

Sheila Miller

Summer Splash Anyone?

I organise the "Take the Plunge" sessions each summer. This year more than forty people signed up to swim in the sea. We swim about once a week on different days and at various times according to the tides and have had some wonderful swims and lots of laughs during the lovely warm days between June and October. Usually about a dozen people turn up on each occasion, and sometimes we have had the beach at Seasalter all to ourselves - and once or twice we have had people standing on the sea wall looking on in amazement as a large group of elderly people splash about with abandon.

I also regularly play bridge with the U3A group at Dunkirk on Thursday afternoons. As an inexperienced player, I have been made to feel very welcome. One of the founder members, Pauline Riley, who is a skilled bridge player and a born teacher, has helped many of the newer players with informal advice and coaching. Her kindness has extended to inviting a few of us to her home in St Stephens for social bridge to further hone our skills.

After one such session on what had been a very warm August day, I walked home towards Wincheap through the Westgate Gardens. I met my son in law David with my two younger grandchildren and Poppy, the dog, who was looking very hot. David said he was taking the boys for a milkshake, so I offered to take Poppy home, as going into the centre of Canterbury wouldn't be fun for her.

I had no sooner got hold of the lead and taken a few steps, when Poppy decided to launch herself into the river, where some boys were playing. If I had had my brains switched on (clearly they had all been used up during the bridge session), I would have dropped the lead quickly - but before I had thought about it, I was leaning at an angle over the river, which meant I was bound to fall in - so I jumped in before I fell, landing on my feet with the river up to my armpits, dog and attached granny making an enormous splash. Everyone around - me included - was falling about laughing as I picked weed off myself.

A kind young man on the bank asked if he could help. There was a big outflow pipe nearby and I knew I could use it to climb out - but there was no way I could lift a heavy dog up over my head on to the edge, because of the vertical wooden sides of the river, so I asked him to get the dog out. So he jumped in and manhandled Poppy out and we walked on home. Happily, I was wearing a very thin summer dress, which dried out within minutes. However, Poppy stayed wet for quite some time, which presumably was what she wanted. Everyone who patted her after our impromptu swim asked why the dog was wet - so the story of our summer splash was out. The joys of having a Grand-dog!