



Newsletter Edition No. 98 SEPTEMBER 2020

Dear Member

Welcome to the September edition of the Rayleigh U3A newsletter.

In these unusual times, there is little to report about our activities. Although lockdown is slowly loosening its grip, we are unable to restart our monthly meetings at Mill Hall due to the present Covid - 19 Guidelines. Events such as Talks for All and Study Days had, unfortunately, to be postponed/cancelled. It is hoped that many of the previously planned events will be rescheduled during 2021.

To try to keep the members in touch with our U3A, I introduced a series of emails with jokes, cartoons, articles, videos contributed by our members. It proved very popular.

For this year, after much thought and discussion, your Committee have replaced the AGM in Mill Hall with a mixture of email and post so that you are kept informed and can express your wishes.

After serving my three years as your Chairman, I am stepping down. I have tried to encourage a more friendly U3A and I feel we have succeeded. We have greeters at our monthly meetings so that new members and single persons are welcomed. Many events such as Talks for All, Study Days, Quiz shows, coach trips to places of interest, coffee mornings and a holiday at Warner's, have been organised.

The activity groups cover a wide spectrum of subjects. Heather Fryer-Kelsey has been the Group Coordinator for many years and is also stepping down. She has been able to fit new members into existing groups or form new ones. Hopefully some of the groups can meet electronically or at open air venues.

The end of my term has been spoiled by Covid-19. The current situation must be very hard for many. It seems unlikely that we will return to the old days soon, but when we do come out of lockdown, I am sure that we will make the most of the new normal.

Meanwhile, take care and stay well.

Best Wishes

David Fryer-Kelsey, Chair

RAYLEIGH U3A JULY COMMITTEE MEETING



Our July committee meeting was held in Val and Jim Whitehouse's garden – social distancing, of course. It was very unusual, but we all appreciated getting together to discuss the way forward.

Although we are not able to hold large meetings yet, the Members Contributions have started up again- don't forget to send me anything you think would amuse, entertain or be of interest to other Rayleigh U3A members. (email: - val_whitehouse@yahoo.co.uk)

There is, of course, also the newsletters.

RAYLEIGH U3A GROUPS

I am sure that most of you that are members of groups are missing the 'normal' get togethers each month.

I heard recently that Book Reading Group 1 has continued during the lockdown. Doreen orders the books from Rayleigh library; the members collect their books and send their reviews to her which she then sends to all the group members – well done Doreen!

Walking Group 3 has also been on a walk around Hockley Woods.

As a Group Leader of two groups with my husband Jim, we have been trying to keep in contact via email with our members despite not being able to meet up.

Is your group up and running again? Please let us know.

We hope that you are all keeping well and staying safe.

Val Whitehouse Vice Chair

BRIDGE GROUP

Some of the members of the group have been playing bridge online using the website:

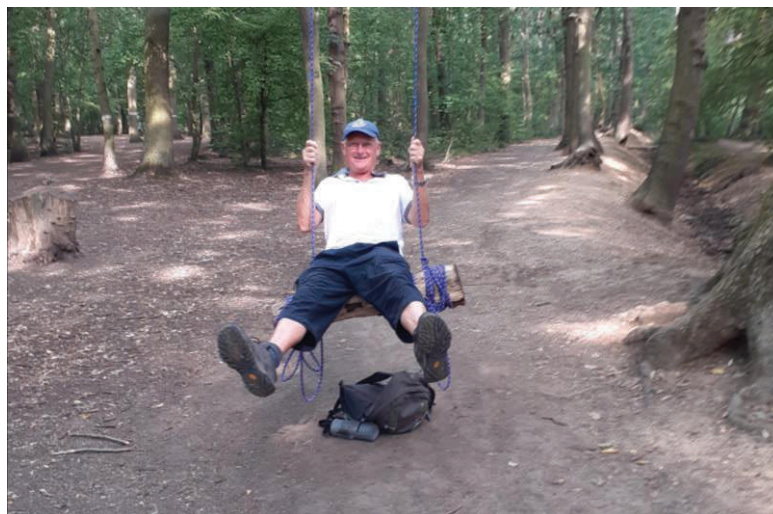
BRIDGE BASE ONLINE

Social membership on this site is free. If any member would like more details/and or wish to join other members in pairs/fours, please contact Sheila

email sh.fa.40@gmail.com

or phone 07724095299

WALKING GROUP 3'S VISIT TO HOCKLEY WOODS



RELIVING CHILDHOOD ADVENTURES?

