

U3A Newsletter

February 2021 Issue 60:

Chat from the chair

Life after the pandemic?

Welcome to the first 2021 edition of our Newsletter! I hope you all had the best Christmas possible and welcomed in the New Year with positive thoughts.

As lockdown continues, and acting on guidance from National Office, we are still not allowed to have meetings and activities. However, this is your U3A, so if you have any ideas or requests on how you would like your U3A to function in the coming months, please do let us know.

Would you join a Zoom meeting?

We have already had a request from one member to hold Zoom General meetings. This would only be successful with more involvement from you, our members. Is this something that you would like to take part in? Let us know your thoughts. Use the form on page 7 of this issue. And, if you have other suggestions, do share, we would love to hear from you! We also welcome contributions to the Newsletter, snippets of how you are filling your days, pictures of your crafting projects, amusing and informative anecdotes are all very entertaining.

After the pandemic

We would also love to hear about the top three things you are looking forward to doing once the pandemic is over. Please send your ideas to our Newsletter editor, Helen Riby by email at ftu3anews@gmail.com or, if you prefer write to: 5 Fal Paddock, Mansfield Woodhouse **NG19 9RW**

Volunteers needed

This year, key roles on your U3A Committee become vacant: Sue Harkin and Steve Evans will complete their three years' service as Business Secretary and Assistant Group Co-ordinator, respectively. Both roles will need to be filled for us to

continue to not STUCK at home. function, you're SAFE at home even during lockdown.

Forest Town

& District

Learn, laugh, live

I appeal to all our members to

think about what they can do to help run their U3A and I am sure Sue and Steve would be only too pleased to discuss their roles with any prospective candidates.

Remember, you're

I have recently had cause to contact the DVLA as my photocard driving licence expires in April. There is NO extension to driving licences and we are encouraged to renew in a timely manner to avoid infringing the law.

Finally, to quote a phrase I saw recently on Facebook, "You're not stuck at home, you're safe at home"!

Take care of yourselves and stay safe!

Linda Shutt



Luckily I am never short of things to do. During this third Lockdown one of my latest projects is to sort through old photographs. Nowadays we take photos digitally with a camera or phone and download them onto a computer but in the good old days, not that long ago, we had a roll of film in our camera which had to be developed before prints could be made.

Over the years I must have taken hundreds, if not thousands of photos, at family weddings, 'of babies,' on holidays, recording local history.... You name it and I snapped it, especially if it was amusing like this one.

Pauline Marples



Free U3A membership for all in 2021/22

Great news for all Forest Town U3A members!

Your Committee is pleased to announce that membership fees for the forthcoming U3A membership year, April 2021 to March 2022, will be waived.

As pandemic restrictions severely limited activities for much of 2020 into 2021 and with the prospect of these being in place for some time to come, offering existing members a free year seemed the most common sense solution.

However, to benefit from this free year, all members **MUST REGISTER THEIR INTENTION TO REMAIN a** member of Forest Town & District U3A. Please follow the instructions on page 7 of this issue.

Newspapers: a great source of local history

Looking through old newspapers can be fascinating and as I have a subscription to the British Newspaper Archive it is something I often do. And, as often happens, you set off looking for one thing and get sidetracked by something else.

I was looking in the Mansfield Reporter and Sutton in Ashfield Times 19 November 1937 for information on the British Legion when I noticed an article called 'In The Years Gone By' (culled from the 'Reporter' Files).' The journalist was looking back through previous editions of the newspaper. You might find the following snippets that I have extracted about Mansfield history of interest:

- 10 Years Ago [1927] Handley Arcade with its 15 shops was in the course of building;
- 1000 people attended a Whist Drive and Dance at the YMCA organised by local Liberals;
- The first news of the proposal to build a new cinema with ballroom and café in West Gate, was published;
- 20 Years Ago [1917] The Statutes Fair was not held because it was not possible to get the Market Place ready in time;
- School children under the supervision of their teachers, gathered four cwts of horse chestnuts for war purposes;
- Butter and margarine were still very scarce. One multiple shop closed for the afternoon because they had neither to sell, nor any tea;
- Places of amusement were regarded as 'non-essential consumers of electricity' and, in the event of any emergency, their supply would be disconnected in the first place;
- 30 Years Ago [1907] The Mayor (Councillor I H Wallis) declared that bazaars 'blessed him that gives and him that takes';
- Mansfield's oldest trader, Mr Samuel Walker received congratulations on reaching his 90th birthday;

