

## Newsletter Late 2020



The Swan family enjoying lunch at high water at the bottom of South Street the day of the Environment Agency Flood Alert.

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### Letter from the Chairman

At the time of writing we are back into a full lockdown and we are only allowed out for exercise and other “essential” reasons and can only see one other person outside our household/bubble at a time, so all in-person U3A activities screeched to a halt. As before, some groups are able to continue online and it’s worth looking at our website to get an idea of what’s going on. You can get to it by typing “emsworth u3a” in Google or the web address is [www.emsworthu3a.org.uk](http://www.emsworthu3a.org.uk).

I am very grateful to those group leaders who have been able to keep their groups running in these difficult circumstances. When I last wrote I was hoping that restrictions might be easing a bit and that we could increase our activities. There was even some thought that if things went well we might be able to have a Christmas meal of some sort, but even then events on the horizon were starting to look unfavourable and of course now it wouldn’t be possible. But there has been good news in the press about possible vaccines and perhaps some of our members might be considered as priority cases and be offered a vaccination as soon as they become available. I am optimistic that the combination of available vaccinations and improving weather next year will make it possible for us to recommence some of our in-person activities and that our U3A can start operating a bit more normally. Maybe eventually with old style monthly meetings. If you look at the website you will see it’s appearance has changed a bit. The Third Age Trust have changed the branding “to give a bold and progressive look and feel that will help elevate the brand and attract the next generation of members”. Well perhaps, but I think it looks nicer too. You might notice that they’ve dropped the “University of the Third Age” and replaced it with “Learn, Laugh, Live”. I think the word “University” might have discouraged some prospective members and that companionship is the most important part of it for most of our members.

Of course you will know, our AGM is in February and that the committee serves a year and a new one is elected at the AGM. As I wrote before, there will be some vacancies and I hope some of you are considering joining the new committee. Don’t forget that the U3A can’t run without a committee.

On line monthly meetings have been continuing and Trevor Rayner, our Speakers Secretary, has found some interesting people to talk to us. I’ve enjoyed them and I encourage you to join in if you can as the talks are usually good and there is an opportunity for chat before and after. The last talk at the time of writing was “From Barrow to Baghdad and Back” by Philip Caine and it was remarkable how he managed to fit so much in to his career—see page 12 for a review of this talk.

Christmas is around the corner and it’s anyone’s guess what we will be permitted by the Government to do. Most people seem to think it won’t be anything like normal though. However I hope you all have the best possible Christmas and that next year is a lot better than this one has been.

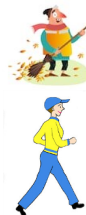
With very best wishes.

*Mike Polgreen*

**So let me get this straight, there's no cure for a virus that can be killed by sanitizer and hand soap?**



Ruth Brown has been planting bulbs, sweeping leaves, re-hanging pictures trying to write something about David Hockney and making Christmas cards. Also revisiting the list of 100 walks they did during the first lock down.



A Medway U3A quilt spotted on display in Rochester by Kenneth Laing. There is no Quilting section in Emsworth—should there be?

Is it too early to put up the Christmas tree yet? I have run out of things to do.

## **A different view on life by Tessa Smith**

Hello All, I had a left sided hemiplegic stroke 3 years ago and have to use an electric wheelchair to get about. I was so busy running my business before and had to take forced retirement before I was mentally and physically ready so now I am able to watch so many of the wonderful interesting discovery programs on tv which I enjoy so much, I love the nature program Jeremy Wade's Dark Waters. I am learning so much but I do miss being able to cook as I am a very good cook and very particular about how things are made and seasoned. I have someone who comes when needed to help me make enough to freeze and my daughter does my daily prep of meals but she's vegetarian and won't touch meat. She will and does cook fillets of fish as long as it's a fillet and doesn't look like a fish. My helper is very good but it's not the same as doing it oneself.

When we have rearranged the bottom of our long garden I am going to put a hedgehog house with pallets and logs above and more bird feeders to make a wildlife haven. I am having a concrete path down the length of the garden, so I can get down there in my wheelchair even if it's wet which is impossible now if the grass is wet I churn it up and get stuck.

I keep in contact with friends by phone, email, a bit on Facebook and WhatsApp. Now we have lockdown all over which I think should be in hot spots only and keep 2 metre social distancing and meetings only in small numbers outside, but we have to obey. I think Boris is wrong - for the whole country it's bad for everyone. Anyway what do you do? If I could I would be more actively working on my FOREVER Living Aloe Vera business. I still have regular customers and they are increasing and I have 2 people very interested in the business and joining my team as FOREVER business owners and distributors which is brilliant. If you would like to see what it's about go to [www.tessasmith.myforever.biz](http://www.tessasmith.myforever.biz).

