



BENFLEET BULLETIN

u3a learn,
laugh,
live

Issue 31: December 2020 / January 2021

W: u3asites.org.uk/benfleet facebook.com/groups/benfleetu3a

FROM THE CHAIR: Hello Everyone

I can't believe that we are rapidly approaching Christmas, despite all the troubles and adversity of lockdown the days, weeks and months are rushing by.

Fortunately, with not one but three vaccines on the way it feels that we can begin to hope and look forward to a time next year when life may get back to some semblance of normality.

On another positive note we, now have four new groups with another extending activities to the whole membership. Our Facebook group (Benfleet u3a) is up and running with 83 members so far who are posting many interesting and enjoyable items every day. Our website is full of member's photos and activities and we have excellent Bulletins and Newsletters every month. Much for us to be proud of.

Just as an extra , I have been told today of another website www.memorylane.co.uk, which has many photos of Benfleet, mostly aerial taken in 1987, which show a fascinating view of Benfleet and the surrounding area before more recent changes. Can you spot your house/road?

We do have much to be positive about, so stay happy, safe and well. Enjoy Christmas in whatever way you are able to celebrate it, and look forward to a much better 2021.

Marion (Chair)



CHEER UP – IT'LL SOON BE CHRISTMAS

(with apologies to cracker joke writers everywhere)

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Who is Santa's favourite singer? | Elf-is Presley |
| What do Santa's little helpers learn at school? | The elf-abet! |
| What kind of motorbike does Santa ride? | A Holly Davidson! |
| What did Santa do when he went speed dating? | He pulled a cracker! |
| Why was the turkey in the pop group? | He was the only one with drumsticks! |

NEW YEAR; NEW GROUPS; NEW ACTIVITIES

Tier 2 High Level Alert for Covid – Essex, Southend and Thurrock

We have now received advice from the National u3a about the rules for operating in Covid Tier 2, High Alert level. The table of rules for England is on our website [access from home page]. As you will know we are in Tier 2 and this now applies to Southend and Thurrock as well – so there is no issue over local boundaries. We still cannot meet inside, including restaurants and pubs.

However, we can meet outside in groups of 6 providing we operate appropriate measures for social distancing. This should allow groups such as Walking, Photography, Wildlife, Gardening and possibly others to resume same degree of group activity, providing a risk assessment is made for the activity and members feel comfortable with meeting [personal risk assessment].

New Groups



Following Marion's initiative to introduce new activities, we have established 4 new groups which are attracting good levels of interest. Access all new groups via our website: <https://u3asites.org.uk/benfleet> > QUICK LINKS > Select group.

Beginners Drawing: Group contact [Sue Quattrucci](#).

Starting from scratch first project to draw a Rooster and a Piglet. Results are on the group webpage.



Local and Essex History:

Group Contact [Marion Coleman](#). First project to explore local landmarks, sites, history. We have produced a supplement for these topics for November, available on group webpage, and plan to continue with similar supplements in the New Year. November topics include Beamfleote, Hoy and Helmet, Sapper Ellison, Tarpots Hall, Bread and Cheese Hill and Southend Pier.

Macs and Wellies Gardening: Group Contact [Bob Munson](#). Aiming to swap advice and topics to spread gardening experience across the group. Can meet in groups of 6 outdoors.

Coffee Morning: Group Contact [Carol Noble](#). Will be virtual meetings using zoom. In the initial phase this is primarily intended for members who are perhaps alone and looking for some conversation and company.



Unfortunately also New Scams

The latest Essex Police report details telephone scams re: BT – but we are also aware of similar scams from other phone companies. The report is on the web and can be accessed from our home page.



And, don't forget our ever growing **Facebook** page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/benfleetu3a>

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

Jean Askew

As with most working class families from the East End of London, I don't really remember much in the way of presents but I know Mum & Dad always made sure we had 'a lovely Christmas with the family and friends' but one in particular sticks in my mind.



I was about 6 or 7 and a week before Christmas I was rushed up to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children around Hackney (sadly gone now) and kept in for treatment right up to Christmas morning. Instead of a big operation expected to have for a suspected mastoid, I was treated with penicillin, all still very new then.