- 40 Years Ago [1897] The School Board decided to build a new school in Rosemary Street for 800 children:
- The General Power Distributing Co. was proposing to promote a bill in Parliament to supply electricity to 25 towns in Notts., Derbyshire, Lincs and to the West Riding and to many villages containing factories, with a great generating station at Market Warsop. The main idea was to utilise the resources of energy in the underdeveloped coalfield of Notts and Derbyshire.

the British Legion as it is 100 years since the legion was formed. Forest Town Heritage Group and Forest Town & Clipstone British Legion are participating. If any of you or your family have connections to the British Legion please get in

British Association of Local History to

about past and present members of

record memories and information

heritage.foresttown@ntlworld.com or on 01623 431783

Pauline Marples

As for the British Legion, I found the article I was looking for and this told about the Forest Town **British Legion** Dinner held in the Mansfield Colliery Institute when about 80 members attended.

My reason for looking for this is because there is a new project instigated by the



touch with me at



Diary of a Lockdown Kid (part 6)

Monday

Trust all your Christmas decor has been packed away (although, technically, there are 40 days of Christmas so they can remain in situ till Candlemas – 2 February). News on the 'saga of the stray cat.' After a very long investigation, which included much detective work of which Hercule Poirot would be proud - use of internet, word of mouth etc. - she has been reunited with her family, but she still reappears at our doors and windows, demanding to be let in. The process to get her back home was, to say the least, a tad unnerving - suffice to say, she now has an uncomfortable-looking tracker collar and I would rather not encounter her owner again anytime soon.

Tuesday

At the end of November, our marvellous postman (one of the 'I Will Wear Shorts All Year' club) handed me a letter

from our gas supplier, saying: "You'll enjoy reading that -(not!). I've been delivering them for the past two weeks."

It explained that the entire road would be under siege for the next five weeks with an army of men and equipment from 06.30, so no hope of a lie-in, plus three-way traffic lights, causing mini gridlocks from 07.30. On our daily 'walks, which now involved manoeuvring between holes in the road and fencing, I got to know the team well. They all had specific jobs which mainly involved standing around with clipboards or mobile phones, poised to be called in for their particular expertise. I was assured it would all be 'done and dusted' before Christmas and it was.

However, the week before Christmas an ominous notice appeared at the other end of the road, stating that it would be closed entirely from 21st December with no indication for how long. All was soon revealed as another

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A funny thing happened

I hope you all managed to have as good a Christmas as possible (seems a long time ago now!) and that the New Year will be a better one for us all, although it has started pretty grim with Lockdown 3. And the weather isn't helping is it? Who wants to go out for a walk when it's cold, wet or snowy and blowing a gale, unless of course, you've got a dog or masochistic tendencies? Not me, I'm afraid. Having said that, the spring bulbs are starting to poke their noses through and the days are slowly pulling out too, so spring's definitely on the way, yippee!

Having been in semi-hibernation there isn't much to report this month. However, the article 'Try something new' in December's Newsletter sparked some memories of my early culinary efforts when I was a newlywed which I thought I'd share with you.

On the whole most of my efforts were passable, however if something didn't turn out right I resorted to changing the name. One classic was jigsaw cake.

My mum used to make a chocolate orange drizzle cake that I adored and, one day, I decided to make one. Not having the recipe I fell back on the one for the good old Victoria sandwich, which I did know. All was going well and the cake came out of the oven looking good, but, this was where things started to go wrong. I knew mum drizzled in orange juice to moisten and add flavour using a skewer, so I did the same and then tried to cut the cake in half, intending to sandwich it together with chocolate butter cream. For all you cooks out there who are reading this with mounting horror, yes, I know this isn't what you do to a drizzle cake of any type, but I was young and willing to experiment with what I had to hand.

