



Chair Chat April 2019

April Fool

April Fool's Day is loved by children, adults who enjoy fooling people and the media. April 1st and foolishness is mentioned in The Nun's Priest Tale, part of Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer. A study in the 1950s by folklorists Peter and Iona Opie found that in the UK the joking ceases at midday. Anyone playing a joke after that time is considered an April Fool themselves.

One famous prank was on a 1957 BBC Panorama programme showing a "Spaghetti Tree". The BBC were inundated with people asking where they could buy one! Opinions were split whether it was a great joke or a terrible hoax on the public. Patrick Moore, the famous Astronomer, told Radio 2 listeners that a unique alignment of two planets would result in an upward gravitational pull making people lighter at precisely 9.47 am that day. He invited listeners to jump in the air, which many did and claimed they floated!

The positive view is that April Fools can be good for one's health because it encourages jokes, pranks and belly laughs.

The problem can be that if a serious news story broke on April 1st, nobody would believe it. In 1946, there was a warning about an earthquake in Hawaii, it was ignored and 165 people died.

Personally, when I was working in a girls' school with 900 pupils I was always glad when 12 o'clock came and it was safe to continue the day as usual.

Did you spot the April Fool stories in the newspapers and on television this year?

Sandra Goulding



Monthly Meetings and Speakers:

The main meeting is held on the 2nd Thursday of every month at 2 p.m. (be there by 1.45 pm to get a seat!) at Roberts Hall behind Christ Church, Bexleyheath Broadway.

April 11	Support Dogs	tba
May 9	Wilf Lower	Behind the Scenes of Television's Golden Years
July 11	Summer Social with Aiden Kent Singer	Don't miss. He is Great!
August 8	Oliver Wooller	The Blind Mayor and the Ghostly Cat Also the History of Hall Place the House

September 12	Gaye Illsley	Lasting Powers of Attorney. Don't be put off by the title!
October 10	Saffron Summerfield.	A talk with Music Milton Keynes to Mississippi
November 7	AGM with Evergreen Revellers	
December 12	Social with Tom Carradine	Good old Cockney Sing A Long

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### Local Lights

Dressing up optional! Fun obligatory!

#### The Orchard

5pm Saturday 28th September

The Rocky Horror Show

Group rate: £42.50 (saving £2.50 pp)

Only a few central stalls seats available, so please book and pay today. Cash or cheques payable to 'U3A Bexley'.

Please remember to collect your tickets at the next meeting.

Organiser Carole Alleway

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One City. One Month. One Book.

Cityread returns for its eighth annual festival, turning the capital into one massive, interactive book group with Ayisha Malik's "Sofia Khan is Not Obligated". Billed as the Muslim Bridget Jones, Sofia Khan is Not Obligated is advertised as a hilarious romantic comedy.

Launching with an event at the House of Lords on 1st May, and running throughout the month there will be events in public libraries across 24 London boroughs with lots more very special announcements to come. Key partnerships include the Museum of London and Picturehouse Greenwich.

As in previous years the Reading for Pleasure group will be participating in the Cityread and hope that many of you will decide to join us in reading this book during the month of May.

We currently have a vacancy for a new member so anyone interested in joining the group please contact me by email.

Lynn Fish (Group leader)

More of London - Outings to London

I have a few spaces on the following trip:

**Wednesday 22 May 2019 at 11 am - Tour of Southwark Cathedral
with the story of the Women of Southwark, The Untold Story - £7.00 each**

I realise that Town and Around have a lovely outing to Windsor on the same day. However, if you are not going there then please join me on our trip to Southwark Cathedral.

Please contact me - Maureen Wright (Group Leader)

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## GROUP VACANCIES

**Amblers** 5 Vacancies - Stan Hutson; **Armchair Travellers** 2 Vacancies - Carole Hunt; **Backgammon** 4 vacancies - Lynne Brown; **Classical Music** Dorothy McCarthy; **Genealogy** Sophie Piggott; **Greek Beginners** 3 vacancies - Lynne Brown; **Italian** Beverley Winstanley; **Jigsaw Swap** Maureen Wilkins; **Listening to Music** Patricia Kay; **Mah Jong** 1 or 2 vacancies - Chris Kitchen; **Meditation** Chris Parascandolo; **Quilting** Linda Loft; **Reading for Pleasure** 1 vacancy - Lynn Fish; **Rummikub** 7 1 or 2 vacancies - Chris Kitchen; **Scrabble** Rosemary Richards ;**Self Help Art Group** Margaret Collins; **Spanish Conversation** 2 vacancies - Chris Kitchen ; **Stitching** Maureen Hinton; **Welling Library Reading Group** 1 vacancy - Cynthia Allen; **Writing for Pleasure** 2 vacancies - Irene Wallace