On Christmas Eve the ward had been decorated with a beautiful tree and we were told to be very good and listen out - then what seemed the middle of the night (probably about 4 in the afternoon!) we could hear singing in the distance, the lights were dimmed and in walked the Nurses all carrying lanterns and wearing their uniforms but with their capes turned inside out so they were red over their immaculate blue uniforms and white caps.

They walked slowly around the ward singing Silent Night and it was magical. I have never heard it sung better without music. (Still my favourite Carol particularly sung in German).

The next morning all the children sat round the tree after breakfast and Father Christmas handed out gifts to each one. I had never had a doll and I was given a BOY doll in his little stripy green cotton suit! (Start of equality??).

I named him Christopher! Unbeknown to me, I could have gone home Christmas Eve but the Nurses wanted me to stay for the present - they had told my Mum that the local children usually didn't want to go home because they had never known anything like that at Christmas, particularly the Christmas dinner.

I was the exception - I was thrilled to be going home for my dinner but I have never forgotten that magical Christmas Eve and always wanted to be a Nurse after that! I never did but I still love Christmas Eve more than the Day itself - something magical is about to happen!



Why was Theresa May sacked as nativity manager?

She couldn't run a stable government!

Jan Lane

I was introduced to Carols and Hymns from the age of four and a half, as I attended St Margaret's School at Bowers Gifford. I do enjoy the emotion they give.

I had never understood American humour but several years ago, thanks to local radio DJ Ray Clark, I became hooked on Bob Rivers 'Twisted Christmas' songs. For the uninitiated, the songs sound like the original performers but with different words. Some are so good you think you are listening to the real thing until you think - that's not right!

Ray only ever played 'Walking in a Winter Wonderland' but the new title was 'Walking round in Women's Underwear'.

I hope hubby will get me the CD 'Chipmunks Roasting on an Open Fire' for Christmas to complete my set. He never realised that my sense of humour was so perverted!



How did Darth Vader know what Luke Skywalker got for Christmas?

He felt his presents.

How does Darth Vader enjoy his Christmas Turkey?

On the dark side!

What does the Queen call her Christmas Broadcast?

The One Show!



Jean Askew: My Christmas Treat?



Over 19 years ago, I visited Sicily with my husband and we bought back the stones from the Medlar fruit we had eaten and took a chance in growing them. I handed the stones to various members of the family but only my nephew bothered.

After all that time, 2 years ago we both had fruit appear - all of two each! Strange thing is he lives in Goldhanger and we hadn't had fruit before and not since but now I have blossoms appear complete with the honeybees!

Will I get fruit this Christmas? - be nice to have something to look forward to at least! If people have never heard of them - they look like a small squashed nectarine but only eaten when they look disgustingly rotten although sweet and tasty like a nectarine.

MEMBER'S FAVOURITES

FAVOURITE CAROL/SONG

Joan Cox: *In the bleak mid-winter.*

Jean Askew: *Silent night sung in German.*

Lyn Aldridge: *Driving home for Christmas* by Chris Rea.
Just gives that excitement when driving home from the office to be warm and cosy as a family at Christmas.



FAVOURITE FILM

Terri Waters: *Miracle on 34th Street* because it proves there is a Santa.

Chris Hurst: favourite Christmas film for all the family has to be *ELF*.

Lyn Aldridge: *Miracle on 34th Street* and also love the *Coca-Cola* adverts.

Joan Cox: *The Snowman*. Only a short film I know, but I enjoy it for the simplicity of the animated story together with the gentle musical soundtrack.

Alan Aldridge: *The Muppet Christmas Carol*. Why? It may feature singing pigs and frogs, ice skating penguins, Hawaiian mice, an alien [Charles Dickens] and rat as narrators and have song and laughter but surprisingly it is accurate to the story. Michael Caine is superb and it explains why Scrooge is so mean having lost his one true love as a young man. We always watch on Christmas Eve.



FAVOURITE BOOK

Chris Hurst: my favourite Christmas book is *The Night Before Christmas*. Traditionally, I would sit round the tree with my children on Christmas Eve to read it and now with my grandchildren, magical.