It must be most interesting to see the variety of occupying time - it would be very interesting to know what without knowing the identity of the people. I am at 34 Hollybank lane and when visiting is relaxed I would love to invite you round. My husband and my daughter also live in this house with me, neither of whom like or can garden. My daughter because she works from home and has no time as she does so much for me, my husband because no

When this virus thing is over with, I still want some of you to stay away from me.



interest and he's now not physically able. YouTube has been a lifesaver for us both - you can find out about anything and anybody on YouTube. If you go into YouTube and then enter ENJO-UK you will find a series of short videos of the most amazing eco-friendly, safe cleaning fibres. I use them, they are miraculous and do what it says on the tin.

My email and phone number are here for any interested Emsworth U3A member who would like a chat to a human instead of a computer. Sadly I can't join Zooms before 11.30 as I have the carers at 10/10.30 am for a one hour morning session with them, hence I have had to leave my discussion group as they all now prefer the mornings which I fully understand. All other groups are 10.00 or 10.30am so no good for me as until my carers have finished I am still in bed. They help me get into my wheelchair ready for me to start my day. Life is always changing and we have to adjust to it or die and there is so much to enjoy and live for and look forward to. Roll on the end of the pandemic when we can meet again with our families and close friends. Roll on spring when hopefully we get warm weather to be able to sit outside in the garden.

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## Emsworth U3A Committee

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Is it too early to put up the Christmas tree yet? I have run out of things to do.

How have we been spending our time? Perfecting the art of making worm compost. Ooh we compost makers know how to enjoy ourselves. I've even swept up the leaves on the pavement (not even outside our house) in order to add some to my compost bin! How's it done? Read on!

### **A worms tale: compost that has exited through the worm's tail-end**

I have always been fascinated by worms, ever since, as a small boy, I heard that the local scientific research institute was short of worms for research and offered to buy them in at a few pence a bucket. I worked out that if I cut the worms in two I could double my income and soon gave up the paper round. But the day I decided to take up worm composting was the day I opened my compost bin and eye-balled a rat. I knew they were around, in fact one had gnawed through the plastic compost door, but seeing one eyeball to eyeball was unnerving, to say the least.

Recalling the old gardener's tale that worms in a compost bin devour everything, including rats, I set about converting my compost bin to a worm-cast factory, and I never looked back. Horse pooh? *Full of seeds, spreading weeds from other habitats resulting in chaos in the garden.* Pigs shit? *Smelly, dirty and full of chemicals; aptly named pigsmuck.* But now, compost that has exited through the worm's tail-end, or to give it its technical term,

vermicompost. *Magic.* Worms devour almost anything and everything; my food and garden waste is eaten, passes through their digestive system returning as nutrient-rich compost. Well, almost everything. I avoid putting meat in as the smell will attract rats even though, if the old gardener's tale is to be believed, the rat would be eaten alive by worms should it venture into the compost bin.

Interestingly worms prefer an organic diet; they don't eat plastic, so I pick any bits out when I use the compost. The worm jury is still out about so-called recyclable wrappers, which are not as compost-friendly as the wrapper says.

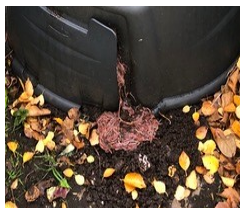


Just wait a second - so what you're telling me is that my chance of surviving all this is directly linked to the common sense of others?  
You're kidding, right?

Worms thrive when it is moist, they have plenty of air, in dark and where it isn't too hot. I keep my compost moist with tea and coffee slops and aerated with plenty of cardboard and paper shredding. It is always worth adding urea - available on tap - to your compost, it is the best and cheapest compost activator.

You ask, *how do you get the worms?* Admit it, you are fascinated with this - I have got you hooked, I can see. Well, it's magic! They just appear. The literature recommends red worms or red wigglers and you can buy them, but I never have. Worms are one of nature's wonders. Leave a brick or a pot plant on the patio for a few weeks and when you lift it, there they are. I told you, magic! I have them by the million. Or is it trillion?

*How long does it take?* Another good question. Well, how long is a piece of string? (I digress, but the answer is 14cm - I have a measure and a piece of string in my pocket.) Well, anything from three to twelve months. You know when it is ready, the worms tell you. They are communal critters and multiply at an astonishing rate, but there comes a time when *Worm City* (the compost bin) is just too crowded and fresh food scrap offerings are devoured almost instantly. Worms also - and I am sure you will understand this - are not keen on eating their own excrement, so when all the compost has been converted into worm castings and *Worm City* is too crowded, they move on, hence the exodus at the side of the compost bin.



