



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Newsletter

NESTON U3A

Summer 2020

Welcome to the second newsletter which I have had the pleasure of compiling, despite the difficult circumstances that we have found ourselves in since the previous one was published. Neston U3a has obviously not been functioning in the same way during lockdown but I have received some interesting articles and have attempted to show what members have been doing during this unusual time. Many thanks for the feedback I received about the last newsletter and I hope that you enjoy reading this one. Julie (Editor)



Chairman's Musings

Hello everybody, yet again. I hope you have all kept clear of the dreaded virus. Strange times indeed.

When writing my previous musings, I little thought I would have the opportunity to do so again, as I was supposed to have relinquished the post of Chairman by now. As we have not been able to hold our AGM the current Trustees have to continue in that capacity until such time as a new committee is elected. I don't think Alan Green will mind if I disclose that, subject to successful election to committee, he has agreed to take on the responsibility of being the new Chairman, but we still need volunteers for the positions of Membership Secretary and Groups Co-ordinator.

Please think about it and put your name forward; an initial helping hand will always be available. We are currently investigating the possibility of holding a virtual AGM online, but the problem of voting on the various resolutions is making it difficult. With the contributions coming in for 'Ideas to Keep Us Occupied' and the concerns being expressed as well, it is clear that members value the Neston U3A so I don't think there will be a problem mustering a quorum online.

Committee meetings, with the restricted number involved, are not a problem and a few of our Interest Groups are already holding virtual meetings using Zoom. Earlier security risks with Zoom have apparently been resolved. In addition to this, the accompanist for the Singing for Pleasure Group has put a good number of their more popular pieces onto YouTube, so that we can all sing along at home. Thanks Cath, it does us good to let loose!

Returning to the 'Ideas' initiative, we owe Liz Marrs a huge thank you for all the work she has put into it, receiving the suggestions and sending a daily e-mail to the members. When I go out on Thursday evenings to applaud our essential workers I include Liz in my thoughts. Aren't we lucky with the people we have on our committee and with the weather we have enjoyed so far during lockdown? Imagine what it might have been like if we could not get out to exercise or into the garden.

Despite Julie having some health problems, Simon and Julie Davies have exhibited a genuine community spirit, expressing their willingness to continue to arrange assistance with deliveries for anyone unable to get out (phone 0796 017 0007). Julie is also compiling this newsletter for members. We hope to be able to post copies to members without e-mail. Our grateful thanks to both of them.

Please continue to take care and keep healthy. I look forward to seeing many of you at our Christmas Social.

Best wishes,
Geoff Gibson

Finally understood what
zoom meetings remind me
of.

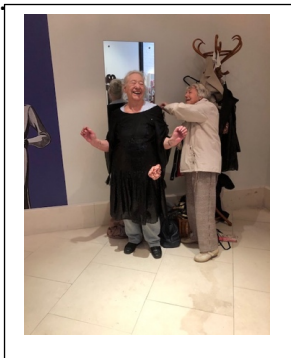


BEFORE LOCKDOWN

There is not much to report about Neston U3a activities prior to going into lockdown, but some groups did manage to enjoy activities in the run-up to the changes.

On the 4th February, a group from the U3A Antiques and Collectable had an enjoyable trip to Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery to 'An English Lady's Wardrobe'.

It explored Mrs Emily Tinne's fascination with shopping. This is the largest collection of changing fashion, including fur coats, of any museum in the UK. It included stylish examples of day and evening wear, underwear and accessories. The exhibition also had many posters and photographs of Liverpool shops including Cripps of Bold Street and Henderson's.



We all enjoyed the visit. Thanks to Liz Marrs for organising it.

Snookered!

A few weeks before lockdown a new group started up on Wednesday mornings at Neston Civic Hall. Members were enjoying meeting up and practising their snooker skills, which, in the case of some members needed to be practiced!



A problem arose which has not yet been resolved. Unfortunately, the snooker tables are upstairs at the Civic Hall with no disabled access, which excludes some members from joining the group.

Hopefully this can be resolved once normal life resumes.

New members are welcome to join this group once it is allowed.

Sports and Social Activities

The many sports and social activities were going strong but, unfortunately, they came to an unexpected halt when lockdown started. At the time, prior to lockdown the groups were very active and new groups were being formed to give members a greater choice. The committee continues to look for a committee member who will take on the role of group coordinator and would welcome a show of interest from members who would be willing to take on the role.

LOCKDOWN

Thoughts from your editor:

When I offered to take over the publishing of the Neston U3a Newsletter, there was no indication that the world as we knew it would soon be rapidly changing. Geoff wrote what he thought would be his last Chairman's Musings and the date for the AGM had been set ready for a new Chairperson to take over. Then Covid 19 hit the UK with force and we have been in lockdown ever since.