### Open Groups

**Decorative Arts Visits** – Margaret Collins

**Micropubbers** – Derrick Allen

**Strollers** – Tuesday mornings – Barbara Wheeler

**Jigsaw Swap** – Monthly – Maureen Wilkins

**Town and Around** – Margaret Collins/Marie Carr

**Choir** – Terry Mosley

Contact me for further details: Pat Fearnside

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TOWN AND AROUND

ALL OUTINGS AT YOUR OWN RISK

Thursday 25th April. Tulips at Anglesey Abbey, Gardens and Lode Mill. Meet Opposite Library in Townley Road at 9.15. Historic house and beautiful grounds with great displays of tulips at this time of year (hopefully). Café, Plant sales, if you are a member of National Trust you must bring membership ticket with you. N.T. members £14.00. Non N.T. members £26.00.

Wednesday 22nd May. Two hour circular Boat trip from/to Windsor via Bovney and Bray. Meet Waterloo mainline under the clock at 10.15ish using first Freedom Pass train available. Join train to Windsor and Eton Riverside. **PLEASE GET A RETURN EXTENSION TICKET FROM YOUR OWN STATION TRAVELLING BETWEEN FELTHAM TO WINDSOR AND ETON RIVERSIDE (approx. £7)** Time for lunch before boarding at 2.00pm. Refreshment bar and wc on board. £14.00

Friday 21st June 2019. Royal College of Physicians. Near Regents Park. Meet at Charing Cross at 10.15ish, then onwards by Underground. Tea/coffee/biscuits on arrival then tour of the Museum and also a tour of the medicinal garden with a Garden Fellow. In the afternoon if you are interested separately visit Regents Park to see Queen Mary's Rose Garden. £10

Tuesday 16th July 2019. Down House the home of Charles Darwin am, Biggin Hill Memorial Museum pm. Meet coach at Bexleyheath Library for 9.15. Coffee/tea on arrival at Down House. Visit house and grounds free courtesy of English Heritage. Small café for lunch, or bring your own picnic. Rejoin coach and travel a few miles to the recently opened Biggin Hill Memorial Museum. Then into the chapel to have a talk on the history of the airport with its historic connection to Joyce Green, and Woolwich. Leave at 4.30. Price includes coach, tip, entrance to Biggin Hill Memorial Chapel, coffee/tea on arrival. £20.00

PAYMENT PREFERABLY BY CHEQUE MADE OUT TO U3A BEXLEY, MUST BE MADE AT TIME OF BOOKING. See notices in Roberts Hall for more details. **If you are on the reserve list for a trip please keep day free, or let Maire know as soon as possible if you are unable to come.**

Organiser: Margaret Collins		
Bookings: Maire Carr		
Money: Sabine Wayt		

TOWN AND AROUND

VISIT TO THE MANSION HOUSE

By Margaret Collins

On a bright March day, we only had to walk a few hundred yards from Cannon Street to a side portico entrance in Walbrook. We were warmly welcomed by the very Welsh Keeper of Walbrook Hall to this historic and iconic building right in the middle of the city, opposite the Bank of England. This is the official home and office of Alderman Charles Bowman, Lord Mayor of London and his Lady Mayoress for the year of his office. The outside of this Palladian style Palace with pediment and columns, its original front door reached by an impressive stone staircase, was built between 1739 and 1752 but has had many alterations and additions over the years. It used to have two huge extensions on the roof, which have long been demolished.

After going through airport style security, we returned to The Walbrook Hall through which we had walked on arrival. This space we were told used to be stabling for the horses on the ground floor. More space was needed and the horses were rehoused at the Guildhall stables and the space used for storage. In 1845, a private entrance was created for the Lord Mayor here and the hall was given a makeover with grand plaster ceilings. The Lord Mayor is chosen each year, and funded by the City of London Fund, which covers all of the Lord Mayors activities. The Lord Mayor often has twelve to fifteen engagements

per day, and the Lady Mayoress some six to seven. They also have to dip into their own pockets during that time for private entertaining of businessmen, or others to boost London's appeal for trade.