NEWS FROM THE SECRETARY

So, what do I write about this time? Do you really want to know that I have taken up crochet, read books 'till I'm cross-eyed, sorted all the children's old Lego into packs or watched re-runs of ER (and yes, George Clooney is still gorgeous!)? What have other people been doing? So, I looked on the National Office website – www.u3a.org.uk and oh my, what a lot is going on!

I've just spent two hours looking at what people have been making – check out 'Learning – Make It! Made It!' for inspiration – I'm going to try Kumihimo next (you will have to check out the site to see what that is!) and if I ever finish my crochet sheep baby blanket, I'll be sending in a picture. If you are at all creative – look at 'Learning – Creative Covid Collaboration' – this is an interesting project to get involved with.

I then looked at the Quizzes – there is new one every week with answers the following week – I think I may challenge the Committee to one (although do I trust them not to look at the answers?!). I looked at the Maths Quizzes too – maybe they might just stretch my brain too far? Find these in 'Learning – Weekly Quiz and Maths Challenge'. Could you try one of these with one of your Groups?

Some stunning photographs have been submitted under 'Learning – U3A Eye' – they give a topic to focus on. Wouldn't it be great to see some from our Photography Groups? The challenge is on!

Did you know that we can join in weekly Mindfulness sessions on YouTube? Particularly in these uncertain times - mindfulness has become ever more popular amongst people of all ages, who want to connect with their situation and surroundings. All the details can be found in 'Learning – Mindfulness'.

There is a Diary Project, to record your thoughts and memories; Birdwatch, full of things to look for and record and much more. You may have to create an account – it is easy just using the link at the bottom of the U3A Home Page – it's free and then you can access the advice pages too. Whilst you are there, sign up for the Newsletter which can be found under the Quick Links also at the bottom of the Home Page. This will mean you get the email newsletters from National Office which are very interesting and informative.

If you are a Group Leader, there is lots of information found in Subject Advice – it may give you ideas for when we can get back together.

I do realise that all the above can only be accessed if you have a computer, or tablet or smartphone, but our Third Age Matters magazine will contain more details of these projects for those of you without devices. If you are particularly interested in finding out more about any of the above, do speak to your Group Leader and I am sure they will do what they can to help.

So, stay safe and keep busy – you have no excuse now!

Debbie Bamber, Secretary

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN FISHING?

What type of fishing are you interested in?

Do you have your own equipment?

To find out more please contact Ray Lowe at: -

amandaraylowe@gmail.com



Thank you, Ray Lowe.

WING WALK -- MIKE CAIRNS



Our member, Mike Cairns,
did his wing walk
for Havens Hospice in July
and really enjoyed it

(1250 feet high and 100 mph).
He said it was amazing.

He thanks all who donated.



If you would like to see the video, look on YouTube: 'Mikes wing walk'.

BELOW ARE some of the PAINTINGS that have been achieved by members DURING LOCKDOWN



THE FOLLOWING STORY ALTHOUGH FICTITIOUS IS LOOSELY BASED ON A FAMILY THAT WAS ABOARD THE TITANIC.
THE INFORMATION WAS TAKEN FROM VARIOUS DOCUMENTS RESEARCHED ON THE INTERNET.

THE SHIP OF DREAMS

I've never written or said much before about what happened, but now I'm nearly 96 years old I am ready to speak about it. I find it difficult to write now due to arthritis and my poor eyesight, so this story is written by my niece after recording my story.

I was only a child, but I could feel that something important was about to happen. My parents, Arthur and Ada, were constantly talking excitedly together, looking at pieces of paper and making lists. There had already been a lot of changes in my life. We had moved twice, the last move being from Bristol to Bournemouth, and I recently had a baby sister, Barbara, who was now 10 months old. Were we about to move again? In fact, we were, but I could not have imagined what was ahead.

