



## **Branston & District u3a – 20th December 2020**

Dear Member,

Good morning, I hope that you have stayed well during the week, and that you are not too downhearted by yesterday's tightening of restrictions. I don't know about you, but we have been on tenterhooks about what we should be doing for Christmas, but it looks like the choice has been made for us.

We had been thinking that we might see my sister from Kent for a couple of days, as she was hoping to drive up, despite no longer liking to drive such a distance, but she certainly didn't want to travel by train. One of our sons was also hoping to travel up from South Wales for the whole of the 5 days. We also expected that youngest son (40<sup>th</sup> birthday yesterday!) would make the journey all the way from Washingborough. Four households don't fit into three, so we were faced with a dilemma. And we had already discounted seeing our oldest son and grandchildren in Leicester, other than maybe a quick visit to deposit our presents on their doorstep.

On Thursday, we thought the dilemma was resolved when Washingborough son phoned from Humberside Airport to say that at very short notice, he was on his way to Aberdeen and thence to a North Sea rig, duration of job unknown but later confirmed as beyond Christmas. So that's his birthday and Christmas celebrations taken care of – apparently catering is first class out there!

Those of you who have joined me on Zoom recently will have seen that my hair has once more become "bonny" as one of our Members described it during first lockdown. Well, I should have had it cut in November during Lockdown II, but that obviously didn't happen, but I had, unusually, booked ahead, and was due to have a cut on Friday. Unfortunately, Simone had to self-isolate, having been a contact of a contact. So I faced the prospect of a shaggy Christmas. But that wonderful young lady phoned yesterday to suggest a 7.15pm appointment. What service! So now I'm shorn. The last time that I had my hair cut at that time of day was when I came home from college and my father was still cutting my hair – or more often wrenching it out of my scalp!

Now, I appreciate that I've made light of all this, and I'm sure that many of you will be struggling with yesterday's announcement, and I do sympathise with you if that is the case, it does feel like we've been promised the holy grail of a family Christmas and it's been snatched away from us, so I hope that you can see a more hopeful future.

## Dreich

Well, I managed to get one or two things right last week, including the reference to the word "dreich", as Mike & Heather Sharpe tell me that "*Dreich was often a daily word when we lived in Scotland!!*" I can imagine!

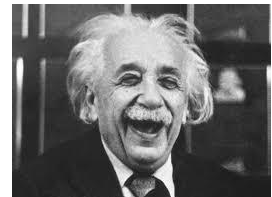
## Quiz Time



Janet Foster was back to form last week with an early response to the crossword, whose shaded squares revealed the attraction as being the Natural History Museum. Linda and Tony Chapman also submitted the correct answer, as did Colin & Joyce Beck, Chris & Arch, Glenys Storey and Angela & Phil Applewhite. Congratulations to them all, now I shall have to see if all the names will fit onto the rolling banner on our website. The solution is attached.

This week we have another crossword, with a well-known, and seasonal, phrase hidden in the shaded squares – and it's much easier than it looks at first sight!

Lynn Snelson was first to return the answers to the Single Names quiz. She was quickly followed by Linda & Tony Chapman, Glenys Storey and Chris Hodson & Arch. Overall, the answers were only fractionally short of 100%, so I'm impressed. The official answers are attached.



The next national u3a quiz has a very definite seasonal flavour to it, "Christmas Bumper Quiz", so see how you get on with it, you have plenty of time as the answers will not be published until 12th January.

In case, as I suggested last week, I don't get round to sending out a "Keeping in Touch" next Sunday, don't forget that you can go back to [old quizzes and crosswords on our website](#), and [on the national u3a website](#), where you can also find [other items to test your knowledge and skills](#).

## Play Reading

There was a very limited response to the suggestion that Members might be interested in joining a Play Reading Group, with just a couple of volunteers, but there's still time to respond and if you're interested, just let me know and I'll pass your details to Wendy Wilcox.

## A Christmas Story



Now I have another dilemma. I had originally written that "*this week's short story comes again from our Creative Writing Group, written by Andrea White and is "A Christmas Story", so just right for this week. It's a delightful tale reflecting the trials and joys of Christmas. Once more, a jolly good read.*" Whilst that holds true, I'm aware that the first couple of

paragraphs are quite prescient of our current situation, and if you're feeling particularly sensitive about our cancelled Christmas, you might want to avoid the story, but I think it's worth it for its conclusion.

### **Scams of the Week**

Bill Fowler, currently recovering from a broken ankle, has reported the following scam; *"I had a call from a Skegness number on my mobile a couple of days ago. It wasn't a number I knew and, by the time I was about to answer it, they rang off. My daughter has some whizzy technology and when she put the number in, it said that the call was from somewhere like Japan, despite being on my screen as a Skegness number! "Wolf in sheep's clothing"? I tend to be over-cautious when it comes to unknown callers. If I don't know the number on my mobile, I tend to leave it. After all, if the caller is someone who genuinely wants to speak to me, they will leave a voicemail."*



I have also had an email from Brian Haynes via Garry Snelson that reinforces last week's message about Delivery Scams, which are currently widespread. I've attached a copy of the message.

### **From this ... to this?**

I'm not a fan of reminiscing, mainly because it's not what it used to be. However, Garry has also forwarded an email that asks the question, "How did we get from this... to this?" You'll see what it means when you look at the attached file! Look at the cartoons carefully, there are some subtleties to some of them.

### **Getting it wrong? - It's not just me!**

The week has not been without its humour. We had a message from the person in charge of the Beacon administration system, and part of the message was that there have been some problems with the email part of Beacon. This has been caused in part by the fact that many u3a's send out large numbers of emails with the same wording, and some internet providers interpret this as junk mail and suppress the messages. So, he suggested that we use the mail-merge type "tokens", such as //FAM for "familiar" name to address recipients, as we do on most of our u3a emails. Unfortunately, he used the wrong lettering for the "token" and the recipients were all addressed as "Dear //FIRSTNAME".

### **Wildlife Corner**



Janet Webb has supplied this week's wildlife photo, with a nicely posing Linnet – they're often too skittish to oblige.

And so despite all the difficulties, it's time to wish you a ;



Best wishes,

*James*

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**Linnet by Janet Webb**

