

Keeping in Touch

Branston & District

u3a

Poppies by Andrea White

Branston & District u3a – 13th December 2020

Dear Member,

I trust that all is well with you, despite the miserable weather. I've learned a new word for these dull, damp days, "dreich", which I understand has Scottish origins. Interesting what you learn when reading reports of bird sightings! Unfortunately it looks like it's going to be a washout in terms of being able to see tonight's display of Geminid meteors. If so, that will bring my meteor sightings this year to precisely zero.

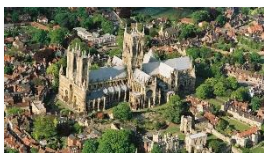
However, it's been a fascinating week, what with the vaccine being rolled out, Brexit cliff-hanger, and has Donald Trump finally had to throw in the towel? And of course, we had our first Zoom Monthly Meeting with an external speaker, and what a wonderful talk, I certainly enjoyed it and so did a number of others judging by the comments received. So we're looking forward to next month's Monthly Meeting with Michael Brook speaking on "Musing from an Amateur Stage". One of the advantages of Zoom meetings is that we can enjoy speakers from all over the country – and the world – without the need to pay travel expenses!



Nearer to home, I'm looking forward to hosting the Readers Group meeting on Thursday to see yet another Group beginning to reconvene; still more progress!

Well, it's getting on for 9 months since I began writing the Keeping in Touch emails, and a great deal has happened since then. The missives have now hit a milestone – I have been keeping a record of the text of all the emails in a single file (safely backed up, of course), and that file now stretches to 102 pages, with over 41,000 words. Let's hope that we don't need another 100 pages before finding some sort of normality! And thank goodness for word counts on word processors, I would have run out of fingers and toes a long time ago. And, incidentally, it's quite possible that there will be no KiT on the 27th, just so that you know.

Where's Waldo?

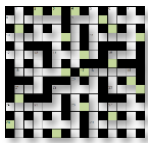


Last week's Lincoln quiz seems to have stumped people, as I've had just one response, so congratulations to Chris Hodson and Arch for getting all but 3 answers correct. The answers are attached, and I think they are fascinating.

I particularly liked the biography of Waldo Sibthorp as presented on the History of Parliament website, which begins by describing him as, “a colourful and preposterous Member, an excessively hirsute man dressed in a regency frock coat, top hat and Wellington boots, who always carried a magnifying glass. Poorly educated (he did not graduate from Oxford), but possessing ‘an acuteness surpassed by few’, he expressed his unshakeable prejudices with an often comical and sometimes offensive bluntness. He became one of the House’s great entertainers and his ‘peculiarities’ were generally indulged.” [The full biography can be found here](#). Anyway, it puts me in my place as being “poorly educated”, having not been to Oxford – well, not as a student, anyway. (The picture is copyright National Portrait Gallery).



Cruciverbalists (not so) Anonymous



There was a better return on the crossword, so congratulations to Linda Chapman, who was first to return her answer, the shaded squares anagram being North Yorkshire Moors. Linda was followed by Chris Hodson & Arch and Colin & Joyce Beck. Glenys Storey also completed the crossword, but missed the anagram. So well done to all concerned! As always, the answers are attached.

This week, there is another crossword, with an anagram of a popular tourist attraction and learning centre. Let me have your answer to the attraction, no need to send the whole crossword, to see your name up in “lights”.

And from the national u3a, there is the “Single Names” quiz, devised by Walsall u3a, with a number of famous people whom we usually know by a single name – but what are their other names? Let me know how you get on with that as well.

The Wall

I’m grateful to Lesley Leslie for sending me another short story from our Creative Writing Group. “The Wall” is written by Andrew Richards and is another compelling read. I’m beginning to change my mind about short stories, which I’ve previously not paid much attention to, but we really do have some quality authors amongst us, and there’s more to come next week.



Play Reading

And from writing to reading – Wendy Wilcox has suggested the possibility of setting up a Play Reading Group. She was a member of the Witham u3a Group when it was operating, and has found a source of plays suitable for reading, which can be done over Zoom (now that we’re all experts!). So, if you fancy having a go, let me know and I’ll pass your details to Wendy so that she can let you know the details. I



know that she's keen to emphasise that this reading, not acting, in case you're put off by the thought of acting.



There is a story to this, by the way. I was in contact with Wendy yesterday, discussing her idea, as she had sent me the details several days ago, and I distinctly remember writing it up for last week's KiT, and sent her a copy of the email – and of course, it wasn't there! So where it disappeared to, I have no idea. Going potty? Yes, I think I must be! Ah, well...

Lightbulb Moment

Andrea's slide projector found a new home last week, so it was good to know that the "adverts" in KiT do work on occasion.

Christmas Stamps

A reminder, if may, that Jo Randerson is hoping for a bumper crop of stamps for Medical Detection Dogs from all your Christmas cards and parcels. So, please open them carefully so that there's a margin of envelope around them. I'll try to remember to give Jo's details sometime after Christmas so that you can get them to her.



The idea of a Christmas greetings wall has also hit a, er, wall, with only one response. I'm not sure whether members are uncertain as to how it would work, or just want to do things their own way, but I think I'll hit that one on the head.

Scam Time



Jim O'Hara has had a close encounter with scammers recently, and he says, "I have just narrowly avoided a scam related to the courier DPD service. If anyone gets an email indicating a missed delivery in the name of DPD, just ignore and delete it. DPD do not send out e mails. They put an advice note through doors and do not charge for redelivery, which the scam e mail does. Fortunately, I contacted DPD and they confirmed that they do not operate in this way. On further investigation the email is very credible, but the source was a foreign email address in Japan!

Progress? What Progress?

For your amusement, Vernon Goddard has sent the attached "Problems with Technology" video. It does pose the question of how far should we pursue technological advances!

Poppy Time?

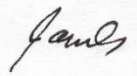
At the beginning of this letter I mentioned Tuesday's Monthly Meeting, but we also had a Zoom Photography Group meeting on Monday evening, and it worked well on the whole, as we were able to share our photos – and I even discovered how to take control of someone else's computer in order to show their offerings. One of the photos that Andrea White

showed was a wonderfully arty rendering of poppies, part of which appears in the header, and the whole picture is shown at the end of the letter.

Also displayed is a Grey Heron which I stumbled across a few days ago when I had a walk around Boultham Park looking for a Smew that had been reported there. There was no Smew evident on the pool, but in a ditch, I saw the Heron out of the corner of my eye, and as I approached it for a better look, it just carried on feeding, I've never been so close to Heron. So here it is in all its splendour – although the water looks a bit murky.

That's it for now, apparently we need some carrots for lunch, so it's harvest time. Please stay in touch with your quiz entries, photos, articles and general musings. Here's hoping that your Christmas preparations are getting closer to completion than mine!

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James', written in a cursive style.

James Hewson, 4 Chartridge, Branston, Lincoln, LN4 1UE 01522 828780

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