

NEWSLETTER - January 2021

Welcome to the January Newsletter

A Happy New Year to all members. I hope at some point in 2021 that we will be able to meet together in person and I very much look forward to when we can do that.

I am sorry to tell you that Harry Constantine died on Christmas Eve. Harry and his wife Pat were founder members of the Collingham & District U3A and members of the first Executive Committee. Harry used his considerable professional skills and abilities to produce the artwork for all our initial notices, the information for the Group boards and he initiated and produced the Newsletter. Harry also typeset, chose the illustration and layout for our submission for the Fleet Magazine. This piece was usually written by the Chair but was then handed over to Harry to make it 'look good'. Some of you will have met Harry when he was running the bookstall at the General Meetings. He was creative, full of life and fun. He will be greatly missed by us all.

There are a number of Groups that continue to meet online and many of these Groups contribute to our Newsletter. Other Groups are awaiting with eagerness a time when they can meet together and pursue their learning in person.

We would like to thank John Lewis very much for the Christmas quiz which he devised for members. It provided some seasonal mental stimulation for many of us. Check the answers provided with this Newsletter and see how you did.

Finally, I would like to draw to your attention to the relatively new u3a radio podcast on YouTube. Below is a quote taken from the Third Age Trust/u3a home page which gives information about this new development.

'This month, u3a radio podcast is packed with interviews about food, music and how to retire with attitude.'

Interviews include a Barnet u3a member who featured in Britain's Got Talent, two members who created a course on how to retire with attitude, and a chef from Vegetarian for Life who has been doing virtual cookery demonstrations to u3a members.

Listen to episode 4 on our [YouTube channel](#).

Created by a team of u3a members with radio experience, our u3a radio podcast comes out on the 17th of each month. It showcases the amazing things happening across the u3a movement.'

Best wishes,
Jannet Wright, Chair, Executive Committee

So What Did You Do During Lockdown?...

Last year, and into this, we have all been presented with time on our hands! Time when that long overdue job or chore could be sorted. Then what?

In my case I cleaned some oil paintings. I knew that it was needed and being a fan of 'The Repair Shop' and 'Fake or Fortune', I had a clue about how to do a light clean.

In Lockdown 1, I cleaned two small paintings of my family farm by an evacuee. What an improvement, but they had hung either side of an open fire!

Come Lockdown 2 next in line was a small painting of Robin Hood Bay - around the back. The period is probably late 19th century early 20th century. The detail which became so clear adding further dimensions to it, just made me smile. I have always liked that painting now I love it. There is a signature mostly hidden, but the picture has never been out of the frame, so I am not tampering.

So now a larger affair, a Quail family on the edge of a corn field. It has been in my family all my life and being a farming family, close to home. The painting now so clear, that I can see a 10th Quail chick never before seen. The colours vibrant and true. The signature, bottom right, is G King 1908. I have tried to discover more about this artist but come up short.

I do not have any others to clean, so I shall have to find something else to do. But it has been so rewarding, settling down with my cleaning bits, putting on some gentle music and ...

Thank you Coronavirus!

Pat Stewart



Groups

Art Appreciation

Lead: Chris Stothard, Telephone: 01636 894241
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Throughout January members of the art appreciation group have taken centre stage with examples of art likes and dislikes. Whilst there has been little discussion provoked by the likes, the dislikes have led to responses. All those who wrote were in agreement that Rothko is an acquired taste! The Raphael cherubs gave rise to suggestions of other angels who might be more to people's tastes such as the Epstein Fallen Angel in the Birmingham City Art Gallery that we visited some time ago, when such things were a regular part of our summer.



The Raphael cherubs



Epstein Fallen Angel

In the likes category, we have looked at both well known and not so well known artists: Vermeer and Caillebotte, though neither of the Vermeer's suggested were necessarily the most famous.



The art of painting by Vermeer



The little street by Vermeer



© RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay) / Hervé Lewandowski

The floor scrapers by Caillebotte

Still to come: art in media other than paint and some very famous art works.

This slot will run while ever members suggest art works, then it will be back to normal service.

Gardening

Lead: Ingrid Wiggins, Telephone 07805 975456
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It's cold and we have snow again, but the garden club are admiring and sharing views of their gardens. Below are two photos of winter wonderlands from Sue and Maureen. Despite the freezing conditions we are also starting to see bulbs peeping through the soil. A promise of spring bulbs flowering is always worth waiting for. Not long to wait now before the snowdrops make an appearance. There is always something to look forward to with a garden.