Translocating is a dangerous business for worms, the birds around here are pretty savvy at knowing when the migration is imminent and form an orderly queue to await the mass departure. The worms have to run the gauntlet, rather like turtle hatchlings desperate to reach the ocean before been gobbled up by a crab, a lizard or a bird. Act immediately you see the worms spilling out of *Worm City* and before the gobbling birds barge in. Spread the compost so your flower border or veggie patch is enriched with an excellent, nutrient-rich organic fertiliser and soil conditioner. Get the timing right and you avoid the mass carnage of the birds devouring your able but Malthusian garden assistants and the worms will disappear into the soil of their new home, continuing their time-honoured organic process.

*Lincoln Allen*

*Editor's note 1 – Gill, who has the allotment opposite Lincoln's, says she will pass on adding the urea to her compost bin as a lady's tap is not so convenient, and short of having a potty in the allotment shed is an awkward feat of gymnastic balance.*

*Editor's note 2 – I have in the past used the supply of urea to which Lincoln refers, collected in a plastic milk bottle indoors rather than direct input!*

People are scared of getting fined or arrested for congregating in crowds, as if catching a deadly disease and dying a horrible death wasn't enough of a deterrent.

## Bluefin

The world's oldest fibreglass offshore catamaran, Bluefin, was on display at the Emsworth Yacht Harbour recently. Designed in the late 1950s by Tom Dowling, a Royal Navy submarine officer, he started building it in 1959 in the chapel of the Dragonara Palace in Malta and launched it in 1961. Tom sailed her back to England and she has been based in Chichester Harbour ever since.

For the technically minded, the hulls are moulded fibreglass (split along the centreline) with Onazote (type of rubber) cored full-width fibreglass ring frames. Originally built with a wing mast and adjustable water ballast, these advanced features proved to be beyond the materials of the day. Bluefin was raced successfully in MOCRA (Multihull Offshore Cruising & Racing Association) events up against younger designs, and was used for family sailing holidays from Scotland to the Channel Islands.

She is now back in the ownership of the family who first bought her from Tom in 1975, owning her until the late 1990s.

*Kenneth Laing*



The spread of Covid-19 is based on two factors: 1. How dense the population is and 2. How dense the population is.



**Never in my whole  
life would  
I imagine my hands  
would consume  
more alcohol than  
my mouth!!**



Toni was asking us all how we are filling our time. Well we've been doing the usual cycling, decorating, and gardening, but I probably have been doing one of the more unusual pastimes: I've been writing computer programs to control Christmas lights. Why? Just because I can. I know it would be easier and cheaper to just buy some but that isn't the point.

*Mike Polgreen*



**Remember all those times when you wished the weekend would last forever? Well, wish granted. Happy now?**

## TWELVE COMMANDMENTS FOR SENIORS

- Talk to yourself. There are times you need expert advice.
- “In Style” are the clothes that still fit.
- You don’t need anger management. You need people to stop irritating you.
- The biggest lie you tell yourself is, “I don’t need to write that down. I’ll remember it.” silversurfers
- “On time” is when you get there.
- It would be wonderful if we could put ourselves in the dryer for ten minutes, then come out wrinkle-free and three sizes smaller.
- Lately, You’ve noticed people your age are so much older than you.
- Growing old should have taken longer.
- Ageing has slowed you down, but it hasn’t shut you up.
- You still haven’t learned to act your age, and hope you never will.
- WD 40 to make things go and duct tape to make them stop
- “One for the road” means peeing before you leave the house.

[www.silversurfers.com](http://www.silversurfers.com)



No Nativity this year because the 3 Wise Men face a travel ban. The shepherds have been furloughed. The Inn keeper has shut under tier 3 regulations and had a slump in bookings. Santa won't be working as he would break the rule of 6 with Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Donner and Blitzen. As for Rudolph, with that red nose, he should be isolating and taking a test.

Whoever decided a liquor store is more essential than a hair salon is obviously a bald-headed alcoholic.

## Membership Renewal

Membership is now due for renewal. I hope that you will understand that despite this not being a normal year we have still had expenses – Zoom accounts, online speakers, payment to Third Age Trust among others. Our u3a membership fees are lower than many in surrounding u3as and have been the same for 3 years, at which time we actually reduced them slightly from the previous year. We are keeping the fees for 2021 static for another year at **£12.50 for an individual member and £23 for joint members, sharing an address.**

Clearly I will not be able to collect membership at monthly meetings for the time being so we are offering 3 ways for you to renew:

1. By cheque made out to “Emsworth and District u3a” and posted or hand delivered to me:

Gill Polgreen, 3 Esmond Close’ Emsowrth PO10 7HX

The treasurer will be minimising his trips to the bank so it may be a bit longer than usual before your cheque gets paid in.

