



CHAIR CHAT AUGUST 2020

Are people who live on islands different in some significant way from those who inhabit the mainland?

Winston Churchill's notion of us as an "Island Race" suggests that we are.

I have always felt that I am "Islander" and it seems deep in my psyche.

My brother, who lives 8 hours driving time to arrive in the City of Vancouver, really misses the sea. Whenever he visits the UK he goes to the sea and just spends time on the beach drinking it all in.

I did not want the Channel Tunnel being built to connect us to Europe because I wanted to still live on an island. (Of course, I use the Channel Tunnel and Eurostar because it is so convenient!)

I am sure that the ten thousand residents on the Isle of Skye were in two minds about the road bridge connecting them to mainland Scotland, but in stormy weather, it must be so good not being cut off when the ferries can't sail.

The diamond shaped Isle of Wight probably became separated from the mainland about 125,000 years ago and a long time in the future, it will be connected again due to soil erosion. An ice cream shop, which was at Compton Bay in the 1960s, is now 50 yards out to sea. But I am sure that an island mentality will not disappear.

I recently spent a week on the Isle of Sheppey and many people I spoke to there were very aware that they live on an island and that there are only two bridges to leave the island. They were really being strict about lockdown measures as they felt very vulnerable if there was a "spike" in Covid cases. (I tried to write a Chair Chat without mentioning the dreaded word and I failed!)

Richard II referred to "This Sceptred Isle" in his famous speech in the play by Shakespeare.

We are never more than 74.5 miles from the sea, Coton in the Elms, Derbyshire is the furthest from the coast, so most of us can visit the seaside, admire our coastline, watch the sea birds, breathe in the sea air, without having to travel many miles.

Our Island "leans" towards the West, consequently Edinburgh is the most westerly city in the UK despite it being on the East Coast of Scotland, and it is more westerly than Bristol.

Fenny Drayton in Leicestershire is the middle of the UK but not the furthest from the sea.

It has a length of 874 miles, coastline is 7000 miles and the US state of Oregon is the same land area as UK but of course is not an island!

So now we are allowed a bit more freedom of movement I shall be visiting the sea as often as I can.

Sandra Goulding

ALL MONTHLY MEETINGS CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

FROM TERRY:

Hi Everyone,

I hope you are all keeping well & safe.

Writing this Article at the End of July and with Lock Down slowly coming back to some sort of normality, I am a little concerned that some People, not just U3A Members, are still very

apprehensive to go out.

I do realise that for various health reasons some people are reluctant or cannot go out but for the people who are able to, you are missing out. Generally, we have had some really fabulous days ideal for getting out and about. There are lot of gardens open with safe distancing; Buses and Trains are generally with just a few people on them. I recently travelled on a train with just 5 other people in the carriage! Very safe Distancing and of course wearing my Face Covering. Providing you stick to the advice with regards to PPE and safe distancing, being out in the fresh air and visiting a different place is the Best thing for you. Please do not get into the situation where you start getting into your mind "I cannot go out"!

On Monday 20th July at 12.00, Hall Place, Bexley 22 members of Evergreen Revellers, Our Lovely Choir plus our Chairperson Sandra had a "Meet Up" for the first time since March. Observing the Social Distancing Rule our folding chairs in place we settled down to a picnic and a chat. The weather was just perfect, arranged well in advance of course! A special celebration Cake was made which did look like a Top Hat and written on the base "Till We meet Again" ! Very appropriate!

After the bite to eat, a Singsong! We choose four songs, *Ugly Bug Ball* (This song has somehow become our theme song)

White Cliffs of Dover (a Tribute to Vera Lynn)

A war medley and of course *We'll meet again* (another Tribute to Vera Lynn).

Everyone did very well despite being so far apart. I'm sure some ended the song a short while after the rest of the group but ,Hey, it did not matter, we were enjoying ourselves.

Some of the General Public that were wandering around must have wondered what was going on. I think we must have brought a bit Happiness back to all that attended.

It was so lovely meet up with all our friends and have the hours together, so much so we hope to do it again but less the cake!

Keep Well, Safe and Keep Smiling, it is not all Bad out there!

Terry

FROM JEAN PLAYFORD: FAMILY HISTORY

I belong to this very longstanding and lively group run by Maire Carr. Having researched our families for a long time and basic research known by every member Maire suggested that each month a member gave a short talk on any subject connected to their family research, with the added bonus that we would be given an insight to more social history connected to our ancestors.

ERNEST LOUIS PLAYFORD GM 1905-1991

This is about my father-in-law who was one of the first civilians during WWII to be given the George Medal. He was a Civil Defence Heavy Rescue Leader in Bermondsey during the Blitz.