Lockdown hasn't been all bad for us although I consider that we are amongst the lucky ones. We have no young children to worry about or Grandchildren to miss visiting. We don't live in a small flat with children who are bored as they can't go out or go to school. We have a garden that we can sit in or even potter in. We can go to the shops and have had the privilege of shopping for others who are not so fortunate as us. My part time job had to stop but I was paid in full and although Simon did not feel that it was safe to carry on with his job as an Uber driver, he has been able to secure himself an alternative job as a shopper for Morrison's online service, which is perfect for him as he loves to shop! The strong sense of community spirit and the chance to wave to friends and neighbours when we go out to clap for the NHS has been a real positive too.

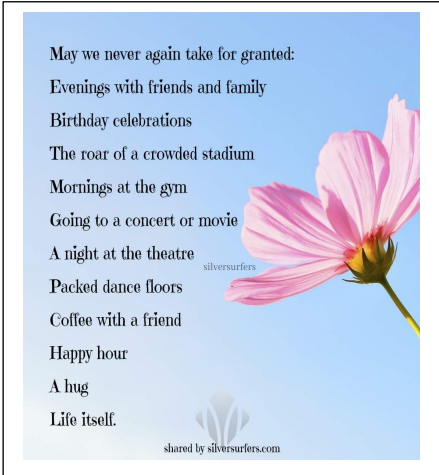
I have discovered that I can still be creative with a crochet hook and have started to use up some of the tons of wool that I accrued years ago. We have also found that we have a third bedroom that is usable as Simon has finally got around to sorting all the things that were dumped in there when we had major surgery to the house following a rather nasty accident. I've also sorted the kitchen cupboards out and have been determined that we will use up the food we have stored over the years, some of which has been thrown out as it was *way* past its sell by date!

The lovely cycle tracks we are fortunate to have in this area have also been rediscovered and well used during the permitted 'one exercise a day' session and we have had some enjoyable local walks too. The cats have loved having us at home too! The bonus has been the weather which has been mostly good throughout lockdown.

Communication is so good now that it has been easy to keep in touch with family and friends and apps such as Face Time have made it feel like we are with people, even when we are not.

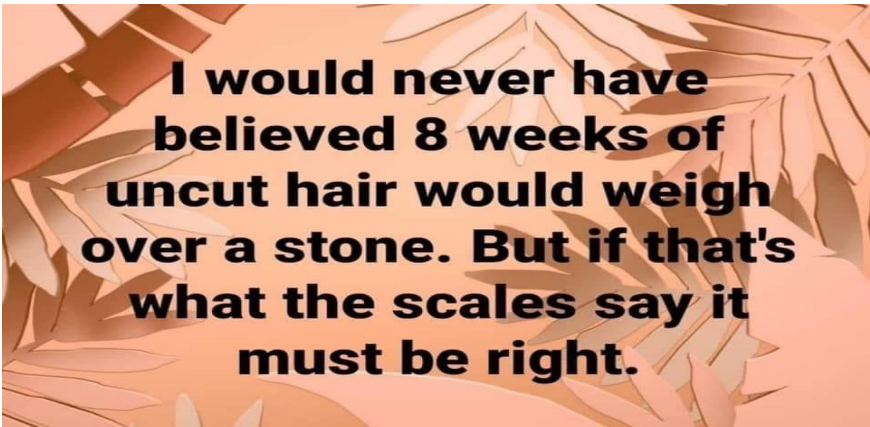
Whilst it has not been pleasant to have our lives restricted, perhaps lockdown is helping to save our planet. The reduction in road traffic and lack of aeroplanes has reduced the air pollution throughout the world. People have realized now that they can have overseas meetings and even university lectures, without unnecessary travel. I also wonder if the reduction in use of transport has contributed to the long spell of good weather we have experienced this year!

Perhaps when things get back to normal, normal will have changed and the world will be a better place for it!



May we never again take for granted:
Evenings with friends and family
Birthday celebrations
The roar of a crowded stadium
Mornings at the gym
Going to a concert or movie
A night at the theatre
Packed dance floors
Coffee with a friend
Happy hour
A hug
Life itself.

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I would never have believed 8 weeks of uncut hair would weigh over a stone. But if that's what the scales say it must be right.

Life in lockdown By Bob Kynaston

It felt strange not being able to go out but to start there were the jobs around the house that hadn't been done.