The next few weeks were a whirl of making arrangements, sorting, packing and saying farewell to family and friends. I was told that we were going on an exciting journey across the sea on the 'Ship of Dreams', The Titanic, the largest and safest passenger ship in the world. My parents had decided to strike out for a new life in America. Finally, the day to leave home arrived. After a tortuous journey, first to Waterloo and then by a special boat train to Southampton, we finally arrived. We were all tired after the journey, but our spirits lifted when we boarded the ship; a band was playing and people on the quayside were waving and cheering. I felt very special and watched with fascination as the crew carried out the lifeboat drill by lowering two of the lifeboats.

There were three classes of passengers on the ship and we were 2nd class. We were on E deck: mother, Barbara and I were in the same room. Father was on the opposite side of the ship as all adult males had to have rooms separate from their families. Our cabin, called a stateroom, had oak panelling and was spacious and comfortable, with a large sofa, wardrobe and a dressing table. What I liked best was the washbasin that could be folded back into a cabinet.

The next day we explored the ship. I couldn't believe how large it was, it was like a floating vertical village. As 2nd class passengers, we had three promenades and a spacious library come drawing room with its own lending library including children's books. For males only, there was a Smoking Room with comfortable green leather chairs and tables for playing cards. There was also a large Dining Room with parallel rows of long, rectangular dining tables and red leather swivel chairs that I would swing on from side to side until mother made me stop.

Over the next few days, we got into a routine. The ship's company, 'The White Star Line', provided us with a pushchair and mother and I would take Barbara for stroll. I loved using the lift down to the enclosed promenade on C-Deck. There we'd find other children and I sometimes played deck quoits with them. In the afternoon we went to the library where afternoon tea was served. Father instead went to play cards in the Smoke Room, where the stewards served drinks.

On the evening of the 14th April, after an especially tasty evening meal which ended in my favourite, plum pudding, mother, Barbara and I retired to our room while father went to the Smoking Room. As usual I slept very well. A few hours later, I was awoken by mother shaking me. I saw that things were moving about in the cabin and mother was having difficulty standing upright. I could hear loud noises from outside. I was scared. A steward knocked and said we all had to get up immediately and dress with plenty of warm clothes. Mother anxiously asked him what was going on, but he quickly left, leaving mother's questions unanswered. Mother found my warm clothes and, while I got dressed, woke Barbara and got her dressed. I started to cry and asked what was happening and where was father; mother said it was probably just a storm that would settle, and that father would come soon but I could tell she was only reassuring herself as well as me.

THE SHIP OF DREAMS (continued)

Mother decided to leave the cabin and grasping my hand and carrying Barbara we ventured onto the deck. People here were aimlessly rushing about but fortunately we spotted father making his way towards us. He had lifebelts for us and, taking Barbara from mother, led us down to the boat deck. There all was pandemonium; a disorganized and haphazard evacuation was taking place. We saw that a lifeboat was in the water; it left holding about 28 people but was able to hold about 65. Women and children were told to board the remaining lifeboats first. Father saw us safely into a lifeboat and then went back to our cabin to collect a thermos of hot milk. On returning, finding the lifeboat let down, he had to lower the flask by rope to get it to mother. He waved farewell; I never saw father again.

I can't really remember much of what happened next, I think the horror of it must have blocked it all out of my mind and that is why I can only now speak of it. I suppose I felt somehow guilty that I had been so excited and had enjoyed my first days on the Titanic. I learned later that the ship's lookout had seen an iceberg just before midnight, but the ship had been too big to quickly change direction and the side of the iceberg had torn holes in the hull. The Titanic started to sink, bow first causing the stern to rise out of the water. At around 2 am on the 15th April 1912, the ship broke into two sending all those on board to drown into the freezing ocean.