On the night of 18th September 1940 a German Parachute mine landed on the Bermondsey Institute (10.40 pm) and totally destroyed the institute and surrounding buildings. The institute had been an ARP Wardens post and when the building collapsed, the Post Warden was buried beneath the debris.

Rescue operations were commenced in an endeavour to reach the trapped Warden who was eventually found at a depth of 10 feet. The operations were rendered highly dangerous by the fact that the wall of the adjoining church hall was liable to collapse. Nothing could be done in a short time to make the wall safe but despite this, the rescue party continued their efforts to release the Warden.

According to the report made by the Incident Officer "Playford" who was in the hole with the Warden looked up at the wall and without further hesitation made a bridge with his hands, arms and legs so that his body was across the head of the entombed Warden. He was buried by the falling bricks and upon being extricated, was found to be seriously injured. He was taken to hospital where he remained for several weeks.

The details of the report are much longer, too much for the magazine, but one remark written by the Incident Officer makes you realise how brave he was.

"THIS WAS A PIECE OF THE COOLEST COURAGE I HAD EVER SEEN BECAUSE PLAYFORD MUST HAVE KNOWN THAT HE COULD NOT ESCAPE WITHOUT SERIOUS INJURY AND THE PROSPECT OF BEING KILLED APPEARED CERTAIN.

A bricklayer by trade he was unable to continue in that capacity after the war. He became a messenger at County Hall and lived a quiet life in Sidcup, finally moving to Cornwall for the last few years of his life.

Salute to the Forties Chatham Dockyard Saturday 19th September

Sadly Chatham Dockyard has Cancelled this year's event. It is such a shame but I suppose not surprising in the Current climate. If you booked and paid for the trip through Maureen Wright please contact Her. If you have not paid any money then please cancel in your diary.

Terry

STROLLERS

At the end of May we had welcome news that six persons could meet/walk together providing they kept two-meter distance between them. One of our members contacted a few others and the result was our first meeting during lockdown restrictions. So on the first Tuesday in June six of us met at 10 am at Danson Park for our weekly walk. There were no hugs and kisses but we were just glad to see each other again. We greeted one new member and walked around the big lake covering over three miles.

The following week, when we had another new member, our number increased to eight. We then walked in two groups: one of six and one of two. It was not easy to follow the big group conversation while walking at a distance from each other, but we managed!

On both days, the park was well attended. The two car parks were full. However, the vast open spaces of the park allowed the groups to be at a good distance from each other. There were mothers with prams and small children, walkers with their dogs, cyclists, youngsters playing ball games,

tennis courts fully occupied and people sunbathing on the grassy grounds. At the small lake at the bridge, at our usual stop to feed the birds, we watched seven beautiful Egyptian Geese goslings. They all dashed towards the duck food that one member had brought and was throwing over into the lake. No doubt, we shall see the goslings change in size as the weeks go by.

On our way to the lakes we usually pass through Old English Garden, an oasis of colourful flowers in attractive flowerbeds. Occasionally we see in the pond groups of tiny gold fish glittering in the sunshine. At present the water lilies are in bloom decorating the surface of water. This beautiful garden is maintained by volunteers.

The tea kiosk at the Boathouse has been open for take away refreshments, with the inevitable snaky queue in front of the building. To stand in a queue and enjoy the pleasant sunshine is a small price to pay if you want an ice cream or a cup of tea!

During the last couple of months, there have been unpleasant sights in the park. A day after a long weekend or a public holiday the big lawn in front of Danson House had been left strewn with rubbish. The bins provided were also overflowing with waste, plastic bags and picnic leftovers. Why not have a van with a loud speaker reminding visitors, from time to time, to take their rubbish home.

I trust we'll continue to enjoy our walks through Danson Park. We miss Barbara, our Group Leader, and look forward to seeing her whenever she can re-join the group.

Tomira Carson

What goes better with a cup of tea than a few biscuits. But, have you ever wondered about the history of some of these delicious treats? Here are some of my favourites:

The now obsolete LINCOLN shortcake biscuit featured a pattern of dots in concentric circles on its upside. The McVie's version – made until 2007 – had "Lincoln" written across it, but actually originated in Ireland.

MAIDSTONE BISCUITS are baked thick, using flour and ground rice. They can be made with lemon, orange, blanched and chopped almonds. A rose-water version was very popular with the Tudors as long ago as the 16th century.

CORNISH FAIRINGS – sweet and spiced with ginger and cinnamon. They were originally sold at seasonal fairs.

DEVON FLATS – made with clotted cream (mmm sounds lovely). The recipe was first recorded in the Western Morning News in 1935. They can be served plain or with a good spoonful of jam and more clotted cream.

DORSET KNOBS – a hard, dry and savoury biscuit made traditionally from fermented dough. Originally eaten with hot tea and sugar poured over them, but now more usually with butter and cheese.

