

# Baddow & Galleywood U3A

## NEWSLETTER



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE



# Summer 2020

LOCKDOWN EDITION



*Mr & Mrs Blackbird enjoy breakfast at Maggie's*



## The Continuing Thoughts of Chairman Mo

“We have all the time in the world.” — Louis Armstrong

“People will always need People” – Benjamin Zephaniah

In my last Newsletter article, I was looking forward to having lots of nominations for new committee members at the AGM in April. Guess what – no volunteers. Even worse – no AGM.

Since the start of lockdown, I’ve been trying to update you all on a weekly basis with local, and occasionally, national items. Many have been sent to me by members – especially those in the Patient Participation Group at Baddow Village Surgery - or gleaned from local Facebook groups that I belong to. Based on the many responses to the weekly updates that I’ve had from you, it would seem that they have helped in some small way to ease the tedium of living in this strange new world that we’re trying to adjust to.

National U3A Day has now been postponed until October 1<sup>st</sup> (2020, in case you were thinking otherwise!), so you’ve plenty of time now to muster your thoughts and let us know what you or your group(s) might like to do. Just as a reminder, here’s what it’s all about - “Members can showcase what happens in their U3A, challenge negative perceptions of older adults and invite other Third Agers in the community to learn about the contribution U3A makes to the quality of life of retired people”. It may well be that yet another postponement of the day is still on the cards, or at least one observing social distancing rules.

By now, I and some of the committee are becoming more accustomed to meeting by videolink using Zoom. (If it’s good enough for the daily government press briefings, it’s good enough for us.) Although it might sound intimidating initially, once you’ve tried it a few times it becomes much easier. We had a familiarisation session for group coordinators in late April which involved 20 of us, including committee. Hopefully some will have been inspired enough to try holding some virtual group meetings by the time you read this. I’m extremely grateful to Mike from the Photography Group for seizing the opportunity from the outset and his Group are now meeting every fortnight using Zoom. I know that Linda will soon be conducting her first virtual Family History Group meeting. Other Groups are exploring ways of keeping connected and hopefully some of their ideas appear later in the newsletter.

In May we decided to try holding our first monthly general meeting using Zoom and I’m delighted that our Vice Chairman, Alan, volunteered (with his arm only slightly twisted up his back) to deliver his talk about HMS Belfast. We’ve both had lots of positive feedback on that meeting and have been encouraged to keep these monthly meetings going. It has also been shown that having some dates for your diary (coincidentally mapped onto the dates already in your yearbooks) are **June 10<sup>th</sup>**, when Ken will speak about “The Street Names of Galleywood” (based on your votes), and **July 8<sup>th</sup>**, when Linda will talk about “Hylands House”. Beyond that we will be looking for further volunteers or we may be able to book external speakers prepared to deliver their usual topics from the safety of their own homes. If you’d like to offer to speak, please contact me.

I don't know about you, but I feel that out of this lockdown period we ought to be able to generate a few more interest groups for the "new normal" years ahead. Ones that readily come to mind based on my own experiences include:-

- **predictive weeding** – how to forecast where the next weeds will appear based on mathematical modelling of the removal of the thousands that have gone before
- **ukulele playing** for those with big fingers that don't seem to fit between the frets and with minimal musical talent in the first place
- **photography** of items that in the real world would be regarded as ordinary and ignored, but in this unreal world are extraordinary

Some of you might like to add your own, or simply get out and about (virtually) by trying to attend virtual group meetings that you've always thought of attending but never quite got round to.

Great Baddow Parish Council have recently created an on-line survey inviting the views of parishioners about the possible purchase of the United Reform Church, which is now on the market with offers above £600,000. If purchased by the Council for community use the effect on the parish council tax precept would be minimal (£4 - £6 per year), but it appears that preferred usage would see it retained as a church of some denomination. Hopefully the situation will be fully resolved in a time-frame that allows us to make an informed decision about using the Keene Hall or the URC for general meetings after March 2021. Have you noticed that the National Office of the U3A has totally revamped their website recently and there are now lots of interesting projects and opportunities to get involved? Many of these have already appeared in my weekly updates, but reminders here may take you back to areas that you've looked at and then forgotten. If you're interested in taking photographs, but not the technicalities of photography, there is the U3A Eye project, where a theme is chosen every 2 weeks and 15 favourite photos selected from those submitted. B & G is doing well in this project with one of our members' photos having been selected for two separate project themes from the many hundreds received.

There are also sections for Creative Writing, Lockdown Diaries, Things that members have made, Mindfulness, Learning and each week also has a challenging quiz. (There's even been the appearance of a golf quiz this week, so you are never quite sure what you might find.) So if you find yourself running out of ideas for things to do, just head off to [u3a.org.uk](http://u3a.org.uk) and run through the options under the learning tab. There is also the lively Facebook page "U3A: Keeping in Touch", which has over 3500 members and allows the sharing of memories, jokes, puzzles, photos and stories. Facebook also has a "Craft U3A" group, if you're of a crafty nature.

As I've said in previous newsletters, new members join regularly during the year (although perhaps less so in the current uncertain state), so I do hope that my occasional repetition in these articles may be excused. New ideas for Interest Groups are always welcome and should be discussed initially with Wendy, our Facilitator of Groups. Compared to many U3A's our number of Groups is proportionately low and all are now well established. Most people are wary of making suggestions in case they end up having to run the Group, but if you don't speak up you'll never know whether others share your interest and would be happy to help out. Interesting groups that I've spotted around the country include SWIG (Senior Wine Imbibers' Group – surely some of you are up for that!), Modern Wisdom, Latin and Global Politics.