To cut a long story short, the top layer fell apart quite spectacularly and I was left with an assortment of pieces and soggy crumbs. Undaunted and not wanting to waste my efforts, I applied a liberal layer of butter cream and

stuck all the pieces into it, covered the whole in a dusting of icing sugar and then hid it! After dinner I produced my 'Piece de Resistance' with a flourish. Hubby stared at it and then asked the inevitable question, 'What is it?' My reply, 'It's a jigsaw cake', more uncomprehending



looks, so I followed up with 'You've never had jigsaw cake? 'You've never lived!' All said with a completely straight face and, to his credit, he ate it without another comment, although I did confess later on.

Other creations in the early months of married life were dandelion leaves, passed off as spinach. This was when I couldn't afford greens one weekend and they were presented on the plate without a word as to their true origins. In my defence it was May, the dandelions were young and I didn't pick close to any paths where visiting dogs may have left their calling cards.

The final one was 'jelly cream' which was actually a milk jelly that had refused to set and nearly had to be poured into the bowls.

In case you're wondering, hubby survived my early 'trials by eating' and jigsaw cake was a one-off never to be repeated creation. Probably just as well as it wasn't very nice, but it's never been forgotten.

Take care, stay safe and if I've inspired you to experiment in the kitchen, please don't poison anyone!

Jenny Wright

...diary of a lockdown kid continued

brightly-lit vehicle trundled past. It was the water team who duly dug a trench, installed 'road closed' notices and vanished. Luckily, all was sorted by 24 Dec, allowing a few days peace which was shattered on 28 Dec by the return of the gas people, complete with traffic lights and noisy machinery. Another trench was dug. This was followed by a team from a well-known cable, tv and broadband supplier. They walked up and down a few times waving mobiles and clipboards, stopped opposite, prised up a manhole and stared into it. Cue time for the 'nonchalant walk-past'. Turned out customers had complained they had been cut off by flooding in the hole but it was clear none of this lot was going to get their hands wet sorting it!

Wednesday

What are your experiences with the multitude of couriers driving our roads? I have no problem with deliveries. In fact, I am on first name terms with quite a few delivery (wo)men as they pop up at the door so often. It's the returns process that can get complex. Some packages include returns labels (or, you have to print one off from an email.) The parcels can then be taken to any number of outlets for collection. A quick check of all the paperwork and emails and I discovered I have two options, but I haven't a clue which is the correct one and I do not want to go into the wormhole of 'proving I sent a package back'. (Some folks I know are still waiting for their Christmas parcels that were posted at the end of November, ostensibly to beat the rush!)

Thursday

There are now three tabbies that frequent the garden – Terrible Tim, (he who leaps on the bird table and regularly demolishes it), Tiny Timid Tabby, who scoots off as soon as eye contact is made and Tremendous Tabby, resplendent in glittering collar and luxurious long fur – all of them look like butter wouldn't melt. As they have never appeared together, I have been wondering if, in fact, it is only one cat who morphs into other forms!

Friday

Domestic Disaster Day - or all things come in packs of three (or four.) First off, the light pull hidden behind the Art Deco style bathroom mirror failed to turn off one night. The problem was the very flimsy cord had snapped at its attachment point behind the mirror, which meant, at nearly 11.00pm, the need to go into the garage for the toolbox and torch, despite my 'suggesting' it could be left until the morning. Oh no, it had to be sorted there and then, because "Im Indoors' likes to do any repairs ASAP. So there I was, by now, shivering away holding a torch, whilst aforesaid mirror was thumped vigorously with a soft rubber-headed lump hammer. Light switch turned off, mirror returned to wall, tool box put away and thankfully, peace and darkness restored until morning when a frantic trawling of electrical websites ensued followed by the placing of an order, next day delivery and a repeat of the mirror-removing techniques to fix the new switch! Next was the mixer tap in the bathroom, which had

jammed in the 'off' position. Another very complex unit

with far too many 'choices' of designs, all looking very



similar. "Im Indoors' thought he had found the right one, ordered it from Screwfix via Click n Collect, only to discover it wasn't quite right so it was back online. Turned out the one required was now out of production, But another 'similar' one would work 90% of the time, according to purchasers – hmm, not sure what that means. Now awaiting for that to be delivered.

Then, one of the springs in the reclining seat mechanism on the sofa decided it had metal fatigue and snapped. This required the entire sofa to be upended and the old spring wriggled out with "Im Indoors' having a 'cunning plan' to temporarily repair it, which required an extremely acrobatic 10 minutes wrestling with aforesaid spring, a length of strong cord, brute force, a few 'choice' words and me 'assisting' – (Not like Debbie Mcgee!) – with the torch directed into unseen crevices. Then followed another search online for a replacement spring, which I managed to find, so Brownie Points to me.

