



## **Branston & District u3a – 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

Dear Member,

As I begin writing this on Saturday afternoon, it's a cold, windy day with the threat of heavy rain, and it puts me in mind of the Coronavirus pandemic and all its many threats, so I hope that you are weathering the storm and seeing the distant glow of sunnier times ahead.

And it is with that sentiment in mind that I am thrilled to be able to tell you that;

### **Branston & District u3a is coming back to life!**



At last Tuesday's Committee meeting, we discussed how we can begin the process of starting up at least some of our Groups, and I know that some of the Convenors have already been contacted with this in mind, so be on the look-out for messages from you Convenors. Obviously, some activities will be more difficult put into operation than others, so some Groups will be unable to re-start under current restrictions, but we're planning to do whatever we can to get things moving again.

One thing that we are aiming for is to re-start Monthly Meetings – but not as have previously known them! And so, we are planning for the

### **November Monthly Meeting at 2.00pm on 24<sup>th</sup> in the comfort of your own home!**

Andrea White has kindly agreed to speak on "Fallen Women", which I, for one, am looking forward to hear about – who can't resist a fallen woman?

We shall circulate full details nearer the time, but in the meantime, if you have not begun to use Zoom, please let me know there's a team of helpers who will be more than happy to guide you through using it. I think that most Members have had at least some sessions on Zoom, and for those who haven't, I think that you will find it quite straightforward.



As this is a new venture for those of us who are involved in the technical side of things, we are hoping to have a short trial run a few days before the 24<sup>th</sup>, and hope that as many Members as possible will join that meeting in order that we can judge how things look and sound to you, and therefore what tweaks need to happen before the big event.

My sister belongs to Medway u3a in Kent, and reports that their first foray into Zoom Monthly Meetings was very enjoyable, helped by interesting “noises off”, but I’m not sure that we shall be encouraging that!

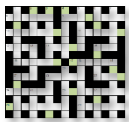
There are, of course, some advantages to Zoom meetings – you don’t have to turn out on a cold day and there’s no entrance fee. But you will have to provide your own refreshments, I’m afraid, we’re not offering a delivery service (Oh, now there’s an idea – any volunteers?).

In addition to the November meeting, we are also hoping to arrange something for December 8<sup>th</sup>, the date when we would have been holding our Christmas Lunch. Again, we shall let you have the details once arrangements are finalised.



In similar vein, I’ve had a message from John Tyerman that u3a have started a Facebook Group called Keeping in Touch. It is hoped it will keep us all up to date with what is going on in the U3A locally and across the country. If you are interested then click on [this link](#).

### **Competitions**



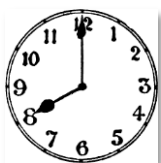
Turning to our ongoing competitions, Chris Hodson & Arch, Colin & Joyce Beck and Janet Foster share the winners’ podium for last week’s crossword once again, the answer being Burton Upon Trent. They seem to be on the podium as often as Lewis Hamilton – but will he be there again later today?

This week we have a quiz to send us along Memory Lane – The Swinging Sixties. I’m very grateful to Ron Oxby for sending the quiz, and I’m anticipating an overwhelming number of answers from those of you determined to climb the podium steps!

This week’s u3a quiz is entitled “Colours, Numbers and Sizes”, and seems to feature quite an eclectic selection of topics. I shall look forward to hearing how you get on with it, and I think that anyone getting 100% correct answers will deserve a big cheer! As always, this quiz is supplied by Madeley & District u3a, the copyright holders. I see that their quizmaster says he is running out of ideas, so I might be in touch with our own Members who have very kindly submitted quizzes to seek permission to send them on the u3a website.

I haven’t heard from anyone completing last week’s u3a quiz, so if you’re still scratching your collective heads, the answers are attached to the email.

### **u3a Short Stories**



Incidentally, whilst looking for the u3a quiz downloads, I noticed that there has been a nation-wide short story competition on the theme of “Time”, and on the basis of having read the winning story, I think it might be worth looking at a few of them.