Feeding birds in your garden is also quite important at this time of year. The RSPB sells bird food online and their food attracts a wide variety of local birds. You can even join their national bird watching survey, recording what you see.

Garden club members are still keeping in touch and looking forward to 2021 with optimism.

Ingrid



History

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A Little Bit of Maori History

A contribution from Sue Brauer

Maori MP **Nanaia Mahuta** made international headlines in November 2020 when she was appointed by Jacinda Ardern as New Zealand's foreign minister.

Mahuta is well-qualified. She is 50 and over several years she has had important roles in the NZ Labour government. On becoming Foreign Minister she retained her post as Minister for Local Government. She has studied Maori business development at the University of Auckland and in 2018 was included in the BBC's "100 Women" (international women of renown). She is also related to Maori royalty who, through the Maori King Movement of the 1850's, tried to establish parity between their King and Queen Victoria and protect traditional Maori lands.

But it was her *moko kauae* or facial tattoo, acquired in 2016, which grabbed the attention. The Times headline read "First Female MP in NZ to have a Traditional Maori Tattoo on the Chin".

So, what is that all about? Tattoos are of course a feature of Polynesian/Pacific island cultures and it is believed that the art was introduced to New Zealand by Polynesian settlers in the long-distanced, almost mythical past. Captain James Cook first encountered heavily tattooed Tahitians in 1771 and as a result, introduced the word "tattoo" to the English language.

With New Zealand's relative isolation its tattoos became unique; the traditional technique was slow and painful; deep cuts, which leave ridged scars, are made into the skin. The cuts are then embedded with pigment – traditionally soot but after the arrival of European settlers, gunpowder, which gave a prized blue tinge. The tattoo artist was skilled and highly-respected and each tattoo is unique to the bearer.

In Maori culture a person's head is considered sacred or *tapu* (Cook misheard and brought the word "taboo" back to England) and therefore facial tattoos are of the greatest significance, denoting the status, achievements, life-history and rank of the individual: *Ta moko* is the full face tattoo

for a high-status man and *moko kauae* the chin tattoo for a mature, high-status woman.

Maori women have always over the centuries been respected and honoured as equals in their tribal culture and, more recently, Maori women argued for women's suffrage alongside their European NZ counterparts, achieving the vote for women in 1893 – the first country in the world.

The 1970s and 80s saw a Maori political and cultural renaissance and Maori language and cultural history is now an integral part of the NZ school curriculum. Maori symbolism is a powerful feature of modern-day New Zealand - personified by Nanaia Mahuta.

Italian for Beginners

Lead: Mary Hughes & Jannet Wright Telephone: 01636 892415

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Buon Capodanno!

We have already met on Zoom for the first time this year. After six months we are getting used to holding our twice monthly sessions this way.

We usually divide the sessions into different activities. Our first activity during this meeting was to ask everyone to produce a sentence or three which began with 'La settimana scorsa...' which means 'Last week'.

We had all read an article in Italian about the author, Elena Ferrante. We took it in turns to read the article aloud during the session and then translated it into English.

One of the Group had prepared a page of phrases and sentences in English that could be useful when renting in Italy. We received these before the online session so we had time to prepare. Then during the session we shared our Italian versions with each other. This generated a lot of laughter as well as very helpful new vocabulary.

Literature

Lead: Sheelah Reynolds, Telephone: 01636 892348,
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We start the New Year on a very sad note. The departure of our very dear friend Harry Constantine on Christmas Eve has left us bereft. Harry has been with the group from the beginning, and it will be hard to continue without him. Harry wasn't always that keen on poetry, and didn't hold back in expressing his dislike with his wicked sense of humour. Although, he did give us a wonderful rendition of W.H Auden's poem 'Night Mail', and a bizarre piece of free verse he composed many years ago. A very kind man with a wonderful sense of the ridiculous, and I think would not want us to "Stop all the Clocks".

I trust Harry, and Pat, would agree with the sentiment expressed in the following poem;

'Do not Stand at My Grave and Weep'

Do not stand at my grave and weep;
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight
I am the soft stars that shine at night
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there!