Next, it was the turn of the shredder, which, give it its due, had undertaken sterling work last January shredding a huge amount of paperwork after a clear out of files. It had never recovered! Another search online and a new one has been delivered.

Saturday

The news of indoor repairs must have filtered out, for, over the next few days, one neighbour had several 'Men on a Mission' wandering around his back garden complete with mobile phones, tape measures and looks of concentration as they measured up all the gaps in a very old and wind-damaged fence, whilst another, on the day of the first horizontal snow storm, had new windows installed. Yet a third household decided it was a good time to begin an extension and garden revamp complete with a skip, concrete wagon, tree feller, shredder and various 'helpers'. Plus, there was the return of the Mobile Farming Soil Improver tractors. Who says its peaceful living in the countryside?

Sunday

Whilst out on an invigorating walk in the woods, we met up with neighbours who gleefully informed us we had missed 'the excitement' in the early hours when there had been a dawn raid on a property nearby. A large consignment of 'fragrant illegal substance' was seized, together with the house's occupants. "We had wondered about that unusual aroma, was the comment of one informant.

And on that note, I will 'go and put the kettle on' ready for The Pop-master Quiz and beverage of choice (Earl Grey, drop of milk, no sugar, if you're asking) – on second thoughts, it's Not Monday – Groundhog Day Syndrome strikes again. (2nd February, a Lot going on that day – see first paragraph.)

AnonyMouse

Banking as it used to be by Mike King

I left Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School for Boys (as it was then) in December 1959 knowing I had not done enough work to pass my A levels the following Summer, but with no idea what I was going to do and with no career advice available to assist.

After several futile interviews, a friend of my father suggested I consider banking. As my dad banked with the Westminster Bank in Mansfield, I went to see the manager, Bill Smith - not that you called him Bill or even Mr Smith, you addressed him as Sir!

London interview

He arranged for me to go for a formal interview at the Bank's Head Office at 41 Lothbury in London. I had never been to London on my own before but found the Head Office and undertook the interview and a few basic Maths and English tests. They then said I needed a medical including providing a sample. Needless to say I had made sure I had been to the toilet before attending the interview and could not provide the necessary, which was quite embarrassing. I had to walk around for a while before returning and completing the medical. A few days later I was advised that I had been successful and was to start working at the Mansfield Branch.

Mundane tasks

On my first few days I carried out very mundane tasks but everyone was very friendly with many people about my own age. The total clerical and management staff numbered about 30, with men having the more senior roles and women generally the more junior positions; nor would you have a married couple working in the same branch.

Mansfield was what was called a fully mechanised branch which meant that both current account bank statements and ledgers were produced on machines - of course no computers!

A short while after starting I was sent on a three-week training course at Oaken Holt in Oxford. The idea was to train us to use the accounting machines, balance the post and any other basic tasks. Though there was a large building for the training, the sleeping arrangements were fairly basic in what were dormitories in Nissan hut type buildings.

I returned to the branch and started on the accounting machines producing the ledgers and statements. They were very detailed. For instance you had to type the payee's name on a cheque in full; this was ok if it was John Smith but not so easy if it was Encyclopaedia Britannica which you were trying to type at speed. One person produced the ledgers and another the statements and then you had to ensure that the two agreed, which invariably they didn't, so you then had to find the errors and correct them.

There were very few services for customers other than a cheque book (current) account, although there were some loan accounts particularly for businesses, plus deposit accounts and savings accounts. These latter two were still manual with customers bringing in their passbooks and transactions being entered by the cashiers who then passed the books over to a clerk behind a screen who would manually enter the transaction into a ledger. It also meant that interest was calculated manually in the ledger and was then entered in the passbook when the customer next brought it into the bank.

Sub branches

After a period carrying out these duties I was sent out as a cashier to Warsop sub branch with an older man called Norman Lee, who we called the manager but in fact was just another cashier. Mansfield had several sub branches which had no permanent presence but were manned by staff

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The phantom diarist (further snippets)

LOCKDOWN NO. 3: I was intrigued to see a recent newspaper article that confirmed my feelings about what I call 'lockdown brain'. I and one or two friends have reported experiencing forgetfulness and a general 'fogginess' over the last year (almost). Well, research seems to confirm that Lockdowns are 'taking a toll' on brain health Phew, thought it was old age creeping on!