We were picked up some time later by the RMS Carpathia and taken to New York. I know that mother, Barbara, and I had been lucky to get on one of the twenty lifeboats on board, all that were provided for a total of 2,240 passengers and crew and yet being more than required by the Board of Trade. We were among only 705 survivors: over 1,500 people tragically lost their lives.

My parents' hopes and aspirations sank with the 'Ship of Dreams'.

Barbara Bowen

STORY FROM OUR WRITERS' GROUP

TIME TO BEGIN

George looked at his watch again. The hands had barely moved. He'd wait for another half hour and start to get ready. His son Russ should be arriving at 11 and he wanted to be organised.

He wandered out into the small garden, planted with such care by Ellen. He'd tried to keep it neat, but she was the one with the green fingers. He'd never been interested in gardening. Sport was more his thing. Oh, he liked sitting out there, especially with a cold beer on a warm summer's evening. They would sit out until it got too dark to see each other, enjoying the peace and quiet, chatting, remembering all the good times in their life together. He had always cut the grass for Ellen, but she tended the plants and had turned the patch of bare earth and brown grass into an oasis for wild birds.

In later times, the garden was the only place that Ellen would settle, just for half an hour or so. Her behaviour became so erratic that George was afraid to leave her. Her memory began to fail her, and they would laugh about it at first. After all, we all have those times when names or places escape us. It gradually got worse and Russ noticed and began to question George about his mum, suggesting he took her to see the doctor. George wouldn't hear of it, insisting that Ellen was fine, just a bit confused at times.

It was when they were on holiday that Ellen's illness got worse. They had gone to a small hotel in Dorset with friends. George and Ellen had stayed there several times before and knew the owners quite well.

At dinner, on their first night, Ellen refused to eat her meal, saying that someone had put something in her food. When George tried to persuade her to eat something, she became very upset and he had to take her back to their room. He stayed with her, settling her down to sleep and quietly went down to the bar to explain to their friends that she was unwell. When he returned, Ellen had turned the room upside down, emptying their suitcases and stripping the bed. She was sobbing and clung to George, begging him to find her baby. He managed to get her back to bed and, eventually they slept. He was awakened by someone banging on the door. It was the night receptionist. Ellen had gone downstairs in her nightgown and was looking everywhere for her baby. She was very distraught, refusing to go back to her room because there was a strange man in there.

Again, George tried to settle her, avoiding the slaps and scratches as best he could, but he realised that it was time to face the fact that he just couldn't cope anymore. He was so tired, and his beloved Ellen needed the help that he could no longer give alone.

He sat up watching her for the rest of the night, afraid to close his eyes, his mind racing, thinking back to the early days when Ellen had been so well, so vibrant. How sad he felt, knowing that he had to face up to the future, with all the difficulties it would bring.

TIME TO BEGIN (continued)

Joan woke early and groaned as she saw herself in the bathroom mirror. She'd had a restless night and the creases in her face seemed to have multiplied! "Oh well, it can't be helped." She thought. "This is me, and that's all there is to it." She made some tea but couldn't face any breakfast. Her stomach was twisting and turning with nerves.

Was she doing the right thing? She was happy with her life. She lived in a small flat, bought with the proceeds from her divorce from Eric, after he went off with that floozy from the Co-Op. She'd forgiven him after the first couple of 'mistakes' but finally she'd had enough of his lies and deceit. They'd divorced five years ago, and Joan had made a comfortable life for herself. She'd joined several clubs and made a new circle of friends. Was it the right decision to make changes now?

Her suitcase was packed and waiting by the door. Just the last bits to go into her hand luggage. She checked, yet again, that her passport was there. She was looking forward to some autumn sunshine in Majorca. It had been stressful few months and she was still waiting for the sale of her flat to go through. It would be fine, a new beginning. It was time to shower and get ready, before the taxi arrived.

George put on his dark suit and a new white shirt. He walked around the bedroom, putting things away. He had always been neat. The army had taught him that. He picked up the photo of himself and Ellen on their wedding day. They looked so young, so happy together. And they *had* been happy, for more than forty years. He touched her face and put the photograph away in a draw. "Come on Dad. Let's have a small brandy to steady our nerves, eh?" Russ held out a glass. "It's gone twelve, better get going soon."

