



Fish sculptures, Doddington Hall September 2020

## Branston & District u3a – 1st November 2020

Good morning,

It's a bit overcast this morning, which seems to pretty much set the scene after yesterday's announcement of a further lockdown, but I suppose it was inevitable. So I hope that you are not too depressed by the prospect of another month locked down. When I looked at the BBC News website yesterday, I didn't know whether to cry or laugh— just below the lockdown news was an article headlined "Essex firefighters rescue three men from tumble dryer" – WHAT?! You couldn't have made it up. I assume it was an industrial tumble drier, or they must have been very small men.

### ...and the Good News



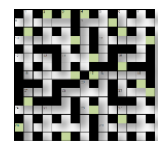
But it's not all bad. As well as continuing to make arrangements for our first Zoom-based Monthly Meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> November, we have also now arranged for a Zoom meeting to replace what should have been our Christmas Lunch. Stephen Wells has agreed to talk to us on "The Story of Butlins Holiday Camps" on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December, so earmark the day. Hopefully that will help us to get into the holiday spirit, even if holidays are off the agenda for the time being.

Our offer of introducing you to Zoom still stands if you haven't used it before, or if you are not confident about using it. Just contact me and either I or one of our team will take you through the process, which really is very simple. And in case you think that because your computer has no camera or microphone, don't worry, that should not prevent you from enjoying the Monthly Meetings. If you do want help, it would be a good idea to ask sooner rather than later, we don't want to be swamped at the last minute.

We are also making slow but steady progress on introducing Zoom into some of our Group Meetings, and hope to have some positive news on that very shortly.

### The Clever Ones?

Congratulations to Chris Hodson & Arch and Janet & Rodger Foster, winners of last week's Swinging Sixties quiz, with full marks. The answers are attached to the email.



This week's quiz comes from Ron Oxby and features "Long Lost TV programmes". How well do you remember them? As always, let me know how you get on with the quiz, and those with the best set of answers will have your names displayed on our website.

Congratulations also go to Chris and Arch as the only ones returning the answers to the Colours, Numbers and Sizes Quiz, with very few unexpected answers – they just need to brush up on their muffins and Grey Seals (which are Britain’s heaviest mammals – the Seals, that is, not the muffins).

This week’s contribution from Madeley & District u3a is called “Find the Gap”, and asks you to fill in the missing word or number from each list. Send me have your efforts, even if you don’t complete all the answers. It’s always interesting to see what is working and what is not.

It was certainly interesting when I sent off one our “our” quizzes to Chris Wright of Madeley u3a to see it is suitable for the national u3a quizzes. His response was that he expects most people to achieve between 50% and 80% correct answers, but he and his wife were unable to get anywhere near that with our quiz. That was a bit disappointing until I realised that several of our Members had achieved 100% or very nearly that when it was circulated, so we obviously have some great quizzers! I’ll not tell you which quiz and who “won” it in case we get some swollen heads.

### News from the Croquet Group



Tony Cross has sent a couple of photos from Croquet Group activities. He says; *The first is of the winners, Elaine Johnson and Terry Herriman, of the Margaret Vinter Handicap Doubles Cup. This fine trophy was donated and presented by Steve in Margaret’s memory. She is still very much missed on the lawns and it is a fitting tribute to her.*



*The second shows the stoicism of Janet and Mick Wood despite the rain and the cold!*

### Out and About – from Home



Lynn and Garry Snelson seem to have been busy collecting suggestions for keeping occupied during these strange times, and Lynn has sent an email with details of some very interesting sounding talks. The one on Grace Kelly is by someone whom Lynn and Garry have heard on one of their cruises. That at least sounds better than a series that we attended on one of our cruises – the story of the Titanic. Apparently that didn’t end well, but at least our cruise did! [The link to the talks is here.](#)

Garry’s first email is from the University of Lincoln, giving details of forthcoming (when did that become “upcoming”?) events, some of which are free. I have attached the contents of the email as a html file, which should open your default web browser when you open it. As this is the first time that I’ve done it this way, let me know if you have any problem using it.