We have a closed group Facebook page for Baddow & Galleywood U3A which we'd love you to join. You can find it by using the **Links** page on our website - or typing the following address into your browser [u3asites.org.uk/baddow/links](http://u3asites.org.uk/baddow/links)

We also now have an external-facing Facebook page which was created during lockdown to give non-U3A Facebook members some basic information about our existence and purpose. It's available to view at <https://www.facebook.com/bgU3A/> and if you "like" or "follow" that will help improve its position in FB searches

And finally – nothing to do with shopping at Tesco’s, spam or Donald Trump, but might make you titter ...  
"A friend of mine always wanted to be run over by a steam train. When it happened, he was chuffed to bits!"  
(thanks Tim). *Maurice*

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## Interest Group Chat

Hi Everyone

Strange times for all, I do hope that you are all keeping healthy, happy & virus free. I know some of you are keeping in contact with each other, & that’s good but let’s say a thankyou to those who are doing our shopping, picking up our prescriptions or are chatting to us in some way. We should count our blessings & be grateful for the bluer skies & cleaner air. It may make us think more about the ozone layer. I miss meeting you all so much & hope that in the not too distant future we can meet again, til then take care. *Wendy*

### A note from the Editor

Welcome to the Summer edition in Lockdown, our new and strange, sometimes scary world.

Thank you to all our contributors for articles large and small: poems, photographs and wise words. It is a packed issue considering the circumstances and I hope you enjoy reading it.

Our chairman's piece contains information about future meetings + a joke or two. Several members have entered our 'Why I joined the U3A' feature, and there are some interesting photos from the Art Appreciation group. Can you offer some help with History Group 1? I've put most of Book Group 2's reviews in this issue, as I thought some of you might like to try a book we've written about, while we have all this time on our hands. Also see an important note about the Membership secretary - could you step up?

you'll find some 'Lockdown thoughts', including a poem written in 1869, which speaks to us now, as well as in 1918 during the flu pandemic, when it was re-printed.

Hopefully we can produce a Newsletter sometime in the Autumn, if this one is anything to go by! With your help, of course!

Keep safe and well. *Maggie*



## Why I joined the U3A

### Why I joined the U3A

Ann

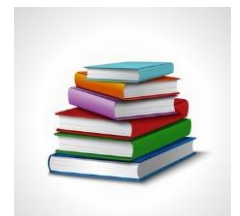
When I first retired, I was determined to stay active. To make sure I made a good start to the week, I joined a Monday morning Yoga class. I went back to Chelmsford College to do a two-year City & Guilds photography course, now that I had time to pursue one of my hobbies in earnest and I did a little French teaching in an out-of-school club, together with some voluntary work for the Red Cross. Oh and I joined the U3A.

I had first heard of the U3A from a friend in France and was keen to go to the inaugural meeting in Baddow in 1999. It was striking to see how many people came and how many interest groups were suggested. Before I knew where I was, Jean Roberts, a former Mayor of Chelmsford, had talked me into running the reading group. Jean was a founder member, along with Mair, who still comes to the meetings. At one point we had three JPs to keep us in order, Jean, Eileen and Pat, but that wasn't a requirement for joining!

There has always been a good mix of people (all women though) who share a common interest in reading. This is why I love the group, where we get the chance to discuss in depth characters, style, plot and the ideas stimulated by our read. Our first book was Laurie Lee's "Cider with Rosie" and the one we should have been discussing, had Covid not intervened, was "The Heart of the Matter" by Graham Greene. The yoga, the Red

### (nearly) New Feature!

Why not write your own version and send it to the editor for the next issue?



Cross and the teaching no longer feature in my programme, but for my sins - 21 years later – I still run and enjoy the reading group!

### Why I joined the U3A

Allen

In 1998 Marconi Comms, my employer was plunged into bankruptcy and I was forced into early retirement. I was never one to sit back and do nothing and the U3A popped up as a heaven-sent opportunity to use my energy and stimulate my brain. I became a founder member and joined everything that looked interesting. The Computer group looked ideal for me and I soon started running computer courses. I joined Arnold's Photographic group and soon found myself assisting him. Over the years I've also been in the Church Visiting group, the Family History group, Singing for Pleasure group, Art Appreciation group, Gardening group, Strolling group, Technology group, Table-tennis group and Local History group. This high profile elevated (?) me to the Committee in 2000, where I did a year as Chairman, but committee work is not for me. The Local History group was right up my street and I discovered there was no written history of Great Baddow. Every village has its crop of old timers whose families have been around for hundreds of years and their memories needed to be unlocked. Brian invited a speaker from the Essex Record Office to talk about Oral History. So in 2001 I formed a team of 9 from Brian's group to carry out an oral history of GB, recording the afore-mentioned memories on magnetic tape and converting them into a book which sold 2,000 copies. This turned out to be a 3 - year project for the team and turned me into a publisher. I still have the scars.

So did the U3A satisfy the need I had when I retired? Absolutely! It kept me stimulated, I met lots of smashing people, and it kept me out of mischief.

As a bit of light relief I started a U3A Pudding Club. I've always liked puddings, so 6 of us met monthly in each other's houses and took turns to produce a pudding of our choice with 6 helpings. Then we had a rest and a cup of tea and then cooked another pudding. This group (not the puddings) lasted for many months until we ran out of recipes. No doubt we could have merely started again at the first pudding, but some of us were beginning to worry about calories. Oh for the opportunity to meet again and indulge in a pudding or two!