We then moved through to a vaulted hall with statues lining the walls and up a staircase hung with fabulous art works. The Mansion House is home to The Harold Samuel Collection of paintings donated in 1987 by this wealthy property developer and entrepreneur. These 84 paintings are considered the finest collection of Flemish Seventeenth Century art works in the country and include works by Frans Hals, Pieter de Hooch, Jan Steen and David Teniers and are beautifully displayed around the rooms. The walls of the house are also decorated with huge ornate plaster casts, flowers, fruits, putti, scrolls, musical instruments, birds or swags, a real triumph of artistry.

The stairs lead to The Salon a magnificent room decorated in white and gold, with huge chandeliers. This had once been an open courtyard, but again space was required and it was roofed over in 1795. There were rooms adjacent, one of which is the Lord Mayor's Office, and another which in the past had been used as a magistrate's court. Some interesting people had faced the magistrate there including the suffragette Mrs Pankhurst. We were told of the many historic functions that had taken place in The Salon. We then went into the Long Parlour with its table that can seat 36 for dinner, so we nearly all got a seat around the table. Sadly, they did not serve us lunch. Fireplaces either end, one original, the second a copy.

The Main Banqueting Hall, known as The Egyptian Hall was next. Despite its name, there is nothing Egyptian about it, with Roman columns and barrel vaulted ornate plaster ceiling. Gold niches around the walls contained oversized white marble statues put there in 1863. Two beautiful stained glass windows either end, one of which had been blown out in the Blitz, the pieces collected, stored, reassembled and finally reinstated the 1950s. This is the room where the Foreign Secretary is entertained at the Easter banquet, and in June the Chancellor of the Exchequer gives his speech on the state of the economy. The tables would be decorated for such occasions with the historic gold and silver candelabra, plate and jugs. Should be a very interesting speech this year after Brexit. The Head of Catering was getting the room ready for a luncheon on Sunday and told us of the busy schedule for the kitchens providing refreshments for meetings, lunches, dinners, and of course banquets sometimes for 450 people.

The North and South Drawing Rooms had previously been used as a smaller dining room with lovely white marble fireplaces both ends and interesting clocks and of course more of the painting collection. Around the walls were beautiful chairs in red damask which were commissioned to celebrate Nelson's victory at the Battle of the Nile against Napoleon.

Down another staircase which led eventually to the Vaults where the wonderful Mayoral collection of regalia and plate is stored. We were shown the Collar of SSs which dates from 1535 or even older, but a replica is worn for everyday use. The Pearl Sword (1571) which was used by Elizabeth 1 and used today if Queen Elizabeth II comes into the City. The Fire Cup (1535) so named because it was snatched from the flames of the Great Fire of London in 1666. The State Sword of 1650 which is still used today at ceremonies, and the Mace of 1735 both of which are the historic symbols of the Lord Mayor. So many other valuable gold and silver gifts had been given to the Lord Mayors over the centuries and were displayed behind glass cabinets so sadly we were unable to take any home.

We agreed it was a very interesting and entertaining morning and that it was a privilege to come into this historic space.

Executive Committee 2018 - 2019

Chair	Sandra Goulding		
Vice Chair	<u>VACANCY</u>		
Secretary	Maureen Wright		
Treasurer	Ron Clayton		
Membership	Douglas West		
Speakers	<u>VACANCY</u>		
Group Liaison	Pat Fearnside		
E-mail & IT	Nino Parascandolo		
Social Secretary	Thelma Wilkes		
Catering	Vi King		
Hall Manager /Database	Nino Parascandolo		
	Cynthia Allen		
NON-COMMITTEE ROLES			
Meet & Greet	Edna Sutton		Please let Edna know of personal events e.g. significant birthdays, anniversaries, condolences, etc. so that she can send cards.
Newsletter Editor	Mary Jupp		

Please submit all contributions to May newsletter by

Midday - Monday 29th April

Please ensure you contribute before the cut-off and have an email acknowledgment from me that I have received your contribution!

Thank you

Mary Jupp