2. Cash, in a sealed envelope hand delivered to the above address. Include a note saying who it is from.

3. By bank transfer to our u3a account.

Branch Sort Code: 524120

Account Number: 43615643

Short Name: Emsworth and Distric

Full Name: Emsworth and District U3A Community Account

Please make use of the reference field to put your full name or if you are joint members with two different surnames put both surnames (and initials, if there is space). This is important because when we look at the account online there is nothing visible other than the reference to see who has paid. Once a month we get a fuller statement with more detail, but the reference fields will give me a better chance of staying on top of who has renewed and so won’t send you unnecessary reminders.

I will be sending reminder emails as usual. We have decided, because of the expense of both printing and getting membership cards to you, not to print physical cards this year. But if you would like one (perhaps to show to another u3a which you are also a member of, or to get discount in Closs and Hamblin) then let me know by email and I can send you a PDF file of your card for you to print at home.

Best wishes to you all for a peaceful and Christmas and I hope we will be able to meet up in person 2021.

*Gill Polgreen*

If these last months have taught us anything, it's that stupidity travels faster than any virus on the planet, particularly among politicians and bureaucrats.

## **From Barrow to a far flung planet**

– by Gill Polgreen

I know many of you have not managed to attend our monthly Zoom meetings, so I am going to review two of them to let you know what you have missed and in the hope you may be encouraged to give it a try in the future. I suspect this will be our modus operandi until the vaccination program is well under way.

In October Philip Caine addressed us with a talk entitled “From Barrow to Baghdad”. Before the talk, when I heard he was not using any visual aids, PowerPoint slides etc. I was a bit concerned it might be dull. But, my goodness, my preconceptions couldn’t have been more wrong. It was basically a talk about his dynamic and varied career. Barrow referred to the town where he was brought up in the North West, not a wheelbarrow or a market trader’s barrow. His father had expected him to follow in his footsteps, when he left school at 16, and be apprenticed to a shipyard trade. But he was having none of it and went into catering, which soon morphed into being in hotel management and then facilities management. His positive can-do attitude took him to many parts of the world, working variously on oil platforms, oil production sites in the desert, building whole international worker complexes in Dubai and bases for the armed forces in Iraq. He spoke animatedly and entertainingly from his kitchen, weaving into his story snippets of family life and repeatedly saying how he couldn’t have done any of it without his supportive wife, keeping the show on the road back home. We were beginning to think his life had been one long success story, but there was a time when he lost all his savings and was in huge debt due to an ill-fated business venture. But like all good fairy tales it had a happy ending. Retirement did not see him twiddling his thumbs either; he became a prolific adventure thriller author, drawing his inspiration from some of the colourful characters he met in his many dealings with business and governments in his career. I did download one of his books, which he has self published on Amazon, and although an easy read, it is in a genre where he is competing with some very successful authors and I thought his autobiography, had he written one would have been a more individual and memorable book.

Remember when you were little and all your underwear had the days of the week on them. Those would be helpful right now.



So from a factual tale in October, we moved to a world of mystery and speculation in November. Again I had a misplaced preconception when I learnt that our speaker secretary, Trevor, had organised a talk on crop circles. Call me a sceptic if you like (SCEPTIC, SCEPTIC I hear Mike shouting from the other room) but I had always dismissed crop circles as a hoax and to be honest not given them a lot of thought. But I always think if you don't attend a talk you are not sure you will enjoy, you can miss out on a wonderful opportunity to learn something new. I know equally you can look forward to one and find it was not as good as you hoped. But in November I think the 45-or-so of us who attended Andy Thomas's talk had a fascinating morning and evidenced by the many questions and our discussion after he left, when we felt freer to express any scepticism, we had found it thought provoking too. Although we don't seem to see so much about them in the press these days, crop circles are still appearing frequently and there are almost as many theories about how they appear as there are designs. Many of the patterns are mathematically complex and would need some sophisticated computer programming and a good knowledge of geometry and fractals to draw them on a screen or paper let alone to cut them in a field. So are they a natural phenomena connected with underlying aquifers or lay lines, or made by hoaxers or publicity seekers, or made by some higher being as warnings or by aliens trying to interact with us? Andy, the speaker had been fascinated by them for many years and researched the subject thoroughly and did not try to force any one opinion on us, although he did rule out the possibility, with the exception of a few cruder ones, of them being made by drunkards on the way home from the pub. And, by the way, this cruder description applies to both their content (he spared our blushes by not sharing those photos) and the simplicity of their execution. Of all the theories, I would love to believe that friendly aliens from a far flung planet were visiting us, using an undreamt-of technology to make them but it is a shame we haven't learnt yet to decipher what they are saying.