Joan put on her new dress, carefully avoiding her hair. The dark colour made her look slimmer, but she wondered if it was a bit too severe. But the salesgirl had said it suited her and wouldn't crease on the flight. Perhaps she'd wear her pearls, to brighten it up a bit. Blast, the taxi was here, five minutes early. Her brother Tom rang the doorbell and gave her an admiring whistle. "You look great Sis. I'll put your luggage in the taxi and then we'll need to get going. Janet's got your other bits."

Joan checked that everything was locked and turned off, took a deep breath and closed the door behind her. A couple of the neighbours came out and wished her well and she promised to keep in touch with them. She would miss this little flat and the friendly neighbourhood, but she had much to look forward to.

The taxi journey seemed to go on forever. Joan was getting more and more nervous by the minute. Tom was making his usual jokes, trying to make her laugh. It was a relief to finally arrive. Tom helped her out and took charge of the luggage, putting it inside the entrance door. He held out his hand and said "Come on old girl. Give us a smile. Life's an adventure, you know." Joan managed a weak smile and greeted her sister in law Janet with a careful hug. It was a warm, autumn day and she could smell the heady perfume of her favourite flowers, faintly hear her favourite son.

It was time.

George and Russ arrived at the pretty church and George quietly greeted the friends and family who were waiting by the entrance. Russ called out, "The car's here Dad. Time to go inside" and took his place next to his Dad, ready to offer him a steadying arm if he needed it. But George strode ahead, nodding and smiling at the small congregation. The church was full of autumn flowers and looked beautiful, but not as beautiful as the woman who was walking down the aisle towards him, holding on tightly to her proud brother's arm, smiling at him.

It was time for them both to start a new life together. Joan would be moving into George's spacious bungalow after their honeymoon. In his after-dinner speech, George thanked the guests but gave special thanks to the leader of their Friday walking group. It was here that he and Joan had met, after the sad death of his dear Ellen. They had become good friends and found that they shared many interests. They had both been through some tough times and had found love and companionship with each other.

Finally, with the hearty approval of their families, they had decided to get wed and spend the rest of their time together. Time moves so fast and they meant to enjoy every minute of it.



Middle Age:

That time when you finally get your head together- then your **BODY STARTS FALLING APART!**

-Unknown Author

The amount of jokes about coronavirus virus has reached worrying numbers. Scientists claim we are in the middle of a **pundemic**

I'm retired.



I was tired yesterday, and I'm tired again today!

HUMOUROUS THOUGHTS ABOUT GETTING OLDER

(from our current chairman, who has thoughtfully/kindly extended his agreed 3 years of office to assist the running of our U3A.)

I thought getting old would take longer
<i>I really don't mind getting older, but my body is taking it badly</i>
I'm on two diets. I wasn't getting enough food on one
<i>Do you ever get up in the morning, look in the mirror and think "That can't be accurate"?</i>
I miss the 90's when bread was still good for you and no one knew what kale was
<i>Don't irritate old people. The older we get the less "Life in prison" is a deterrent</i>
It turns out that being an adult is mostly just googling how to do stuff
<i>I want to be 14 again and ruin my life differently. I have new ideas</i>

EDITORS' NOTE

As some of you may already know, Viv and Sheila are stepping down as editors. The time is right for fresh ideas and new blood!

We wish our successors all the very best.

We would like to thank all of you who have taken the time and effort to send us photos, reports and stories. This has been much appreciated, whilst sometimes making it difficult to decide what to leave out!

We would also especially like to thank David and Heather Fryer-Kelsey for their support and encouragement and for their unflagging efforts to create a friendly and co-operative spirit in Rayleigh U3A. David's time to proof-read has been invaluable and his expertise for this task has been much appreciated. We hope that both of you will enjoy your new free time, now that you've stepped down from your time-consuming roles in the U3A.

Please continue to send articles for future newsletters to **Val Whitehouse** (email val_whitehouse@yahoo.co.uk) until the new editors are announced.

Wishing you all the best for the future.
Viv Smith, Sheila Farrant