DO YOU LEAVE OUT MINCE PIES AND SHERRY FOR SANTA?

Jean Askew: Of course, I always put out the sherry and mince pies the night before and yes, always gone in the morning so Father Christmas must be true!

Joan Cox: No I don't still leave mince pies out for Santa!!

Lyn Aldridge: YES of course. If there's any left by then.



What is Olivia Colman's favourite part of a turkey?

Why has Santa been banned from sooty chimneys?

The Crown

Carbon footprints

CHRISTMAS QUIZ WITH MANY THANKS TO JAN AND BILL LANE

Each answer has a festive connection and will also make a new word or phrase when added before or after the clue words:

i.e. GARY - BALL = GLITTER [Gary Glitter/Glitter Ball].

PERCY	HAMMER	MONICA	BARBARA
ROCKIN'	HOOD	PLANT	TOWN
WHISKEY	CHURCH	LEAGUE	BLUE
SHOE	FAMILY	PLOUGH	PETER
FIRE	JACK	TROT	COLD
STITCH	UP	NORTHERN	TRAFFIC
CLUB	LANE	LOMBARD	VORDERMAN
SHOOTING	TURN	LAYER	CUP
THIRD	LINE	FEET	STREAMING
PLAYING	JOB	ISLAND	CACTUS
GOODHEAD	GOLIGHTLY		

Answers on last page – NO PEEKING



Why is Parliament like ancient Bethlehem?

It takes a miracle to find three wise men there

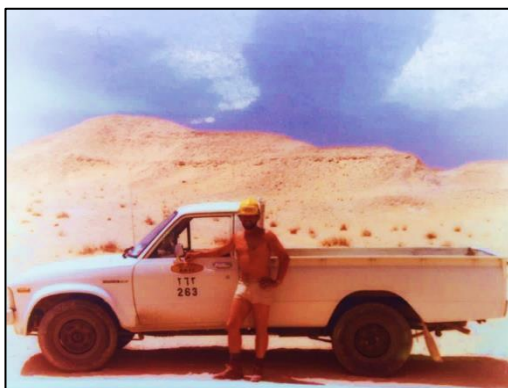
Who's Rudolph's favourite pop star?

Beyon-sleigh!



WHERE ARE YOU GOING NEW YEAR'S EVE, NEW....YEARS....EVE

Graham Humphrey: The most unusual place that I spent New Year's Eve was in the middle of the Arabian Desert, 80 kilometres from the nearest town.



Dear Graham

Looks like a hoot with that

choice of provisions behind you.

CARDS AND CRAFT

A Merry Christmas to all our members from our talented members producing these cards, craft, paintings and drawings.



