sent in their anecdotal stories for publication. This culminated in what was a truly wonderful Armistice Day publication with our members submitting their family stories from both World Wars. Emotional and inspirational! Thank you to all of you who contributed.

Your Committee has been busy during the lockdown, planning for the future when we don't have much clue as to what the future holds for us. We have resolved to forward the plan on the basis of what you, the members wanted. You will no doubt have seen the survey sent out to members and Convenors which was designed and produced by our Secretary Jane Barker and her husband Vince. The results and analysis of those surveys have been a great help to us in how we will take CU3A forward into 2021.

May I, on behalf of your Committee, wish you and your loved ones an enjoyable Christmas holiday and a happy, peaceful and above all, a healthy New Year.

Bob Borwick ,Chairman Chalfonts U3a

Editor's Update

I would like to reinforce our Chairman's Christmas message and thank you all during this lockdown period for all the support you have given me whilst putting together the newsletter together in its present form. Who knows what changes will happen in 2021 but as long as you continue to contribute with your Musings



and any local news update there will be a platform for it! We can at least look forward to a 5-day window to catch up with family over Christmas. I think the turkey would have felt a bit lonely otherwise! Also the great news that has just emerged re a vaccine being rolled out, we need to take our hats off to the amazing scientists around the world who have collaborated to make this possible so quickly.

I am sure many of you have been able to access some of the study sessions on Zoom which have been forwarded to me from Thames Valley Network (TVN) The last two of the year are a Christmas Quiz on 18 December and The Christmas Carol Concert on 21 December. You will all have received details for 8 January where you will be able to follow the story behind 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'

We have had so many learning opportunities as members of the u3a to learn during the lockdown and I suspect like me many of you have risen to the challenge!

Mike Lawson forwarded this information about the ZOE COVID Symptom Study webinar with Professor Tim Spector and Professor Peter Openshaw which was aired on 25 November as being particularly interesting and on 9 December a further Webinar entitled -Rolling out COVID-19 vaccines with Kate Bingham, UK Vaccine Taskforce.

<https://youtu.be/rD6t5OHbDN0>

Monthly Meeting. Our meeting in November was highly enjoyable with Michael Brook former Chief Librarian sharing many entertaining anecdotes surrounding some of our previous Prime Ministers. This month Keith Hoffmeister gave us an update on HS2 and not surprisingly was a popular meeting

Members Survey. Jane Barker forwarded this message on behalf of the Committee. Many thanks to all of you who have filled in our members survey. Over 330 of you have responded so far and its very encouraging reading though all your comments and ideas. If you haven't got round to it yet, there is still time, but please complete the survey by 15 December. In January, the Committee will be reviewing what you've said and trying our best to respond to the things you have identified.

Convenors Survey. In November, our convenors completed their own survey and we had an excellent response from them. They are doing a great job in very difficult circumstances. We now have a list of groups on our website that are continuing to meet via Zoom and know there are more groups keen to get going again as soon as the restrictions permit.

Gary Tomlin our webmaster has been working hard creating the members-only page on the website, this page will be used for sharing recorded zoom meetings and any other member generated content.

You can access it either from the top menu on the home page or directly via the link below:

<https://chalfontsu3a.org.uk/25035-2/> The password for the page is:%\$C4T\$%

If you run a zoom meeting you would like to share you need to select the **Automatically record Meeting** check box and the **On the local computer** check box when you start or schedule the meeting. Once the meeting has finished it will be stored in your Documents folder in a zoom folder. If you then contact **webmaster@chalfontsu3a.org.uk** we can arrange to get the recording uploaded to the website. Also, contact us if you have any questions.

Local News The Rotary Club of Gerrards Cross and Chalfont St Peter is planning to operate its Christmas Float activity throughout Gerrards Cross and the Chalfonts this December. Due to COVID 19 concerns, however, the members of the Rotary Club will not be making door to door collections. The Rotary Club decided that the Christmas Float was such an important part of Christmas Festivities, especially for families with young children, that the show must go on but without the door to door collections. As the Float does raise many thousands of pounds for local charities each year and, as these charities are suffering from a serious shortfall in income during the pandemic, the Rotary club will be seeking card and on line donations where possible to provide some income for our local charities. www.rotary-ribi.org for details

Postal Charges. Just to remind you that postal charges will be increasing on 1st January earlier than usual as it is normally in March.