[The link is here.](#)

## Branston Schools Holiday Meals Vouchers

You will recall that last week I mentioned that the committee members of the Branston Schools



Food Voucher Scheme (I must remember to ask the official name sometime) were holding their sponsored walk on Thursday, and I joined them to take photos and to make sure that they walked the full course, which they did. It was a beautifully sunny day, though a little windy, and it was very pleasant to be out on a walk with such a friendly group. Sheridan also completed the course in his canoe, and I was amazed at how quickly he disappeared from. I would like to think it was because of his incredible power and speed, which it might have been, but as for the most part, the river wasn't visible from the path, so I just have to trust that that was the case.

I'm attaching a couple of photos to prove that they did the walk, and Sylvia Minshull tells me that there's still time to add to their sponsorship money, details of which appeared last week. Contact [Sylvia](#) or myself if you need reminding.

Incidentally, the heading photograph is of Lincolnshire Longwool sheep sculptures beside the Water Rail trail between Stixwould and Kirkstead Bridge.

## Stamps for Medical Detection Dogs



Last week I also reminded you that Jo Randerson is still collecting stamps for the Medical Detection Dogs charity, and she says that she has been most gratified to receive three envelopes stuffed with stamps. However, she also says that some had to be discarded, and as a reminder of the "rules", has added the following;

- ALL stamps must still have part of their backing envelope attached with a **wide** area around the stamps (They recommend a finger width. Some people must need feeding up as their fingers are narrower than a matchstick!!!)
- **No stamps should be damaged.** (I must have received about three dozen stamps so closely cropped that even the serrated edge to the stamp has been removed so they have had to be thrown away). The Charity states that these are "unusable".
- Some envelopes have pre-printed stamps on them. These are also unusable. To check if it is a "real" stamp, run your finger over the edge of it.
- The information sheet also shows as unusable, any stamp which has been torn out from the envelope, where the paper is torn away from under part of the stamp just leaving the serrated edge). ALL the stamps must have their backing paper **completely round all sides.**
- I have no objection to doing all the trimming but I must have sufficient backing paper to work on.

It will be good to remember the good work of the charity as Christmas approaches and there will be more stamps in circulation.

## NHS Test and Trace



I'm pleased to say that this is a scam-warning-free email this week, but in place of the usual scam warnings, Rick Smok has sent the following advice after he had notification of a contact on his NHS Track and Trace App. He says, "The messages are as follows:

**"Possible Covid-19 Exposure.** Someone you were near reported having Covid19"

**"Covid-19 Exposure Check Complete.** Don't worry, we have assessed your risk and there is no need to take action at this time. Please continue to stay alert and follow the latest advice on social distancing"

The alarming part is that once read the message disappears and cannot be recalled. I accessed the NHS Q&A page on the App and it tells me that this is quite normal. **If there is need for you to self-isolate they will contact you again and there will be a countdown showing on the APP.**

This was brought up on the TV programme "The Last Leg" yesterday evening as well."

## Local Wildlife



Well, you might be thinking that you've got away without any mention of wildlife, but Janet Webb has sent some photos, two from activity in her garden – bath time for sparrows and the thieving squirrel, plus a thieving mink with a bird's egg in its mouth at Whisby Country Pak. It amazes me how well they seem to be able to swim, egg in mouth, without the egg breaking. Well done Janet for capturing the moment.

As well as my adventure along the Water Rail trail on Thursday, I had an impulse-driven day at Gibraltar Point on Monday, and came away with my best-yet photo of a Jack Snipe. These birds are seen much less often than Common Snipes and this one is only the third that I've ever seen, so to get so close with unobstructed views was quite a bonus. They are smaller than their Common cousins, with a shorter beak, and they bob up and down incessantly whilst feeding.



One of the birds that I had hoped to see at Gibraltar Point was Bar-tailed Godwit. There had been several hundred there at the crack of dawn (too early for me!), and I thought that I could see some in a spot too far to reach safely, so I was surprised when I was going through my photos at home, to find that I had photographed one. I've been trying to remember what I thought I was shooting (photographically, that is) at the time, I certainly hadn't twigged that it was a "Barwit". That

shows the advantage of taking photos!

That's all for now, I'm off to pick another lot of "last of season" runner beans. Apparently this year is being noted for the amount of late-maturing runner beans. Good thing that I stopped half-way through demolishing my row of bean sticks! It's now bright and sunny, a welcome relief from yesterday's gloomy afternoon, so there is something to look forward to after the storm!

I hope that you like the new format of the weekly missive, please let me know how you get on with it, and as always, any items of interest will be most welcome.

Best wishes, and please keep in touch,

James

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