Both Garry and Sue Morris have sent copies of the email advertising events at the Collection. I really must book a visit to see the wildlife photos if nothing else. And in the meantime, if you enjoy wildlife and scenic photography, try looking at the work of a vague acquaintance, Paul McCaffery, [whose photos are on Flickr.](#)

Bill Fowler is obviously keeping himself busy with some fascinating DIY, as the following request demonstrates; *"I am restoring an old rocking horse I made 50 years ago and is rather worse for wear! Has anyone got an old wig or hairpiece (any colour, as long as it is in the "natural" range, though a grey shade would be good) that they no longer want, that could be recycled into a rocking horse's tail and mane? Ideally the hair length for the tail needs to be about a foot long but this is not essential. Also have any of you "crafty patchers" got a scrap of leather (or faux leather) of about one foot square to remake the saddle, plus strips of leather to make bridle bits? If you have, please contact me. 07968 287838 or [by email.](#)"*



### **Could this be true?**

Vernon Goddard has shared an amusing, if very stereotypical, item which I assume is apocryphal, although you never know nowadays;



A worldwide survey was conducted by the UN. The only question asked was: "Would you please give your honest opinion about solutions to the food shortage in the rest of the world?"

The survey was a huge failure; In Africa they didn't know what "food" meant.

In Eastern Europe they didn't know what "honest" meant. In Western Europe they didn't know what "shortage" meant.

In China they didn't know what "opinion" meant. In the Middle East they didn't know what "solution" meant.

In South America they didn't know what "please" meant. And in the USA they didn't know what "the rest of the world" meant.

### **Autumn Watch**

Some pictures by Andrea White are attached. She has obviously been searching for fungi, and in doing so discovered some Jackdaws enjoying an extension porch on their home. And to demonstrate that it's Autumn, there are other photos of toadstools. I would have liked to name them, but toadstools can be a bit tricky, so I'll leave that to the experts.



And at home, we have seen our rowan tree pretty well stripped of its berries already. We have often seen 5 or more Blackbirds in the tree. They have to get ever more acrobatic as they reach further to the ends of the branches, so it's quite fun to watch them.

I imagine that if you are a gardener, you will be in the throes of preparing the garden for winter. I have decided that it really is time to take down the runner beans, as no more beans seem to be developing, but it's been a good year for those, and for our outdoor tomatoes as well as strawberries, raspberries and redcurrants. We're still harvesting beetroot (our first-ever decent crop), lettuce and salad leaves, and it looks like we might get a few pickings of purple sprouting broccoli, but I think that's about it. By and large we've had a good year in the garden, although our

lawns are looking pretty grotty because of the chafer grubs, and I'm not hopeful that the nematodes have done their stuff. I think the probability is that come the new year, I shall be taking a fork to the front lawn at least. The front flower bed has also been a disappointment, mainly, I think, because of the very dry spell that we had. So it will be a rethink next year, with pelargoniums coming top of my list for a trial at the moment. It does look as though our cyclamen coum patch should do well over winter, though, judging by the covering of leaves. Something to look forward to!

One thing that has been a delight is that over the last few years, some friends have been swapping cuttings with us, and the other day we both agreed how much we have benefitted from the results of those cuttings, certainly our garden has looked much better for it. So what I would like to know is, how have you done in the garden this year? What are the highlights and the failures? I'd love to hear from you.

I see that's brightened up as I've come to the end of the letter, so it's looking much more cheerful. I originally thought that I would be at Southrey Wood, helping with the Butterfly Trust coppicing team, but because of Coronavirus restrictions, was excluded from this week's team. It's a shame, because of the weather continues like this, it could be a pleasant day there. Doubtless there are other things to do!

I must say a very heartfelt "Thank you" to all our contributors again this week, without your input there would be very little to say and see, so please do let me have your items of interest.

Best wishes, and please keep in touch,



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