Flowers Unique Some lovely news for members from Flowers Unique, who are a locally based florist in the heart of our community in Chalfont St. Peter who have very kindly offered the Chalfonts U3A membership a 15% discount on all purchases made in the shop from the 2 December 2020. Purchases include plants and floral accessories . In order to receive your discount, please produce your membership card and quote your membership number.

Existing Groups.

Chalfonts U3A Facebook Group . Our group has finally reached 103! Our members do a great job keeping us posted on events in their locality and giving suggestions for us to consider eg cultural activities, places to visit etc. 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 You can also post your questions on the Chalfonts U3A Facebook page.

Book Group 1.

In November, the group discussed "A Diary of a Nobody" by George and Weedon Grossmith. First published as a book in 1892 it has been in print ever since. It provided some light relief, and the group recommends it to anyone looking for a shortish and amusing read. It is a novel about class snobbery and overweening pomposity, observed through the diary of Mr Pooter, a Victorian gentleman constantly at war with tradesmen, his feckless son, and a barrage of inanimate objects

Excursion Groups News

What a different year it's been. Let's hope that 2021 will be easier and we can look forward to getting out and about again. A quick look back at our days out. Quite a list! - with visits to some places twice due to popular demand! And thank you all for your support.

Mapledurham •Hatfield House •Mary Rose Tour in Portsmouth • Queens Gallery •BMW Mini Factory •RAF Hendon •BBC Tour & Kensington Museums •Audley End •Beaulieu Motor Museum •Eltham •Palace Houses of Parliament & Westminster Abbey •Waddesdon at Christmas •Swindon Steam •Museum Brooklands Museum • Brighton Pavilion •Hever Castle •Highclere Castle/Downton Abbey •Silk Farm & Bombay Gin Distillery •Bath Christmas markets •Morgan Motor Company •Chatham •Dockyard •Bristol Tour & the Suspension Bridge •Buckingham Palace & State Rooms •Guide Dogs for the Blind Centre British Motor Museum •Neasden Hindu Temple & Shayona Restaurant •Lacock Abbey & Fox Talbot Museum •Sandhurst Passing Out Parade and Tour •Forman's Salmon •Smokehouse & London Canals boat trip •Wembley Stadium Tour & London Design Outlet •Winchester •Cathedral & Christmas markets •Royal Albert Hall backstage tour.

If you would like to be added the excursion group please email excursions@chalfontsu3a.org.uk

With Seasons Greetings Tricia and Val (Convenors of the Excursions Group)

Garden Visits

Jane Barker convenor forwarded this which may be of interest to those of you who are not members of the Garden Visits group. The National U3A are running a series of free garden winter talks via Zoom. The link to see what is available is [U3A garden talks https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/winter-school-various-garden-talks-tickets-129716833541](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/winter-school-various-garden-talks-tickets-129716833541)



London Walks

Calling All U3A members! Don't let the winter weather stop your cultural adventures. London Walks are running a U3A edition of their sold-out series 'The Story of London'. Only U3A members will be able to join and make the most of the special discounted price.

London walks have organised a special edition of their virtual tour series just for you.

'The Story of London' is a series of 8 virtual tours exploring the history of London from the Romans to Queen Victoria. The U3A edition will run weekly on Thursday mornings at 11am from 14 Jan to 4 March. Each episode will be recorded so any that you miss can be watched later. The recordings will be available until the end of March, so plenty of time to catch up!

8 virtual Tours for just £32.00 per person, equivalent to £4 for each 75 minute tour, presented on Zoom.

'The Story of London' -Join four of their top flight Blue Badge Tour guides on a journey back in time.

<https://thestoryoflondonu3a.eventbrite.co.uk> and you will require to enter the password Londonstory.

John can be contacted at londonwalks2@chalfontsu3a.org.uk

Now over to our final 'Members' Musings' of 2020

Howard Dell

As the Festive Season approaches I remember a childhood family incident from a Christmas Eve over seventy years ago. My sister, then about six years old, had been over-excited all day anticipating what Father Christmas might be leaving at the foot of her bed later that night. I, a mature eleven year old, never missed an opportunity to tease her and mid-afternoon I realised that things were lining up for the perfect prank.

But first, I needed to get my hands on a prop. My father was a keen angler and in his fishing-box I knew he had clothes peg which had mounted on it a wobbly spring with a little bell on the end – one of those small cloche bells found on cat collars. The device was used to peg to the end of a fishing rod so that, if a fish took the bait, the bell would ring and the dozing fisherman would jump into action. Un-noticed, I went into the garden shed and slipped the peg and bell from the fishing box and into my pocket.