Local History Research

Lead: Pat Smedley, Telephone: 01636 892292
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News from U3A Local History Research Group

The group is now focussing exclusively on preparing for the Exhibition in All Saint's Church over the MayDay weekend : May 1,2,3rd. While there remains doubt about all public events due to Covid, we think there is a very good chance that we will be able to show our work on Collingham in the second world war in this public space, obviously taking every precaution necessary.

The title of the Exhibition is : '**And the sky was full of planes**'. **Collingham at War : 1939-45**. It will feature a lot of visual material presented as information posters on different aspects of life in the village and its surrounds during this dramatic period.

This month, January we will be hearing about 'Collingham and the RAF', a very important theme of the Exhibition, since the village was surrounded by Bomber Command RAF Stations. This will be given via Zoom as a power point presentation and members of the group will be encouraged to contribute to discussions following it.

Photography

Lead: Paul Bass, Telephone: 01636 892057
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The group continues to meet using video conferencing and it looks like this will continue for some months yet. Our theme for images this month was "Looking Forward". This is something we all must do at the moment and it is hoped that newsletter readers can empathise with some of the images in this edition.

With the restrictions now forced upon us, the theme next month will be "Cutlery and/or Utensils". This will not require Photography Group members to leave their homes. I am hoping to see some significant creativity though.

Stay Safe

Paul Bass



Holiday Thoughts by Paul Bass



It must get Better by Jenny Macpherson



Sophie on Point by Roger Davis



Holiday Wishes by Gill Bass



The tea leaves tell all by Phil Leckenby



Felix sit annus novus by Les Murray



Looking forward by Jannet Wright



No tennis yet by Colin Smith



Oh to mingle again by John Geeson

Scrabble

Lead: Margaret Orchiston, Telephone: 01636 894027
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Five of us are now playing weekly on a Thursday afternoon via Zoom. Within the group we had some useful Christmas presents, a new official Scrabble words book and a book of brain teasers. We are now finishing each afternoon with a brain teaser similar to this one:

What five-letter word becomes shorter when you add two letters to it?
Answer at end of newsletter.

The Bucketees

Lead: Lesley Piper, Telephone: 01636 892795
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Lesley's daughter, Jan French, had offered to give a talk to the Bucketees on the subject of Scams before the first lockdown, following is an article that she has very kindly written for us.

Beware the scammers!

The first thing that I would like to say when it comes to scams, whichever type they are, is never ever underestimate how ruthless the people who run them can be. Also, never ever underestimate how clever they are. In fact it has crossed my mind on more than one occasion how their knowledge and skills could be put to better use for good work as opposed to criminality.

Anyway, as I say, the people who run scams are ruthless and brutal, and unfortunately seem to also be one step ahead of those who try to catch them.

In my work in a city centre branch of a high street bank, I've seen the effects of these scams at first hand. The most harrowing of which was a romance scam. It wasn't until the unfortunate lady had left the bank that I looked up the characteristics of this type of scam, and realised that what she had gone through was text book stuff.

The lady had come into the bank asking for a payment to be made. I know that banks have bad reputations, but I can honestly say that the people who work there (where I used to be anyway) genuinely care about the customers. The cashier became suspicious about the payment when the lady couldn't really tell her what it was for, she just said that it was for family purposes but couldn't elaborate when we pressed her further. Bank staff have to be able to justify the reason for a payment, for exactly this purpose, to weed out the scams. The cashier was busy, so as she

so as she didn't want to hold up the rest of the queue, she brought the lady up to me on my Premier desk.

I sat the lady down and asked her what the payment was for, specifically. She was shaking and seemed nervous. Her phone kept on "pinging" in her bag and she jolted every time it did so. Now, this lady was I would say, late sixties early seventies maybe? She was wrapped up against the cold and had a woolly hat on.

I was as suspicious as our cashier had been, so I went off to do the payment, and then went back to her to ask the family members' name. She said "I'll check", and sent a message on her phone. Then I asked the address of the family member, and she did the same, coming back to me after only about 10 seconds with an address.

I don't know what made me do this, but I put the address in Rightmove, the website for selling houses. The address came up as a very large house set in acres of land, for sale for over £2 million in Northern Scotland. I asked the lady to come and have a look at it. When she saw it it was as if the penny had suddenly dropped, she sat back down and sobbed and sobbed.