### Why I joined the U3A

Chris

After 21 years of living and working away from the UK, mainly in Malaysia and Hong Kong, it was something of a challenge to move to Chelmsford in 2016. Although it's my husband's home town and I had visited many times, I had never actually lived here before and worse than that I'm a Northerner! Having said that, the lovely countryside, seasons and dry, warm weather all made a welcome change from the heat and humidity of the tropics.

Delighted as I was to be living in a village setting yet near to the city centre and with easy access to London, I still needed to find ways to meet new people and develop new interests as after a lifetime of teaching I was retired, with a husband still working, children living some distance away and only a few friends in the area. I tried volunteering in the local school and joined a women's group but still had a lot of time on my hands, so what to try next?

I had heard of the U3A, so I checked what was available locally and was pleasantly surprised to find that the Baddow & Galleywood branch met close to home. It's always a bit daunting to join things on your own and my first impression of the main meeting was not very positive as only one person spoke to me but I persevered and joined some groups. There the reception was much warmer and more welcoming and since then I have been able to enjoy a range of activities each month as well as take part in outings and visits. It took a while but I now feel that I have many U3A friends which is especially beneficial at the moment given the current extraordinary times.



However, when I heard that the committee was keen to appoint new members, my early experience made me consider putting myself forward and in 2018 I not only became a committee member but found myself accepting the role of Treasurer! This was in name only at first as although I had been treasurer of a small society in Hong Kong, I relied heavily on my predecessor to help me get to grips with the accounts. Gradually I've become more confident about the role but I'm glad help is still at hand and that I'm part of such a supportive group.

If anyone asks me: "Should I join the U3A?" I would give a wholehearted recommendation but also add that it might take time to settle in and it's good to have a willingness to move out of your comfort zone. (Photo = walks we have taken in Lockdown)

## Why I joined the U3A

Loretta

From a shy starter to a little less shy Membership Secretary

I worked in the Computer industry from the time I left school until 1981 when I had my first daughter. I then moved over to teaching in Further Education for 17 years before spending my last 10 years in a secondary education school. When I finally retired I found that having all this spare time at home, alone, uncomfortable.

A friend had retired in September who was an avid Bridge player and thought I could do with playing the game, but unlike her I hadn't ever played it before. She knew of a group in the Croydon U3A where a very patient man, Paul, taught small groups.

I had no idea what the U3A was and was very nervous about turning up for the first few times. I learned about the monthly meetings but they were in the centre of Croydon, so I didn't go to any. There were eight of us learning how to play Bridge and we spent 18 months together, before I moved to Great Baddow!

On arrival in Great Baddow I had a lot of building work done in my house so used that as an excuse not to join anything. I eventually found both the Great Baddow and Chelmsford U3As and joined both in my first year. There was a (Great Baddow) Group Co-ordinators meeting in the URC where all the co-ordinators were sitting at desks, chatting and displaying examples of what their groups did. Here I discovered the friendly Craft and Computing groups as well as meeting Diane who told me all about the Bridge group.

When my building work was completed, I finally made the effort and went to the Bridge group where I was made to feel welcome. They knew I was still learning – there is so much to learn – and were mostly patient with me! I then cautiously ventured to the Wednesday meetings, where Yvonne welcomed me and sat with me, as did Di at another.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on the Craft and Computing groups. I also joined the Computer Workshop group and it promptly closed! So, in my innocence I mentioned to Marjorie and Di that it was such a shame and maybe I could do something. Well – I've now learned to be careful what I say – as I found myself coordinating the group (with several helpers) for the next three years until it finally folded.

During this time I was accepted onto the committee and agreed to help Alan with the membership task. Unfortunately, he passed away and I took over, not realising fully what the job entailed. Talk about learning on the job!

It's been a great place to make friends and the people have been so friendly!

## INTEREST GROUP REPORTS

### Music Performing

Love is in the air! And it's the love of music shared by the Music Performance Group! And the favourite key-G! The finale of Dvorak's beautiful Violin Sonata, played by Jean and Pam- G major! Telemann's Trio-Sonata- in G was played by Debbie, Ann, Lynley and Pam. And Debbie and Davina, on two flutes played a Romance- in G, by Reicha.

We do play a huge variety of music in other keys, of course, ranging from Mozart to The Animals via an esoteric arrangement of Rodrigo's Guitar Concerto for Guitar (Gerry), Soprano Saxophone (Penny) and Piano (Yours truly.)

The prize for the largest group of musicians goes to the performers of a set of 20th Century popular music, sung and played by a septet (Liz, Ann, Jean, Jenny, Gerry, Ross and Jane.)

The vocal group were on form with a programme including "I wandered lonely as a cloud" and "Funiculi, Funicula."

Neglected masterpiece of the day was a Pastorale and Bouree played on Bass Clarinet by John.

Yet another thoroughly enjoyable afternoon, and thanks, as ever, to Pam for making it all possible.

*Ken*

### Art Appreciation

The theme for this meeting was 'leftovers'. Since I was not there when this title was decided all I could think of was food! Thankfully I was wrong. I was informed that the idea was to have the opportunity to talk about pictures which we have not had time for before. Consequently the pictures were wide ranging. As a novice to art appreciation, I found this meeting particularly enjoyable. Once again, we are the University of the Third Age.

Hogarth's 'Shortly after the Marriage' evoked a good deal of interpretation and imaginings. Hogarth was a great observer of humanity and in this picture he censured the marriage customs of the upper classes. (One thing I have learned is to put pictures in context of time in history. Hogarth's dates are 1697 - 1764 )

Liz



### Art Appreciation

In May we had our first ever Art Appreciation meeting on Zoom. Unfortunately it clashed with VE day so a few people were involved in community events, and others had a bit of a problem in accessing Zoom. But half a dozen of us got together and were able to look at nine pictures.