Did a big load of pyjamas so I would have enough clean work clothes for this week.

## The Joy of an Electric Mountain Bike – Even in November Mud

Emsworth is a great place to own an electric mountain bike. From my house I can be in Hollybank Woods in under a mile and then the tracks and bridleways of the Downs open up to me. I try to get out on my bike five times a week with the intention of doing perhaps twenty miles each time. At this muddy time of year, I do a lot of my mileage on the lanes around the Downs but last Saturday the call of the hills was irresistible. I biked over to West Ashling then slogged through Kingley Vale up to the Devils Humps where the views were surprisingly clear for the time of year.



From the Devil's Humps I dropped down through the woods to Stoughton Down car park – a messier and slower descent than in the summer but still fun. From there I biked along the lane to Stoughton from where I turned West onto bridleways running past woods with the intriguing names of Piglegged Row and Fanny's Row then across to Lodge Farm near Forestside.



From Lodge Farm there was a slippery descent through Stansted Forest, past Stansted House, the sawmill and through Hollybank Woods. And so back to Emsworth where the bike and I both needed hosing down, lubrication and recharging!

But you will ask, isn't an electric bike cheating? If this is a problem for you then it is easily solved: Turn the power down to low so it is only compensating for the extra weight of the motor and battery and then you can have the eight or nine miles of righteous misery which your soul clearly craves. Having satisfied your virtuous yearning, turn the power up to normal and start having some fun!

*Adrian Wakeford*

If you believe all this will end and we will get back to normal just because we reopen everything, raise your hand. Now slap yourself with it.

### Getting Santa's sleigh ready



Because the sleigh flies, and has to go fast to cover the whole world in 24 hours, it has to be serviced to military standards, which means the RAF gets involved. One of the normal things about the RAF is the way in which all the trades have slang name which are used in preference to the formal names. Therefore the airframe troops are Heavies, the engine

troops are Sooties, the electricians are Leccies, the armourers are Plumbers, and for some reason the radio trades are known as Fairies, probably because they only ever carry small magic boxes around and get lumbered with loads of gash jobs, which they usually manage to complete satisfactorily.

So on Christmas Eve the sleigh is being got ready for flight, and Santa is a bit worried about the amount of gifts on board and whether everything is going to work. As always there are the occasional glitches and last minute remembrances. The fairy has been sent off into the woods to get a nice Christmas tree as a final decoration or emergency spare for someone en route (gash job – the radio and radar on the sleigh was working perfectly!), the Plumbers have decided to fit JATO bottles to ensure that the sleigh can get off the ground, the heavies are busy adding a bit of reinforcement to the runners, the Leccies are working hard to get the Grimes Hi Vis Beacon working, and the Sooties are trying to get all the reindeer properly harnessed. The Plumbers found that one of the bottles was not properly pressurised and needed changing, then the Heavies found one of the runners to be cracked and had to replace it, and Santa was getting really red in the face with the stress of the take-off deadline approaching. The fairy then appeared from the woods with a lovely tree in tow and said “Santa, what shall I do with this tree”? Santa told him in no uncertain terms, and *that’s* why there’s always a Fairy on top of the Christmas tree!



Another Saturday night in the house and I just realized the trash goes out more than me.

**MY FRIEND CELEBRATED HIS BIRTHDAY THIS YEAR BY BUYING AN ALL-TERRAIN 4 WHEELER. THIS IS A PICTURE OF HIM PLAYING WITH IT IN HIS BACK YARD.**

**I'M THINKING ABOUT GETTING ME ONE.**

**LIFE IS FLEETING BY. ENJOY IT WHILE YOU CAN**



**GETTING OLD IS EASY -  
HAVING FUN AT IT IS THE REAL TRICK**

You're not stuck at home, you're safe at home.  
One word can change your attitude and one  
cough can change your life.

#### **Editor's bit**

My thanks to all those who sent in items — please keep them coming. My email address is [tonibr@btinternet.com](mailto:tonibr@btinternet.com), and there is a link to me on the U3A Emsworth website. My snail mail address is 12 Orchard Lane, Emsworth, PO10 8BH, so send letters here. I can accept offerings in just about any format. *Toni*