The Georgian pane windows hadn't been painted on the inside since they were put in 5 years ago so two of those were done. 64 small panes in the two windows! Two more to go.!!

The spare room needed redecorating after we changed the wardrobes. No excuse now for not finishing it. We had dismantled the old wardrobe and it was waiting to go out but Pat needed more room for her books so it was re-modelled and became a 6ft high bookcase. The window had been painted as mentioned above so the remainder of the room has now been finished.

We have been getting our regular allowed exercise and I've been doing some cycling to keep it up.

Tidying up the workshop – ongoing and no excuse now for not seriously getting down to it. By now I needed a project and motor bikes have been an ongoing hobby of mine since I was young. So along came the latest addition. I managed to get hold of 2 similar damaged bikes: one with a good frame but small engine and one with a damaged frame with a larger, but compatible engine. Both fortunately were accessible within lockdown restrictions.

This was more like it - so stripped down, cleaned, working parts assembled from both bikes and now, 3 weeks later, one complete working bike that just needs an MOT and the ability to ride it further than a few miles locally.

Pat is less impressed so payback was a garden project.

The next few weeks! Who knows?

Cheers



'God I miss Brexit!'

What have we been doing during lockdown?

Here are some photographs I have had sent to me to show the variety of activities people have been doing to occupy their time:



COPING WITH LOCKDOWN by Michael Grumett

I made a rare sortie to the newsagent's this morning to pay the paper bill and there at the counter, a mere social distance away, was Peter, someone I hadn't seen since the Singing Group's last Friday session before lockdown.

"We'll have a chat outside" he suggested.

The first lockdown question is always the same: "How are you coping?"

His reply? "I'm loving it. Bring it on".

What? This is not supposed to be what we over-70s, the old and vulnerable, are feeling. We're supposed to be at our wits' end, suffering from cabin fever and climbing up the walls.

So what has he been doing that's so enjoyable?

"I'm building a miniature railway in my back garden and when this is all over I'll hold an open day and you can all come and see it". There followed a rather too detailed description about how he was acquiring all the materials for it, plus he's writing children's stories for his grandchildren.

I felt the need to show that I hadn't been entirely idle so I mentioned that I'd had two articles published in a magazine with another accepted by U3A's 'Third Age Matters' magazine. Yet another very long article is about to see the light of day in a magazine published by The Society of Automotive Historians of Britain. I had always wanted to work from home as a freelance journalist but never achieved it in a long and chequered journalistic career.

My wife Celia is a musician, as those of you who used to sing with us on alternate Fridays will know. Her lockdown project is to learn to play the bass guitar which she has been practising ever since this new instrument was delivered by Amazon. We've also been tuning in to online concerts given by Flatpack Music's Heather Highway and Joseph Buckmaster on Fridays at 2pm. Their magnificent voices are truly uplifting.

For those of us with computers and smartphones, there is plenty of entertainment online. Our very own indefatigable Liz Marrs is keeping up a steady flow of competitions and general information to keep us all occupied while we obey the Government strictures to stay home.

I know that some of us are coping better than others but people like Peter and Liz are an inspiration during these hard times. This is what the U3A is surely all about.

**DURING THE MIDDLE
AGES THEY CELEBRATED
THE END OF THE PLAGUE
WITH WINE AND ORGIES
DOES ANYONE KNOW IF
THEY HAVE ANYTHING
LIKE THAT PLANNED
WHEN THIS ONE ENDS?**

(ASKING FOR A FRIEND)

AFTER LOCKDOWN

At the time of going to publication, it is still not known when we will be able to return to normal and continue with group activities or general meetings. Some groups have a provisional calendar of events which may or may not continue once we're allowed out so please keep looking on the website for the most up to date information.

OTHER INFORMATION AND IDEAS

Books

If you enjoy reading and are short of reading material, we have boxes of books on a wide range of subjects and by an even wider range of authors which we would love to pass on to appreciative members. Please contact myself (07799640 208) or Simon (07960170007) and let us know what you would like and we will try our best to find books to suit you.

No charge and no return date – just enjoy reading during lockdown and beyond! We are happy to deliver to your door

A Lockdown Poem By Pam Ayres

I'm normally a social girl
I love to meet my mates
But lately with the virus here
We can't go out the gates.

You see, we are the 'oldies' now
We need to stay inside
If they haven't seen us for a while
They'll think we've upped and died.

They'll never know the things we did
Before we got this old
There wasn't any Facebook
So not everything was told.

We may seem sweet old ladies
Who would never be uncouth
But we grew up in the 60s -
If you only knew the truth!

There was sex and drugs and rock 'n roll
The pill and miniskirts
We smoked, we drank, we partied
And were quite outrageous flirts.