When she was feeling a bit less shaky, she told me what had happened. She was recently divorced, and had suffered at the hands of a quite abusive husband. This chap had contacted her through Facebook, and complimented her, made her feel valued, special and loved. After only one day, he'd take their conversations off Facebook and onto another messaging service which he'd set up. Over the next couple of days they'd been in touch constantly. He told her that he was in the forces, and that he was stationed overseas, in the Middle East. He didn't use her name, he just called her "Honey" which she didn't like, she'd asked him to use her name, but he insisted on calling her Honey. After around 5 days of this, during which her self esteem had rocketed under his constant compliments and declarations of love, he had stated that he would leave the forces, and move to Nottingham to be with her. The money was, he said, as he had to pay to get out of his contract, and had to be sent otherwise he wouldn't be allowed to leave the forces.

The money was relatively small, at £7,000, but it represented her life savings, it was all she had. If the payment had gone through, she would never have seen it again and she'd have had no savings left.

All the time she was telling me what had happened, her phone was pinging, he was getting worried that she'd come up against a problem in the bank and was getting angry about the length of time it was taking. I took her phone and blocked him.

She said "is that it? Is it over?" I said yes, and do you know what the saddest thing about this was? She was upset, because she said he made her feel like a million dollars. For that one week, she'd felt good about herself, she genuinely thought that she was going to start a brand new life with a handsome American forces toy boy who was madly in love with her.

After she'd gone, I researched the scam. It ran exactly as the research I found. He'd found her on Facebook when she was at her most vulnerable (never put your status on Facebook, especially not if you're divorced or widowed. He quickly got talking to her in Facebook Messenger, then

took the conversation to a separate site (if someone wants to do this quickly, it's because they want to separate you from protected or recorded sites and away from others being able to see what you're talking about). He didn't use her name (as he would probably have had a number of women in the same situation, he couldn't risk calling her by the wrong name, so he used the same nickname for all of them). His story about being in the forces is a typical scam story, as he doesn't have to give an address and can be quite secretive about where exactly he is. Another common one is when they say they're on an oil rig.

He'd asked her to send a small amount, but would have wanted more, and if she didn't have it, he'd have asked her to take a loan out. When eventually she'd have said that she couldn't get any more, he'd have disappeared, leaving her with no money and in debt.

You may think well, I'd never fall for that, but these people are very clever, they can find a way in somehow, like sales people, they are highly trained and their knowledge of technology is second to none.

Scammers can jump on a text thread from the bank or any other organisation. They can hack into an e-mail thread. We had no end of people in saying "I know it's a genuine text, Because the one before it was - see?" The scammers know how to make text messages and e-mails look genuine.

If I ever get a text or an e-mail out of the blue, I never click on it, especially if it promises money such as a refund. HMRC never send text messages or e-mails telling you that you have a tax refund, most genuine companies don't. If you get one and it's convincing, google it.

Most scams will have already been reported to websites such as this one: <https://www.which.co.uk/news/2018/06/10-of-the-latest-and-most-common-scam-threats-in-the-uk/>

Copy and paste this in to your browser, or just go to Google and type in "scams" there's lots of websites that will show you the current scams doing the rounds.

If you get a specific one, such as TV licence or HMRC, type in "TV Licence scam" and you'll get examples of what the scam looks like. I literally do this for every unsolicited e-mail or text I get. You can then report the scam to Action Fraud UK, and maybe save somebody else falling victim to this silent cruel crime.

To finish, please don't think you would never fall for a scammer, we discovered another one where the lady had already sent over £60,000 to her "lover" who needed the money to build an oil rig. This lady was very high up in a government department, and yet she couldn't see that £60k towards an oil rig would have been miniscule, her logical mind simply hadn't computed it.

It's not that people who fall for them are intellectually challenged, it is simply that good people don't know and don't expect to be targeted by organised criminal gangs in their own homes via a mobile device.

But believe me, it happens - be aware and stay safe!

Wine Tasting

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The Wine appreciation group

We are experimenting with an online tasting session soon.

Each household in the group will taste the same three wines while on Zoom. We will then compare notes on each of the three to see if we agree on how good they are with food.

The wines are a Pecorini (white) from Italy, a Roter Veltliner (white) from Austria and a soft red from the Languedoc region of France containing three different grapes.

Answer to Scrabble brain teaser—short