BATH OLIVERS – another savoury biscuit made from flour, butter, yeast and milk. They were invented by a physician called William Oliver of Bath in the 18th century.

ABERFFRAW TRADITIONAL WELSH SHORTBREADS – made in the shape of a scallop shell. They date back to 13th century Anglesey. Legend says that whilst a Welsh King was holding court at Aberffraw his wife went for a walk on the beach. She brought back a pretty scallop shell and asked for a cake to be baked in the same shape.

Happy Munching.

Maureen Wright

BEXLEY U3A FACEBOOK GROUP IS GOING STRONG!

We have nearly 50 members, playing games and sharing stories. I hope all members that can access Facebook will join to find friends they may have not seen since the last meeting and to Learn, Laugh and Live! Contact me (with your membership number) if you are interested in joining.

Mary Jupp

In August 2015, we had a lovely day on the Princess Pocahontas from Gravesend to Greenwich, which I hope you enjoy, and brings back happy memories of a non-lockdown time.

Town and Around

Thames Cruise on M.V. Princess Pocahontas

By Margaret Collins

Our August trip was on a grey but warm day, with the sun peeking out later on, however, this temperature was just about right for our cruise from Gravesend to Greenwich on this fabulous old ship. British Rail tried to spoil our day by cancelling trains, but we got there in time, and boarded finding seats either inside or on top deck and to get a cup of coffee.

Built in 1962 it has been wonderfully maintained by the Freemen of the River Thames, all of whom have spent their working lives on this mighty river so we felt in safe hands. The commentary was nonstop all the way up. We started on the Kent side to hear all the stories of Gravesend, including of course the story of Pocahontas the Indian Princess who is buried in St Georges' Church Gravesend and who died on her way from London to return to America aged only 21. The boat turned and following the Essex side with all its industrial past. Tilbury Fort was shown to us, and then the site of Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth's shipbuilding dockyard where many ships of the line were crafted. The Ford factory, where only engines are now made, but new cars imported to this site, was the next tale to be told. Our boat was dwarfed by the huge cranes used at the Container Port. Most jetties and docks along the river have now been made redundant, with smart apartment blocks springing up everywhere. This raised several very politically incorrect comments from our commentator; he was very scathing about past and present governments much to our amusement. Big stretches of Rainham Marshes, with their landfill now being slowly greened over were next. Tales of how the Council refused permission for this site to be used for a Disney World theme park gave us all a good laugh.

Every ship on this still busy river was known to him, where they were going and where they had come from. It was explained to us how the river was cleaned with specially commissioned vessels, which would dredge, remove oil spillage, or pump oxygen into the river to keep the marine life in good condition. Even seahorses have been found in this clean river.

How wonderful to go under the Queen Elizabeth Bridge at Dartford. We were given all the vital statistics, but gosh, there were a lot, I do remember that the total length of the bridge is 1.8 miles – wow. It was fascinating to see Slade Green, Erith, Thamesmead, and Woolwich from the water. Permission was sought for us to go through the Thames Barrier, and again we were given all the information regarding its construction. Thank goodness it is there protecting London as it had to be

raised several times last year. Planes were constantly taking off from City Airport right overhead. The Cable Car linking the North and South banks was running smoothly and well worth a visit if you have not been. The O2 arena, with its strange art installation in the river, (again with very scathing comments from our commentator) had the public walking over the top, something I definitely do not want to do. Round the bend in the river to see yet another view of Docklands and its banking towers (yet more scathing comments), waterside apartments and green spaces. It is hard to believe that this was muddy-banked docks, warehousing, and a busy shipyard only a few decades ago.

We passed the Isle of Dogs, named because of the Royal hunting dogs, which were lodged on the island when Placentia Palace was on the opposite bank at Greenwich. We watched the red ball drop from the top of the Observatory to mark Noon (it was actually 1.00pm), and docked at Greenwich Pier. There was film equipment and vans all around Cutty Sark, which we found very interesting. Then on to lunch and chatter about what we had seen. A most enjoyable River Cruise and we certainly learned a lot about the history of that part of the river as well.

Executive Committee 2019- 2020

Chair	Sandra Goulding		
Vice Chair	VACANCY		
Secretary	Maureen Wright		
Treasurer	Ron Clayton		
Membership	Douglas West		
Speakers	Terry Moseley		
Group Liaison	Cynthia Allen		
E-mail & IT	Nino Parascandolo		
Social Secretary	Thelma Wilkes		
Catering	Vi King		
Hall Manager /Database	Nino Parascandolo		
NON-COMMITTEE ROLES			
Meet & Greet	Edna Sutton		
Newsletter Editor	Mary Jupp		

Thank you to all our contributors.

All contributions for September newsletter to be submitted by Midday Monday 7th September

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