The theme was 'What to do when there is nothing to do', which we interpreted fairly liberally. Subject matter included knitting, reading, drinking, sitting around being bored, sleeping, staring longingly outdoors, and a couple of pictures imagining what we might do AFTER lockdown.

First was a Russian painting of an old woman knitting a stocking. We admired the expression of serenity and relaxed concentration on the old woman's face and also the exquisite detail of her bonnet, and, it has to be said, her wrinkles!

Next up was another picture of concentration. Renoir had painted a picture of Claude Monet reading a book. Again, the concentration was there, but this one gave a real feeling of a fleeting moment in time captured brilliantly on canvas.

The two drinking pictures were both by French impressionists. One by Manet, showed a young woman drinking Plum Brandy, apparently a drink that signifies hope. However, she was sitting alone in a bar, leaning on a table which separated her from us, the viewer. We had different opinions about the expression on her face, but melancholy wistfulness seemed to sum it up. The other one, by Jean Beraud, showed a youngish couple drinking absinthe. Their body language was fascinating. Sitting apart from each other, he, looking rather worse for wear, was staring at his drink which he was topping up, and she had her head on her hand, staring into the middle distance and looking incredibly bored. Is this what lockdown is like for you?

Boredom was the theme of the next painting – the Charity of St Nicholas of Bari by Machiotti. It depicted the legend of St Nicholas giving a dowry to three unmarried girls. The girls were lounging around, along with their father, in various positions of languor, on the verge of sleep, while at the door, St Nicholas is holding two golden balls, which he is about to 'magic' into the premises. One is already on the bed, next to one of the girls. We felt that it was a very unusual renaissance painting – fairly naturalistic and displaying emotions that one does not usually see in paintings from that era.

Shades of Sleep by Redon was a painting that was unfamiliar to everyone. It was appealing because of the colours and the structure, but we had a bit of difficulty in sorting out exactly what it was about. 'By the Open Door' by another unfamiliar artist, Nikolai Astrup, got a 10/10 from all of us. A young woman is sitting at the side of an open door, looking out at a path from her house into the Norwegian countryside. She is being watched by an older woman from the other side of the door. The way the painter leads you outside, hardly noticing the people first of all and then draws you back in to wonder what they are waiting for was masterly. We enjoyed the contrast between the fresh greens and pale greys of the outdoors and rich browns and blues of the interior.

In contrast, Toulouse Lautrec's Moulin Rouge got a generous 2/10. (Sorry old chap!)

Finally, we looked at Berthe Morisot 'Hunting Butterflies'. Morisot moved in the highest French artistic circles, but being a woman was limited to painting domestic scenes. Apparently, although she was a prolific artist, it was not recognised as a woman's occupation, so on her death certificate her profession was documented as 'nun'. This lovely outdoor spring-like picture showed a woman at the centre with a butterfly net, and her three children in the left hand background. All looked very tranquil, but the presence of a spindly sapling between the woman and her children has been interpreted as signifying Morisot's problems of trying to be free whilst having the responsibilities of children and being separate from them. Nothing changes!

Our topic next time, in a spirit of optimism, will be Freedom.

Debbie



### Painting and Sketching

We had been geared up to move to a nice new venue in the Millennium Centre on 1st April for our weekly meetings, but of course that was well and truly blown out of the water by this quite unprecedented lockdown. But we're trying keeping going after a fashion, and sharing paintings and drawings done at home whenever we can. Whether it's a view out of the window, a still life, or (oh yes) a painting on a loo roll tube, we try to keep busy. There are any amount of

subjects worth trying even when confined to the house or the garden. And now we have all the time in the world - sort of - to capture them on canvas or paper, so there really are no excuses. No distracting jaunts in to town to drink too much coffee and eat too much cake. We can drink too much coffee and eat too much cake at home now. On that theme, I was interested to read of one person complaining about the pubs being shut. "Open the pubs again for pity's sake or we'll all become alcoholics", he moaned. I think I get where he's coming from.

We have set up a WhatsApp group to be able to keep in touch that bit easier, and also to share images of paintings or drawings. Video clips are also of course being exchanged on this handy platform, some of them uplifting and thought provoking, some satirical, and some simply providing the big laugh that is needed now and again in circumstances like these.

*Ron*

**The only way to survive is to have a sense of humour.**

**Bob Newhart**

## Rambling

The Rambling Group (4th Friday in each month) is not operating in the lockdown period, so there has been no walk in March or April. 6 members walked in January, and the February walk was abandoned, as only two people arrived at the meeting point.



I hope that members are keeping safe, and trying to do some walking whilst following guidelines on social distancing, and that they will be raring to resume monthly walks when all of the current problems are behind us.

*John*

**How did it get so late so soon? Its night before its afternoon. December is here before its June. My goodness how the time has flewn. How did it get so late so soon?**

**Dr Seuss**

## Weekenders

For obvious reasons we missed out on our usual activities during April. Two coffee mornings, a Sunday lunch and a day out to Leigh on Sea. However, we have been in contact by e-mail and phone calls and we are all having to get used to the lockdown. One or two have been having "Zoom" video meets with their families. Sara and I had a similar meet by having a family quiz, with ours, in Manchester and Ongar. It was good fun with the grandchildren joining in with enthusiasm and at the same time showing us up. Now it would seem obvious that we should have known the theme tune to "Sponge Bob Square Pants", and with our mathematical knowledge know how many Lego bricks there are in a metre length. The quiz lasted about an hour and the final score put us in third place, way behind the others. We have decided that we must change our TV viewing earlier to see the children channels also to book some maths tuition in preparation for the next quiz!