A friend in Warwickshire emailed the other day and mentioned that her husband has to steer clear of her at times, as she has become 'edgy' because of lockdown. I wrote back

and likened it to 'cabin fever' depicted in Charlie Chaplin's film, The Gold Rush! I do know how she feels. I was going to go out the other day, and then it snowed!

STARGAZING: I have spent some evenings muffled up and staring up at the night sky, hoping to see a display of shooting stars. The Geminids and the Ursids were elusive, and I missed out on both. However, there were some brilliant starry skies; although I can only identify Orion and The Plough. Clearly, I haven't been listening properly to Professor Brian Cox!



...banking as it used to be continued

from Mansfield who travelled, usually every day, by taxi. No cash was kept at the sub branches so you had to estimate what you needed and take it out from Mansfield. You had to balance your tills before you left and ensure all the transactions were brought back to the main branch.

at the Mansfield cattle market which stood where the Water Meadows complex is now. What is now Ciao Bella used to be where the farmers would get together for a drink and a chat. The 'bank' was a wooden hut which in winter was freezing cold. On several occasions, I would keep on my coat to stay warm. The farmers were

One of the quirkier sub branches was

great customers though with many colourful characters.

Another unusual sub branch was at Blidworth where one afternoon a week - Thursdays - we were situated in the front room of one of the houses on the main road. There were no counter screens in those days, we just sat in one of the arm chairs and waited for the one or two people who would turn up. I also worked on my own at the Shirebrook sub branch (we always had a 'guard' with us who was usually someone who had retired), and Rainworth where I went in the mornings, balanced the till and then went down to Mansfield Woodhouse in the afternoon to open up and then

> balance the till again, before returning to Mansfield.

A cash society

Back in the 1960's it was still very much a cash society. As bankers for the National Coal Board and with very many collieries in the area, we were responsible for providing cash to the individual collieries for the miners' wage packets. However, we didn't

accumulate sufficient cash ourselves so we had to get extra funds in. Some came from Head Office as a 'High Value Package' to the Post Office on Church Street. A couple of us would go down with two messengers, (messengers were non-clerical staff who carried out various duties such as delivering local post, handling bags of coin, and acting as guards at the sub branches), with a whistle and a truncheon to collect the parcels which would contain thousands of pounds. No Securicor in those days!

More bizarrely we would also collect money from the other banks in the town with surplus cash. For this, the four of us would have a two wheeled barrow that we would trundle across the Market Place and load up with two or three sacks of cash before wandering off back to our branch - if only the public had realised!

To distribute the money for the miners' wage packets, individual collieries would bring large wheeled boxes into the branch and we would, literally throw in dozens of bundles of cash.

Mike King

Looking up by Kay Toy

The sky: celestial versus terrestrial. The sky means freedom, openness and mystery, and all the things that release us from our restrictions here in the mundane, suburban world. I can stand in my garden and watch aircraft overhead... it might be a helicopter, a small aeroplane, or the occasional vapour trail of a passenger jet, its silver dot edging along in the ether. Where is it travelling to? Exotic climes? Busy cities? A world of escape and adventure.

Then again, garden birds offer entertainment and mystique. I look out of my kitchen window and watch, as a large flock of birds swoop across the visible sky, with a sense of urgency; and frantically fly back again with some kind of mysterious purpose. Sometimes they gather on the roof ridge of a neighbour's house, nervous and edgy, and then take flight again as if answering a signal. I wonder what it's all about, this strange avian world.

One day I was sitting on my garden bench when a bird

of prey flew over. With its fan-shaped tail, I wondered whether it was a sparrow hawk, or perhaps a buzzard. Where was it going, and where had it been?

As I was drawing the curtains one dark evening, I spotted a silvery-orange half moon glowing in the sky, like a segment of citrus fruit. Some time later in the moon cycle, the predicted "blue moon" was partially obscured by an eerie haze. A spirit of the times, I thought.

"Red sky at night, shepherd's delight". Looking out of my window one evening, I saw a beautiful sunset, spread across the sky above the trees, and it lifted my spirits.