Somehow, while the rest of the household were otherwise occupied – they couldn't have been watching TV because this was years before we could afford a television set — I crept into my sister's bedroom and attached the peg and bell to the outside of the window frame. That was clever, I wonder how I achieved that? I then tied the end of a ball of string to the spring holding the bell and dropped the string to the ground. All that remained now was to bait the target! As bedtime approached I reminded my sister that if she listened carefully she might hear Santa's sleigh coming with the sound of reindeer hooves and the jingling of the harness.

I gave her fifteen or twenty minutes to get properly settled in bed then went outside and jiggled the end of the string hanging down from the upstairs window: the bell tinkled obligingly. But no response! More string pulling. Was she asleep? Was it not possible to hear the bell inside the bedroom? Should I have opened the window? My sister has never forgiven me.

Last Christmas I gave you my heart

Last Christmas, I volunteered down at the homeless shelter. I have done so for the past three years now. It has helped me forget my loneliness at a time of year when most people experience a surfeit of company from their loved ones. I take along gifts, I serve up meals and I play the games. I listen to everyone's stories and life histories. No-one ever asks me for mine. It is always assumed that I am privileged and content; just a middle-class do-gooder with a conscience and plenty of time on her hands. Afterwards, however, I return to my quiet, empty home and the loneliness is waiting for me.

Last Christmas, however, was different. Amidst all the hubbub of food preparation and social participation, I spotted you. From across the room, I saw you amongst the shy, the lonely, the homeless. Your eyes,



brown and wary, met mine, which were as grey and empty as the ocean. I approached you tentatively and learned your sad history. I was touched. I felt you were so young to have been cast adrift, without family or friends, amongst the older homeless. Despite your obvious sadness, somehow you still had that youthful expression of hope. You had the capacity to begin again. You needed and deserved to be loved. So did I. I was deeply moved by your plight and, rash though it was, I invited you to share my home. I was grateful for your company. We shared meals together. We shared walks in the frost and the rain. Soon, inevitably, perhaps, we shared my bed. My friends warned me. They said you wouldn't throw off your vagabond ways, and you would soon leave me. They said that you were broken, untrustworthy; that you would be faithful to no-one and that you would break my heart as it had been broken before.

Well, the winter snows came and went, but you stayed. You encouraged me to venture out more, to explore places I had rarely appreciated before. As the seasons progressed, you made me feel years younger. Together, we walked the woods in spring, savouring previously undiscovered earthy scents and the vivid colours of bluebells and daffodils. We ran together across sunny meadows. We lay by the stream and watched with wonder the dragonflies dancing in the sunlight. I began to see the world through new eyes – your eyes.

And now that another Christmas is approaching, to I feel sufficiently confident chide my friends for their pessimism. I tell them I have found love once again. This evening, you and I lay, side by side together, on the hearth rug in the flickering light of the log fire. I gazed into your beautiful brown eyes and, for the millionth time, I told you how much I loved you and how happy I was that I had you in my life. You rolled blissfully onto your back. It didn't matter that you couldn't express your love for me. The rapid beating of your tail against the hearth rug said it all.

Denise Beddows

Diana Sankey sharing her get together with another U3a member in OZ !

I joined Chalfonts U3a a couple of years ago when I was home visiting my sister Jo who is a member and was going on a Bird Watching holiday to Norfolk. It was such a success and now I am a great fan of the organisation, its' members and programmes and its' entertaining correspondence and friendly atmosphere, so I have kept up my membership.

My family moved to Gerrards Cross in 1948 when I was 12 so I grew up in the area and love it; but my itchy feet took me all over the world and now I am settled in beautiful Perth in Western Australia and I try to visit Jo in Gerrards Cross most years to see relations and friends.

When Eileen wrote in the newsletter earlier in the year that one of Chalfonts U3a members was stuck in Albany with her son and family and couldn't get home because of Covid-19, I contacted her. Gillian Walmsley was in Albany (which is about 500 kilometres south of Perth) and we discovered we had a lot in common and knew the same places from being brought up in the same area in Bucks.

Gillian's family did a trip up North and Gillian joined them as far as Perth and stopped to see friends and visit me. I met her in Perth and she spent a few days with me in Kalamunda.

We discovered we both had an interest in many things and we both liked talking about them! So it was a win-win situation and we explored the hills and areas around Perth talking our heads off, putting the world to rights and sharing our life history. Life is just a bowl of cherries!