*Denis*

## Music Performing

The Coronavirus has of course put a halt to all our musical activities and in spite of all our efforts no one has found a solution whereby we can play, record / listen to music online. We have tried many experiments but we haven't as yet been able to come up with anything that produces an acceptable sound.



So, not wanting to miss our planned meeting on 24th April we decided to try out Zoom.

The following is a report that one of our members has just given me, for which I am very grateful.

The wonders of Zoom video conferencing brought fifteen members of the U3A Music Group together for a catch-up on Friday 24 April at 3pm. Expertly hosted by Davina, the meeting opened smoothly and people enjoyed seeing each other albeit virtually, and sharing what they had been up to musically and what they were missing. Some members seemed to enjoy the extra time they had to play, practice or listen to music, while others missed the companionship and pleasure of playing or singing together or as part of a group. Pam encouraged everyone to think of songs which meant something to them, and this led an entertaining quiz which involved her tapping out rhythms of Christmas carols for the rest to identify. There was a rendition of 'happy birthday' for Kate on her special day which caused some amusement as everyone's sound came out at different times!

The meeting ended with everyone playing or singing "Somewhere over the rainbow" as a tribute to all NHS workers. The thought was there if not the quality!



The group agreed that the meeting had been so enjoyable that they arranged another one for May 15<sup>th</sup>.

*Pam*

**Believe you can and you're halfway there.**

Theodore Roosevelt

### Local History 1

We started the New Year in January very successfully with a talk on Essex women who rocked the boat! Some famous, some not so well known featured in Alan's presentation. This was followed in February with a talk by Ken on Joseph Strutt, a less well known but very influential Chelmsford resident with an interesting life story.

However, in January I intimated that I had not arranged any meetings of the Group for next winter as I had decided that it is time I relinquished the role of co-ordinator of the Group. Since my first meeting on the Essex volunteer military services in January 2000, I have found it a very interesting and rewarding contribution, with I hope worthwhile interest to members. It has however been a disappointing conclusion to have to cancel the last two meetings in the lockdown.

This means of course that the Group is looking for my successor, either from within the Group or the wider membership of B & G membership. I will willingly discuss what is involved with any potential successor and indeed can help with suggestions and contacts for next winter's meetings and possibly beyond. Please be in touch and achieve the continued life of the Group!

In the meantime, many thanks to those who have supported my efforts over the years and indeed helped with the running of the monthly meetings and visits. (I hesitate to mention individuals but you know who you are)

*Brian*

### Art Appreciation

#### **THE GETTY MUSEUM CHALLENGE**

A world wide challenge the group accepted was to choose a famous painting and try to make a copy. Some of them are below — sent by Allen



Cezanne – Apples



Vermeer



Turner



Baraud



Vermeer

**Book Group 2** In March we all read:

**ANY HUMAN HEART BY WILLIAM BOYD**

### **Maggie**

Once you get through / skim read / ignore the prologue which is dense, wordy and somewhat unnecessary, the novel itself is easy to read – he is a fluent writer.

Written in diary form, covering the 20<sup>th</sup> century (ours in fact!) it tells of the somewhat chaotic but interesting life of Logan Mountstuart, an aspiring writer, from his school days in the early 1920s (and the lifelong friends he would make there) through to his death in the 80s.

It covers his days at school and university – Oxford, his love affairs – many, his marriages – his various jobs, his early success as a novelist, and his family and friendships, all through the prism of real events such as the Spanish civil war, WW2, the moon landing. It suggests that *life goes on* no matter how unhappy / wonderful, chaotic, difficult, thoughtless, hard our personal life is.

The addition of the real people who lived at the same time, is a clever device which makes the book so interesting and also readable. You ask: ‘how many of them do I recognise and/or wonder about?’ Here are a few: Hemingway, F Scott Fitzgerald, Cyril Connolly, The Duke of Windsor and Mrs Simpson, Virginia Woolf, Evelyn Waugh, Ian Fleming, Martha Gellhorn, artists such as Paul Klee, Gris, Miro, poets like Louis McNeice and politicians such as Stanley Baldwin, Churchill and others.

I chose this book, which I know some of you didn’t like, because Boyd is a young British (Scottish actually!) acclaimed writer whom I hadn’t read, and because the title sounded interesting, and indeed it was! It is a tad long but his writing is descriptive and easy to read, and because of its diary form, you can dip in and out. It may not be the best book we have read but it certainly isn’t the worst!

### **Margaret**

What an unpleasant character Mountstuart is: self-indulgent, ruthless and immature. He has little regard for the result of his actions. Lottie and Lionel are the main victims.

I enjoyed references to writers such as Hemingway and Evelyn Waugh. Famous artists were also mentioned, among them Andy Warhol and Jackson Pollock. It is interesting to read about events in that period of history (1923-1991).

I find the book easy to read. It’s written with such clarity and I often have to remind myself that it is merely a work of fiction. There are several humorous passages. I particularly liked the description of the Duchess of Windsor whose legs looked as if they would snap in a sharp frost.

I must admit I am only up to page 371 but given that there are still weeks of solitary confinement ahead, will certainly finish it before we meet again.

### **Betty**

I can see how reading the preamble might have been rather off putting but as soon as I started to read the main diaries I found the whole book very interesting and realistic and an easy read. It was written in such a way that I began to feel that Logan Mountstuart was a real person and in fact I checked on the internet to make sure whether he was or not. In his fictional life he met many famous people including Picasso, Ernest Hemingway, Ian Fleming and Virginia Wolf which made all the varied times of his life in London, New York and France so believable. At times I found it difficult to put down especially in the late evening. I was very sorry when the book came to a beautifully described conclusion. I felt it is one of the best books I have read and I would like to try another one of his later on.