When I was growing up, my mother liked to quote this: "What is this life if, full of care,/ We have no time to stand and stare?" She was fond of little homilies that I thought at the time were rather twee and oldfashioned (being a trendy teenager!). But perhaps she was right!

Family historians continue through the lockdowns

Here's a quick roundup of what the Family History group has been up to.

David's been filling in gaps on his family tree and has written a short life history for his children. He's also inspiring the next generation of family historians and his granddaughter has done her own life history, which David hopes to present to the group when we can next meet.

Jenny A is taking a break from her own family history and has switched to her hubby's side; however she now needs to register with Scottish records to find out more.

Having unearthed her pre computer family history research from 40 years ago Ann's busy adding details to her family trees online and has been pleased to find that most of the two match.

After an initial burst of enthusiasm during lockdown 1 Julie's admitted that they've not done a lot since and much of their time, when lockdowns have permitted, has concentrated on family instead.

Malcolm's been researching his great uncle, Joseph Stringer, and has found out he was a renowned Methodist preacher. He preached in many places, among them Derby, Bradford, Grimsby, Leeds, Mansfield and Newark and Malcolm's been able to find a wide variety of records about him. On retirement he moved to Chapel Allerton, where once he was a Superintendent Minister, to be near his two daughters.

Pauline's been adding to three different family lines, two with recently born babies and the third is a previously unknown second cousin, discovered via facebook, who lives in Ireland. She has also been sorting through photographs, which has brought both joy and sadness with the realisation that while bringing back happy memories some family and friends are no longer with us.

Mick set off with lots of enthusiasm and managed to write his life history up to 1978, but his initial enthusiasm's now waned a bit and over the past few months domestic issues have also taken precedence for him. He's hoping to come back to his family history when time and opportunity allows.

As for me, I haven't done a great deal on my own family history or life story either, bad group leader! Having the attention span of a gnat doesn't help as I get distracted easily and instead have been helping a friend find out more about a great uncle who was killed in World War 2, plus I've been delving into the family history of an occupant of Sherwood Hall.

I hope members of other groups are busy and in contact with each other. Keep sharing, I've loved seeing some of the things you've been up to in the Newsletter.

Jenny Wright

Your Executive Committee contacts

Forest Town & District U3A couldn't run without the hard work of its Executive Committee. Everyone gives their time freely. Welfare Officer, **Kelvin Foster**, has been keeping in touch by email but for members who do not use email he's keen to emphasise that any member who needs help should contact him by phone on **01623 422251**. All Executive Committee members can be contacted via the website at https://u3asites.org.uk/forest-town/contact

Current members are: Linda Shutt (Chair), Allan Barham (Vice-Chair), Andrew Riby (Treasurer), Irene Duncan (Assistant Treasurer) Sue Harkin (Business Secretary), Anita Adlard (Groups' Coordinator), Steve Evans (Assistant Groups' Coordinator), Kelvin Foster (Membership Secretary & Welfare Officer), Kathryn Cope (Assistant Membership Secretary), Desley O'Leary (Speaker Seeker) and Bob Hunt (Website Editor).

Next issue

Please send articles or ideas for the next issue to Helen Riby by email ftu3anews@gmail.com or by post to: 5 Fal Paddock, Mansfield Woodhouse NG19 9RW by midnight on Friday 19 February.

Please visit our website for the latest news:

https://u3asites.org.uk/forest-town/

Forest Town & District U3A is a Registered Charity Number 1186417



Claim your free membership

To claim your free Forest Town U3A membership (April 21 to March 22), please complete this form and return to the address shown. If you are unable to print the newsletter, or do not want to cut up your printed copy, simply write all the details on a slip of paper and return it, or put the details into an email. Clearly, if returning by email no signature is required.

Please return to one of the membership team: Kelvin Foster, <u>kelvinfoster298@yahoo.com</u>

- 6 Walkers Close Forest Town NG19 ODQ

or Kathryn Cope cope.kevin@btinternet.com

- 97 Ling Forest Road Mansfield NG18 3NQ

I confirm that I wish to continue my membership of Forest Town & District U3A. *Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS*

Name:	
Address:	
Post code:	Tel:
Email (if applicable):	

I would be interested in attending virtual General Meetings via Zoom

Signature: __

YES/NO