Then we settled down, got married
And turned into someone's mum,
Somebody's wife, then nana,
Who on earth did we become?

We didn't mind the change of pace
Because our lives were full
But to bury us before we're dead
Is like a red rag to a bull!

So here you find me stuck inside
For four weeks, maybe more
I finally found myself again
Then I had to close the door!

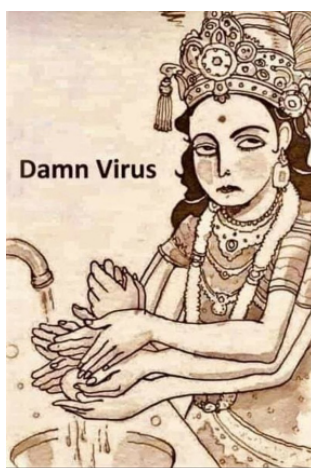
It didn't really bother me
I'd while away the hour
I'd bake for all the family
But I've got no flaming flour!

Now Netflix is just wonderful
I like a gutsy thriller
I'm swooning over Idris
Or some random sexy killer.

At least I've got a stash of booze
For when I'm being idle
There's wine and whiskey, even gin
If I'm feeling suicidal!

So let's all drink to lockdown
To recovery and health
And hope this awful virus
Doesn't decimate our wealth.

We'll all get through the crisis
And be back to join our mates
Just hoping I'm not far too wide
To fit through the flaming gates!



Now for something completely different and 'unlockdown' related!!

Memories of an old Ventriloquist, by Colin Spencer

"Was it really over 60 years ago?"

From 1939 through to 1963, all males in the UK were, at the age of 18, conscripted into the armed forces for a period of 2 years. As I was learning a trade, my "call up" was delayed until I reached the age of 21 and finished my training, way back in 1954. I joined the Royal Air Force and after basic training I was posted to the Air Force base in Wilmslow near Manchester. My home was only some 50 miles from the base so I was able to go home and return with my vent partner "Sydney" and soon we were appearing in shows and concerts on and off base.

There had been quite a number of thefts from the catering section where I worked, so an order was posted that all catering staff had to undergo a search before they could leave the base. One evening as I left base with Syd in his case, the Military Policeman in the guardroom stopped me and said, "What have you got in the case?". I replied, "A body". He said, "Don't be funny with me son! Open the BL***Y case". I said, "If you wish to look in the case you open it" and I put it through the window. On opening the case and pulling off the padded cover he found Sydney smiling up at him! Sydney is a life-sized figure made by Len Insull Jnr, one of Britain's finest makers, with balanced eyes and kid leather lip movement, he did look like a "BODY". The M.P. jumped about two feet in the air, very startled, and uttered a few expletives much to the amusement of the other M.P.s on duty. I was never asked to open the case after that. Any Snowdrop (our nickname for the MPs, because of the colour of their hats) on duty would point at the case and say "A body?" I would grin and say "Yes Corp'".

During my time in the Royal Air Force at the Insworth base in 1954, I had just finished performing my vent act at a camp concert when the stage manager put his head round the dressing room door and said that a couple of Irish WAAFs (Women's Auxillary Air Force) would like to come and talk to the wee man. I said, "Show them in". At this time there was no TV in the Republic of Ireland as it did not appear until 1961. It turned out that they were twin sisters who came from a remote part of Southern Ireland and they had not heard of ventriloquism or seen a ventriloquist before, and they really thought that "Sydney" was one of the "Little People!" They were very surprised to find that he was not real and that I made him move and talk! Oh, those happy and innocent days.

One of the acts I featured in with "Sydney" during my time in the Air Force, was a card mind reading skit where Syd would read my mind. In one part of it he asked me to select a card from the deck and look at it and show it to the audience while he looked away, after some by-play he would, to my amazement, tell me the name of the card. Pure magic! One young airman in the audience still talks about this effect over 60 years later! His name is Derek Lever and he is the owner of The Taurus Magic Co here in the UK and a former President of the British Ring of the IBM, and has performed and lectured at the famous Magic Castle, USA. He still says that it is the most barefaced piece of magical cheek he has ever seen performed and, to cap it all, the audience even gave it a round of applause! I never told him before I wrote this article that I used a "one way force deck" with 52 cards all the same, to make sure I got a card that was easy to say ventriloqually!

NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is a bit different from the usual ones because we are living in a slightly different world. We will continue to produce newsletters for the memmbers and would welcome any articles/photographs/other contributions from members to make this possible. Remember, this is a newsletter by the members for the members!

With grateful thanks to all those who have contributed to this edition.