Annette Firth



Sheila Sears



Jan Davies



Maria Kelly



Terri Waters



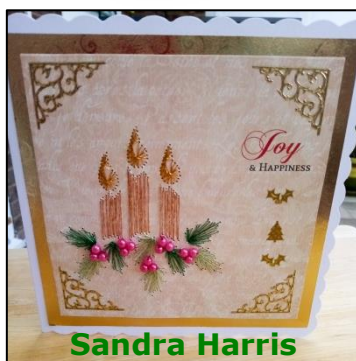
Sue Quattrucci



Lyn Aldridge



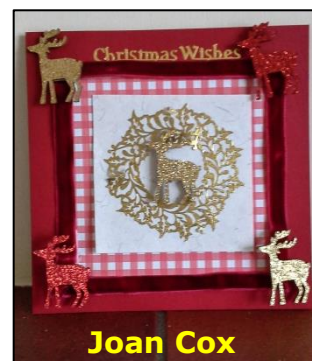
Jackie Liberty



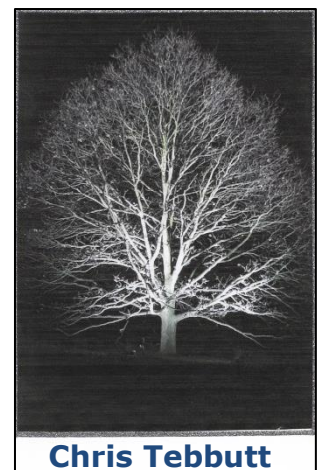
Sandra Harris



Ann Sayer

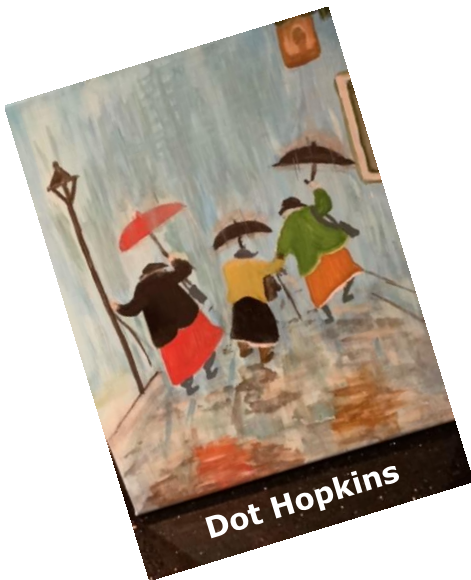
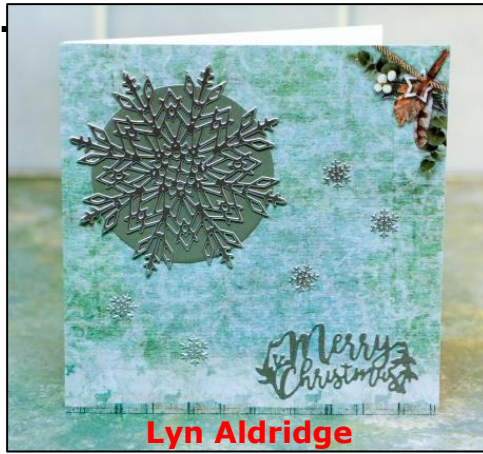


Joan Cox



Chris Tebbutt

And there's more.....



And, if your birthday falls over the Christmas period,
here is something for you.....



Sandra Harris



ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

Courtesy of Barbara Webb and the Culinary Experience Group

Italian Porchetta

Prep and cooking around 4 hours. Serves 10-12.

3kg pork loin, belly attached, skin on and scored.

4tbsp cider vinegar

1tbsp sea salt flakes [Maldon – keep it local].

For the Stuffing:

Small knob butter

1 onion, finely chopped

150g cubed pancetta

10g rosemary leaves only, chopped

5 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed

2tbsp fennel seeds, bruised

100g pitted prunes, chopped

75g pine nuts

50g fresh breadcrumbs

Zest 1 lemon



Recipe:

1. Remove pork from fridge. Bring to room temperature –about 1 hour.
Place skin side up on a wire rack in the sink and carefully pour over a whole kettle of freshly boiled water, followed by the vinegar, allow to cool. Pat dry with kitchen towel, rub skin with half tbsp. sea salt flakes, transfer to baking sheet. Set aside.
2. Stuffing: melt butter and fry onion gently for 8-10 min, until just crisp. Add rosemary, garlic, 1tbsp fennel seeds, prunes, pine nuts, wine and breadcrumbs; cook for 2 min, and remove from heat. Stir in lemon zest, season, and allow to cool.
3. Heat oven to 220degC (220 fan/gas mark 7). Set pork skin side down on a board, spread over stuffing, roll up and tie tightly. Transfer to large foil-lined roasting tin. Rub over remaining salt and fennel seeds and cook for 30 min.
4. Reduce heat to 160degC (140 fan/gas mark 3). Continue cooking for 2 hrs until cooked through. Remove from oven and rest for 20 min before slicing.



2019 🌿



2020 🌿



LEMON MERINGUE ICE CREAM PUDDING (LOG OR PUDDING)

Ingredients

50g meringues
300ml (half pint) double cream
Rind and juice of 1 lemon
Half jar of home-made (!) or
supermarket's 'best' lemon curd

Method

Line a 1.5 pint pudding basin or
1lb loaf tin with cling film
(pudding basin gives you the Xmas pud effect but the loaf tin easier to slice!)