### **Needles and Pins**

I have just about learnt how to do Fair Isle knitting holding one colour of wool in one hand, and knitting it the English way, and the other colour in the other hand, knitting the continental way. I wouldn’t say I have enjoyed it, particularly when you have to carry a colour across the back and twist it over the active colour, but the advantage of doing it this way is that you do not have to untangle your two balls of wool at the end of every row. Do not expect to see me in a Fair Isle jumper any time in the near future. Or if you do, it will be rather misshapen as I haven’t quite worked out how to keep the tension constant.

*Debbie*



### **Family History**

What strange times we are living in! We were lucky in that we had a meeting just before we were ‘locked in’! What an excellent afternoon we had on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March when we learnt so much about Denmark in WW2. Brita Junker Smith told us about her Danish family. Her father is Danish and her mother English. Both her grandfather and father were very involved in education in Denmark – training teachers.

Her story started with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Schleswig-Holstein War in 1864 when the Danish fought the Prussians and Austrians and lost, and also lost a lot of their country. Brita’s great-grandfather was a soldier and when he was paid he walked many, many miles back home with his pay in his shoe and then used his pay to buy a farm. When he died one son got the farm and Brita’s grandfather got an education. He eventually started up a teacher training college, specialising in gymnastics, and attracting students from all over the world.

In WW1 Denmark was a neutral country, but on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1940 planes flew over dropping leaflets to say that Germany would protect them from the English. Denmark was ‘invaded from within’! ‘Tourists’ and ‘business men’ staying in hotels appeared from their rooms, wearing Nazi uniform and carrying guns! Brita’s father

was out on his bicycle one day when he met the King who rode out on his white horse every day without any security 'My people will protect me!'

That September the teacher training college was requisitioned as a VD hospital. Many students had not returned after holidays as Denmark was so close to Germany, but students who were still there, from countries who were at war with Germany, were not allowed to leave, and had to board with families and very quickly learn to speak Danish. Brita's father would ride round on his bike to make sure they were all right. One of them was 'Mary from Southampton' and she was to marry Brita's father. [The family she boarded with was a wealthy family who owned large department stores in Denmark, and they later became Brita's god-parents. Brita stayed with them when her mother was having her second child, and she was taught to curtsy by the nanny, ready for when the King came to dinner!]

Throughout the war the school continued to pay Brita's father's salary, but he was involved with setting up the Resistance. Men in the Resistance knew only one person above him and five below. If there was going to be a 'drop' there would be an announcement on the BBC 6 o'clock news 'a parcel for Thomas' and repeated at 9.00 and her father would cycle to pick up. They also blew things up! The family moved to different places in Denmark, always with a change of surname. Brita, as a young child, was not told her surname! Their house had a flag in the window and if her mother had placed it on its side, her father would know it was not safe to go home. One of her early memories was of 'the screaming man', who was hidden in their spare bedroom. The neighbours were told it was Brita screaming whereas it was a man who was having nightmares. Brita's father had to be sure he was really a British soldier who had parachuted down and landed in a bush. If the Germans found such soldiers, first they would strip the soldier, dress one of their own undercover soldiers in the uniform and even break his leg and 'rough him up' so that when the Danish Resistance found him he would be convincing as a wounded British soldier. The 'screaming man' did not talk much but he did say he had seen a film at home on the day before he had flown over Denmark and Brita's father was able to find out that the film had been shown at the right time in the right place, so was convinced he was genuine.

There were many Jews in Denmark – 7,300 escaped with the help of the Danish people and only 481 were captured and taken to a concentration camp. They were told to leave in small groups and were smuggled across Denmark and then taken by boat across to Sweden. The Danish people looked after their homes and when they returned after the war they found that their homes were in a good state. At one time when Brita's family was in hiding they were in one of the Jewish homes.

In April 1945 when there was chaos in Denmark, Brita's family flew to England in a military Dakota which had come to take home wounded soldiers. Brita was given a strange brown sweet – chocolate - for the first time! When they got back to England her parents were interviewed separately and then put in a room together where their conversation was listened to, so that they could be sure they were genuine.

When Brita went to school in England, taught by nuns, speaking only Danish, the nuns would shout at her - "I was Danish, not deaf!"

*Linda*

**BOOK GROUP 2** (Lockdown April - no meeting, no library! We made our own book choices .)

**Maggie**      **A Long Long Way** - Sebastian Barry

Some reviewers say that Sebastian Barry 'writes like an angel', and from what I've read of his, I agree. Our Book Group originally read his tender and compelling novel **The Secret Scripture** which I would highly recommend – who can forget the story of Roseanne, frail and old, and now in a mental hospital, as she looks back on her life.

*A Long Long Way* tells of Willie Dunne, a young soldier from Ireland (Barry's own homeland) who volunteers for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the British Army in 1915; it is not for the fainthearted reader, as it documents that period of sacrifice in Belgium and France, with all its horrors : blood, gas, bodies, mud, pain and death while watching the gathering storm back home, leading to the Easter Rising. But there are touching moments of friendship, family and bravery among the many tragedies.

Barry's writing is vivid, poetic, gentle yet heartrending and so beautiful that you have to stop, *feel it*, and breathe! Willie is torn between doing his soldier's duty as his father (chief of police in Dublin) taught him, and his growing awareness of the freedom movement back home amid the futility of wasted lives in war, and the death and destruction all around him. It is both a savage and lyrical account, and one that shocks and saddens the reader on the piteousness of war. It is the most powerful and moving book about WW1 I have ever read.

