



## Newsletter

We have been drawing up plans for a monthly U3A newsletter over the past few weeks.

The planning has been fairly leisurely but we have decided to push ahead quickly now that most groups have become casualties to the Coronavirus crisis.

Where will we get our news?

FROM YOU. We'd like to hear from you about how you are dealing with the stream of government "advice".

What are your fears and hopes. Where do you get your news and information. Is it clear and does it give you confidence.

What can We Do?

How strictly are you observing current guidelines?. For instance I've been going for bike rides with a mate and stopping at a coffee shop where we sit outside. Is that OK, do you think?



## What Can We Do?

Boris Johnson's father told a TV programme he would go to the pub if he "needs" to. Is he right?

There's another sense of "What Can We Do?". Give us your ideas what to while most of U3A is not functioning.

ALREADY UP AND RUNNING

Combatting isolation: Maggie Jones has started a WhatsApp group for our U3A. As a means of keeping in touch and to ask for help if needed. Of course, members will need a smartphone to download the WhatsApp app. Email Maggie [maggiejones999@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:maggiejones999@yahoo.co.uk) with your phone number and she will invite you to join the group.

Combatting boredom: gardening, cooking, puzzles and music move up the agenda. Overleaf we have a piece on books.

Combatting House Arrest syndrome: we hope to look at (solo?) walks in our next edition. And lots more.

Be aware that in addition to hoarders and profiteers, the virus is an opportunity for scammers and fraudsters to do their worst. We've already heard that people are going door-to-door saying they're testing for the virus.

cartoon courtesy of The Guardian

## BOOK OF THE WEEK

Well, we are going to have plenty of time to read, aren't we? Two of the great heavyweights of English literature, Hilary Mantel and Philip Pullman have produced novels recently which combined give us more than 1500 pages. So, *The Mirror and the Light* and *The Secret Commonwealth* should keep us occupied for a while!

More relevant to our situation is Albert Camus' novel *The Plague*. Published in 1947, it is a fictional story about the very real town of Oran in Algeria. Often considered to be an allegory of the French resistance to the Nazis in World War II, it points out the futility of human aspirations and the inevitability of suffering. I ploughed through it nine times without it depressing me too much – a fine read (yes, one of my A level set books).

You might also enjoy *The Plague Dogs* from Richard Adams (better known, of course, for *Watership Down*).

Charity shops (eg, Oxfam in Balham High Road if still open) are good for books – or there is the library (oops, closed) and there is the e-book.



## JOKE OF THE WEEK

We were hosting a dinner party for all our friends and they were all encouraged to bring their children. During dinner my wife's best friend's four-year-old was sitting across the table staring at me. The girl could hardly eat her food for staring at me. I checked my shirt for spots, felt my face for food, patted my hair in place, but nothing stopped her from staring.

I tried my best to ignore her but finally it was too much. I asked her: "Why are you staring at me?"

Everyone at the table had also noticed her behaviour and the table went quiet.

The little girl said: "I'm just waiting to see how you drink like a fish."

## SONG OF THE WEEK

Forget *Happy Birthday* and go for *Don't Stand So Close to Me*, the bestselling single of 1980 in the UK.

From The Police



Our mission is to do what we can do to help Wandsworth U3A members cope with life under the virus. Here we go international and look at what is happening across the waters.

## GOT A BALCONY?

Neighbours in Italy have been joining nightly singalongs to brighten up quarantine. At 6pm notes on Facebook and WhatsApp call on people to step out onto their balconies and make some noise – sing the Italian national anthem or simply sing. Inspiration has spread to Bamberg in Germany where people have been singing the Italian Resistance song *Bella Ciao* in solidarity with the plight of Italians.

Spaniards on lockdown have also taken to their windows and balconies – to clap and cheer medical staff for their work during the coronavirus outbreak.

## GUNNING FOR TOILET PAPER?

A rather different example from the United States ... where long queues have been spotted outside gun shops. One way of getting yourself to the front of the queue, I suppose.

## YOUR EDITORIAL TEAM

Don Brind, Zenobia Cowan-Davies and Peter Martin want to hear from you and know what you think.

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