Lightly break up meringues into chunky pieces
Whisk the cream until trail forms
Add the juice and rind of lemon plus the lemon curd to the cream
Fold gently into the cream
Spoon mixture into container of choice and freeze at least 6 hours
Bring out to room temp 15 mins before turning out on to plate
Decorate how you wish (as photo)
Dip sharp knife in boiling water to slice
ENJOY and be prepared for requests for the recipe!



APRICOT FRANGIPANE TART

Homemade or shop bought shortcrust Pastry

Filling:

75g softened butter
75g caster sugar
2 beaten eggs
75g ground almonds
1/2 tsp almond extract
2x400g apricot halves, drained (reserve juice) sliced and dried

Topping:

125g icing sugar sifted, 1-2 tsp apricot juice
Line 28cm loose bottomed fluted tart tin with pastry.
Sprinkle extra ground almonds over pastry to absorb moisture.
Place butter and sugar in food processor, whizz until creamy, blend eggs, mix in ground almonds and extract.
Arrange apricot slices on pastry base, spoon in frangipane mixture, smooth top.
Sit tart tin on hot baking sheet and bake 45-50 mins at 190C/170C fan/Gas mark 5
To finish mix together icing sugar and juice and spoon zigzag over the tart.
Serve warm or cold.



And, some lovely Flower Decorations for the Christmas Table From the Flower Arranging group



Dot Hopkins



Dot Hopkins



Brenda Liberty



Dot Hopkins



PUTTING THE **Merry** INTO CHRISTMAS

By the benfleet bartenders

Before Christmas Dinner – so you won't mind it being late.



A variation on the French classic Kir Royal – with a little more bite.

Use a champagne flute or similar.

10-12ml of Chambord – black raspberry liqueur.

10-12ml of Cointreau or similar Triple Sec.

Top up with very cold Champagne, Prosecco or Cava.

Sit back and enjoy.

After lunch, a refreshing NEGRONI

Use straight sided tumbler; load with plenty of ice

25ml of Gin; 25ml of Martini Rosso; 25ml of Campari

Stir and top up with a little soda to taste

– we suggest 25-30ml; maximum of 75 ml.

Leave the washing up and enjoy



An evening TREAT



Mix with little ice in a cocktail shaker:

25ml vodka – cheap or expensive to taste

25ml Baileys original Irish Cream

25ml Baileys Chocolat Luxe

Use a classic Martini glass, swirl round thick liquid dark chocolate - we like to use Ghirardelli.

Strain mixed drink into the coated Martini glass

Relax, drink and count your blessings.

Then, with a clean finger! wipe the inside of the glass for the remaining chocolate.

PHOTOGRAPHY – IMAGE OF THE YEAR 2020

A competition every year with each photography group member entering their best photo for the year. This year we are running it via our website.

Photography group members will vote for the best photos – in their opinion. This year we also invite ALL members to hold an additional Members Vote.

Shortly, the entries will be on our website and you will be able to vote on the web page. We will circulate details as soon as entries are available. Please take part.

Results to be announced just in time for Christmas.



2019 Steve Dimon



2018 Dave Balthasar



2017 Linda Waskett



2016 Alan Aldridge



CHRISTMAS QUIZ ANSWERS

Percy SLEDGE	SLEDGE hammer	SANTA Monica	SANTA Barbara
Rockin' ROBIN	ROBIN Hood	TINSEL Plant	TINSEL Town
BELLS Whiskey	Church BELLS	IVY League	Blue IVY
Shoe TREE	Family TREE	SNOW plough	Peter SNOW
Fire CRACKER	CRACKER jack	TURKEY Trot	Cold TURKEY
STOCKING stitch	STOCKING up	Northern LIGHTS	Traffic LIGHTS
PUDDING club	PUDDING Lane	CAROL Lombard	CAROL Vorderman
Shooting STAR	STAR turn	Layer CAKE	Cup CAKE
Third PARTY	PARTY line	COLD Feet	Streaming COLD
Playing CARDS	Job CARDS	CHRISTMAS Island	CHRISTMAS cactus
HOLLY Goodhead	HOLLY Golightly		



A very big thank you to all our talented contributors and to all members -