**Wendy**      **Nothing Ventured by Jeffrey Archer**

I have managed to read a Jeffrey Archer *Nothing Ventured* I think was his latest, he always seems to leave an opening to another one so I hope this is the case, but his next one is not due til November.

**Margaret      The Importance of Being Seven - Alexander McCall Smith**

This book (the sixth in the series) is about a number of fictional people living in Edinburgh in recent times. It helps to have read other books in this series as the characters become familiar and one can follow their progress.

Although discussions between the people are often trivial, there are, sometimes, deeper discussions about moral issues, love and friendship.

Alexander McCall Smith strikes me as being a kind, gentle and good-humoured type of person. I wonder if it's really possible to judge character by reading an author's book- probably not.

I like the style of writing – especially the short chapters and well-constructed sentences. The book has been a tonic in this strange Lockdown life.

**Betty      Only Time Will Tell - Jeffrey Archer**

Being short of something to read in the Lockdown, I delved into the small library at the flats where I live and ventured into a Jeffrey Archer novel. This is set in the 1920s and 1930s and to the relationships between the owners and management of the Bristol docks with the poor and needy workers and their families. Harry Clifton and his widowed mother Maisie and his uncle Stan a docker, are struggling to survive financially. Hugo Barrington is carrying on the tradition of his family as owners of the business and from the start he appears to take on the role of the wicked wealthy squire. Maisie had a brief affair with Hugo on a works outing and the consequences of this are the subject of the plot of the book.

Harry is discovered to have a remarkable treble voice which enables him to win a scholarship to St Bedes, a local boarding school where he meets Giles, Hugo Barrington's son and Deakins a local shopkeeper's son and they become lifelong friends in spite of the fact that Giles father refuses to acknowledge Harry's presence whenever he comes across him'

Following an ill-fated wedding ceremony Harry is forced to leave Bristol in a hurry aboard a ship en route to Cuba as a trainee officer but events make this impossible as the ship is attacked and Harry lands in America. To my surprise at the end of the book Harry finds himself in trouble with the police and just when I thought all would be revealed it says that the rest of the story is in volume two of the Clifton chronicles. So now I have to read that one too, called The Sins of the Fathers.

Although I am not a big fan of Jeffrey Archer, I found it was well written and easy to read with its rather dated view of life which is so different to how things are today, *or are they?*

**Marian      A Place of Secrets - Rachel Hore**

I was introduced to this author by a friend and this is the second book of hers that I've read.

It centres around Jude, an auctioneer with a London company, grieving for her husband's sudden death in an accident. She travels to Norfolk to value a collection of books by an 18th century astronomer - Anthony Wickham. During her research she finds a journal which has been hidden, written by Esther Wickham. As she reads the journal she discovers that Esther is a foundling, adopted by Wickham, and as she grows older the two share their interest in research into astronomy.

She is near her sister Claire but they have a difficult relationship especially as she is attracted to Euan, a naturalist, who is Claire's friend. She has had recurring nightmares since a child and these are also experienced by Summer, her niece. There is a touch of the supernatural here but it doesn't take over.

I found the historical side of the story very interesting and the two came together to make a satisfactory ending. The characters were likeable and the love interest not overplayed but realistic. It was an easy but engrossing read and just right for these locked down times. I shall certainly look for more by this author.

**History 2**

I had a full Programme for this year 2020 with the support of members, but the only meetings that took place were in February and March. In February we had a talk on Moulsham Street by Alan. There was a good turnout and everyone enjoyed the talk; he had some lovely pictures of times that I remember as a child.

March was our last meeting before lockdown. I deliberated for some time, and consulted the Group before we met. We had a successful turnout with a distancing regime in place! It was a talk by Stephen on Hoffmans which included full history of the Company and its significance to WW1 and WW2, and Chelmsford employment, including its final demise in the late 1980s. The rest of our programme has been placed on hold, although the chances for later months seem very low and disappointing is our trip to Harwich for the 400th Anniversary of the Mayflower.

*Janet*

**Important note**

**For all members!**

**Time for a new Membership Secretary**

I have been the Membership Secretary since 2016 and have served my three years in this position on the committee. It is now time for me to step down and for someone else to take over the mantle at the next AGM in 2021.

After this isolation is over, I am able and willing to go over what is required with all of those of you who are interested in taking on this job. A requirement is that you should be able to use a computer and Excel.

If you think you would be interested can you either contact me or Maurice (Chairman)

*Loretta*

**WORD PLAY**

**TOMORROW:**

*One of the greatest labour saving devices of today.*

**YAWN:**

*An honest opinion openly expressed.*

**Lockdown Thoughts - then & now**



People grew sick of social distancing measures as they dragged on into the summer of 1918. When the great war finally ended in late November, people took to the streets to celebrate. In the coming weeks the second wave of the flu pandemic killed more people than in the war.



**Lockdown is bending time – we must adjust our clocks**

Tell people that Monday will mark eight weeks of lockdown and they stare back in disbelief. Really? How did that happen?

'The weeks seem to pass surprisingly quickly', texts a friend. 'Yet the days seem to last an eternity!'

Right now our lives resemble an unpunctuated sentence, shapeless and confusing. Simon Kuper writes: "No wonder people worldwide have conceived a new communal ritual, the ovation for the health workers. We probably do this more for ourselves than for them," he adds.

We want to feel time is precious; we don't want to wish our lives away! Perhaps it's good just to slow down for a while!

