



**Newsletter**

**Wandsworth**



Somebody contacted me last week to tell me to put my clocks back.

Unfortunately, I can't remember where I took them from.

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**NEWSLETTER TEAM**

Don Brind and Peter Martin are keen to hear from you.

Please email us at

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PM: 020 8672 8150  
DB: 020 8673 1116

**Are we over privileged?**

We get free travel, free eye tests, inflation-proof pensions, winter fuel allowance, Christmas Bonus, and so on and so forth.

All at a time when our (grand) children can't afford to buy a home in London without help from the Bank of Mum & Dad. Can the country afford this largesse in the time of Covid?

The responses to our question about TfL and the Freedom Pass suggest we know when we are well off: yes, we feel we deserve it but many of us could make a contribution to the cost.

***Do you feel a little uncomfortable?***

**A STATEMENT FROM OUR CHAIR: TAKING A STAND ON RACISM**

Wandsworth U3A is an anti-racist organisation and opposes all forms of hate speech and actions. Members may be surprised that this needs to be made explicit. Surely ours is an organisation based on liberal values of education and self-development within a community of like-minded people? Sadly, that confidence has been brought into question by a recent comment posted on a social media group made up of U3A members.

One member suggested that ethnic minorities were responsible for spreading Covid 19. The comment was immediately challenged by other members, who branded it as "racist rubbish". The author of the offensive comment was excluded from the group.

The purpose of this statement is to fully endorse the response of those members. In considering the matter further the committee will observe important principles such as natural justice and due process. We will not be identifying the member concerned but we will make contact with them to seek a way forward. The committee will also take advice about drawing up a code of conduct covering the rights and responsibilities of membership.

It's a great boon for all of us. But treat it as a benefit in kind, worth, say, £500 a year? It would become taxable – if you paid tax; if you didn't, it remains free.

Not the under 16s and students, but the over 60s could contribute an annual sum.

I didn't mind when bus travel was no longer free before 9:30. I also wouldn't mind paying an annual fee like the Railcard but I'd be really annoyed if I was no longer eligible at all.

## BLACK HISTORY: THE REAL McCOY

**W**e often hear the expression “this is the real McCoy” but how many of us might have used it without knowing its origin and why it was initially used? Jeff Pickering finishes off BLACK HISTORY MONTH by taking a look at the life of

**Elijah McCoy 1843-1929**



Elijah McCoy was a black American who was born during the civil war, and during this time – and for some time after – very few businesses would ever consider employing a black person in a professional capacity and less so as an engineer. During this time, the railroads employed a large number of black men – and probably more than any other industry – but only in a track laying capacity or in the train yards doing the menial jobs.

Elijah McCoy was born a free person in Colchester, Ontario on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1843. His parents George and Mildred were former slaves from Kentucky who had escaped to Canada via the Underground Railroad. This was a famous and well documented network of people, houses and farms that gave shelter to escaping slaves who were making their way North to freedom. After some years, the McCoy parents returned to the USA and settled in “Ypsilanti” Michigan and it’s here that Elijah went on to have a secondary education.

Elijah came from a large family of eleven brothers and sisters and was always fascinated by machinery. His parents made huge sacrifices and sent him to Edinburgh where he studied mechanical engineering. At the end of his studies he returned to Michigan and headed to Detroit, hoping to find work as an engineer but had to take the best job he could find on the railroad. His work included oiling the engines of the trains.

In those days, the engines had to be temporarily turned off to be oiled or they would overheat, catch fire, or breakdown. Oiling helped reduce the friction and prevent wear and tear. Elijah became aware that children, some of whom were orphans, were also oiling the engines by hand and were called “Grease Monkeys”. This was dangerous work that could injure or kill them – and it often did. They were paid mere pennies a day and slept on the dirty floors where they worked.



Elijah quickly realised that there was a need for a safer and more efficient method for oiling the trains, and because of this he spent some time developing a device that would lubricate the engines without stopping their operation and without endangering life.

*And we look at that solution next week*

### JOHN ARCHER STATUE

The Council hope to establish a charitable entity to help with fundraising and oversight of the project and have pledged £10,000 as seed funding. An artist of national significance and ideally someone of an Afro-Caribbean or African heritage will be sought. In place in 2022? Battersea Park?

### WANDSWORTH'S GOT TALENT

Two Furzedown youngsters triumphed in the Black Theatre awards. Noah Thomas won the **Best Male Actor in a Musical** Award for his performance in the title role of **Everybody's talking about Jamie** and Tonye Scott-Obene from Graveney School won the **Best Recent Graduate** Award.

### THE BLACK CURRICULUM

campaign aims to teach and support the teaching of Black history all year round, rather than just one month, both in and out of schools.

In Wandsworth Ernest Bevin and Putney High schools have been involved in developing ideas for the project.