Extracted from The Guardian May 2020 (Maggie)

## And People Stayed Home

And people stayed home  
and read books and listened  
and rested and exercised  
and made art and played  
and learned new ways of being  
and stopped  
and listened deeper  
someone meditated  
someone prayed  
someone danced  
someone met their shadow  
and people began to think differently  
and people healed  
and in the absence of people  
who lived in ignorant ways,  
dangerous, meaningless and heartless,  
even the earth began to heal  
and when the danger ended  
and people found each other  
grieved for the dead people  
and they made new choices  
and dreamed of new visions  
and created new ways of life  
and healed the earth completely  
just as they were healed themselves.

Kathleen O'Meara 1869  
Re-printed in 1918

Contributed by Annick & Ted

I wonder how others are coping with being 'locked in' – without the internet I would have found this situation so difficult! I have found Facebook useful – there is a group called 'Chelmsford Community Kindness' where members point people in the direction of places that deliver [and not only food!]. I have had compost delivered from a local firm; plus food from a local firm when I couldn't get a supermarket delivery and I know about pubs and restaurants that will bring take-away meals. I have found entertainment and watched West End shows and National Theatre plays (as I write this – on 25<sup>th</sup> April, ANZAC Day – I have my evening planned out – I shall watch the New Zealand Army Band's ANZAC concert and then the National Theatre's 'Twelfth Night'.) I have also watched a moving concert by Andrea Bocelli from the cathedral in Milan and another by Alfie Boe from his bedroom. We have a What's App group for our street where we get Neighbourhood Watch information, have offers of help, and recently when there was a funeral in the street, organised that everyone would stand outside to pay their respects

There is also a Facebook U3A group, mentioned by Maurice, 'U3A keeping in touch' where I found a wonderful film made by Barnsley U3A – if you want a good laugh just go to YouTube and look for 'Barnsley U3A swimming'.

I am so pleased I have a garden – it has been wonderful to work outside and just sit and enjoy the birds who seem to be very cross if I am out there working when it is their lunch time!

Then I have 'catching up to do' and preparation for the next exhibition up at Hylands – hopefully in September. So I am keeping busy!  
*Linda*



**I think one's feelings waste themselves in words;  
they ought to be distilled into actions which bring results.**

Florence Nightingale.



**All things are only transitory.**

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Due to lockdown our main meetings will be presented via Zoom

See email updates from Maurice for details

**10 June**

Ken

**The Streets Names of Galleywood**

**8 July**

Linda

**Hylands House**

Because of the current situation, it is difficult to predict whether we can produce a Newsletter for the Autumn / Winter, since groups may still not be meeting .

However, lets hope we can, provided enough U3A members produce some lively, short articles. We'll keep you informed.

Look out for the Chairman's email updates during the next few months.



Thanks, Maggie (Editor)



### CHELMSFORD FOODBANK DURING LOCKDOWN

We, like so many, have really appreciated the weekly Updates given by Maurice realising that within our U3A and outside, many organisations are being accessed and supported by our members and their loved ones.

Chelmsford Foodbank is one such organisation and this note comes with very sincere thanks to all of you who have donated, both with food and financially, especially at this difficult time for us all. Every donation goes to help those who are in many and various crisis situations and allow us to continue our work.

Our usual practice is that a professional dealing with the family, issues a voucher which is taken to one of our Distribution Centres where it is exchanged for 3 days' supply of food along with toiletries etc. They can also get additional help by referring to other agencies.

In this "new world", all but one of our Distribution Centres have closed and we use predominantly home deliveries as many are self-isolating. This has meant separating our distribution of food from our reception of donations, the former taking place in Melbourne and the latter at Vicarage Hall, Beehive Lane with regular transfers of food parcels from there to Melbourne. Requests for food come via professional organisations issuing vouchers, now done electronically, sent to Melbourne every evening for delivery the next day (Monday to Friday). These are bagged up and volunteer drivers collect and deliver them to clients.

As far as the increased demand goes, from 1<sup>st</sup> April until 17<sup>th</sup> May (when this was written) Chelmsford Foodbank had put food into the mouths of 743 adults and 500 children (a total of 1243 mouths). In the same period last year, the figures were 365 adults and 266 children, a total of 631. I expect numbers to increase as lockdown loosens, government support reduces, and jobs disappear.

Thank you again for your support and, if you need food support in a crisis, contact the Citizens Advice Foodbank telephone number on 01245 205579.  
Roy and Trish

**This is no time for ease and comfort. It is time to dare and endure.**

Winston Churchill



Painting and Sketching group

## INTEREST GROUP PROGRAMME

DAY		1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH
<b>Monday</b>	a.m.				
	p.m.		Photography German Conversation	I.T. & Computing	Poetry Appreciation
<b>Tuesday</b>	p.m.	Table Tennis Singing for Pleasure Scrabble	Canasta Table Tennis	Table Tennis Singing for Pleasure	Table Tennis Canasta
<b>Wednesday</b>	a.m.	Italian Walking 1 Painting & Sketching	Italian Painting & Sketching	Italian Strollers Painting & Sketching	Italian Painting & Sketching
	p.m.	Reading 1 French Conversation Mah-jong	General Meeting	Mah-jong	Local History 1 Spanish
<b>Thursday</b>	a.m.		Papercraft		Papercraft
	p.m.	Bridge Gardening	Bridge Local History 2	Bridge Discussion	Bridge Paper Craft
<b>Friday</b>	a.m.		Arts & Crafts	Walking 2	Rambling
	p.m.	Music Performing Reading 2 Creative Writing	Family History Cribbage Art Appreciation	Needles & Pins	
<b>Saturday</b>				Weekenders	
<b>Sunday</b>		Weekenders			

