



CHAIR CHAT DECEMBER 2020

Whatever your views about the Christmas regulations, and I am sure everybody will have a view, I will remember my grandchildren's hugs whatever the New Year brings. But it will be like no other Christmas that I have experienced before! Church services will be different, with no community singing, which is a great shame, but Covid doesn't know it is Christmas. It certainly doesn't know that just 2 miles from my house those poor people are in Tier 3, and this side of the county boundary I am in Tier 2.

Lots of Christmas decorations, lights and trees are going up much earlier than usual and I am sure it is reflecting the country's mood of trying to make life a bit more cheerful. Personally, I love to see the houses looking so bright and I even like the clashing colours, subtlety doesn't work with Christmas decorations.

I was intending not to put up my Christmas Tree this year as my grandchildren and other visitors will not be coming to my house. But I have been told, in no uncertain terms by friends, neighbours and relatives, that is not allowed. So the Christmas Tree and decorations are coming out of the cupboard and will take pride of place in my living room. And I am sure I will be glad that I have!

I have bought a Christmas mask with reindeers on it and I am in the middle of a Christmas jigsaw, so Christmas has arrived in November for me, next are the Christmas cards.

So it is not Bah Humbug after all.

Have a very safe Christmas, and I hope that, however, you spend the time, you will feel included which, for me, is very important.

2021 might well be the year of the vaccine and hope.

Sandra

Bexley u3a Press release - Tom Carradine.

As we all know this Christmas will be different. Sadly, we cannot hold our lovely Christmas Social with the excellent buffet laid on for us, I will certainly miss that!!

If you remember last Christmas Tom Carradine gave a great Christmas Sing-a-long, I know everyone really enjoyed it. We of course were limited in numbers because of the size of the hall. This year there is no limit!

To try and make a bit of normality to this Christmas, Tom will be back on Thursday 10th December (the date we should have had our Christmas Social), not in the Roberts Hall but from his home in Tonbridge, Kent. Tom will be putting on a YouTube Streaming of a Special U3A Christmas Sing-a-long from 16.00 - 17.00. This is not for the General Public just u3a.

Many celebrities own a rescue dog, including Paul O'Grady, Peter Egan, Drew Barrymore, Sandra Bullock, Tom Hardy and the Duchess of Cornwall. Along with the horrific publicity that puppy farms have attracted in recent years, this has helped to ensure that more people consider adopting a rescue dog. Now such a dog is about to make his home in the White House.

Donald Trump was the first President since the 1840s to not own a pet. Originally, Barrack Obama also did not have a pet, as his daughter Malia's allergies dictated a need for a hypoallergenic breed. Then the family were given Bo, a Portuguese Water dog as a gift, and he joined the family at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Now, after four years without a presidential pet, dogs are coming back. Major, President-elect Biden's German Shepherd, will be the first ever shelter dog to live in the White House, along with Champ, the Bidens' other German shepherd.

Many US Presidents have owned pets, including George Washington's 12 foxhounds. Teddy Roosevelt's had a garter snake and a pet rabbit, Peter. Franklin D Roosevelt owned a Scottish terrier. Lyndon B. Johnson had a rescue dog, but not from a shelter. His daughter found the abandoned animal outside a petrol station. Abe Lincoln had 2 goats, and Andrew Jackson had a parrot that he taught to swear.

Many members of our own Royal family have a reputation for being animal lovers. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge have Lupo, a cocker spaniel. The Princess Royal has won three Olympic medals, two silver and one gold, for eventing, and continues to open her home for horse trials each year. The Queen's love of horses and dogs, particularly Corgis, is known throughout the world.

For anyone contemplating adopting a rescue dog, there is a wealth of advice available. The dog's introduction to the family should be calm and controlled. Meeting existing pets should be done on neutral territory, perhaps in the park. House rules should be made clear from day one - e.g. where will the animal sleep? And new owners must be consistent.

From my own experience of my two rescue dogs, both settling well into their new and, to them, strange environment, I would say that the following things are the most important:

Time, patience, routine and, above all, lots and lots of love.

Cynthia Allen



With Christmas in Mind

Advent - preparation for the commemoration of the birth of Jesus, lasting for the four Sundays leading up to Christmas.

Christmas Pudding- In the 14th century this took the form of a porridge known as Frumenty that consisted of meats such as mutton and beef mixed with spices and dried fruits. By 1650 it had become customary as a Christmas dessert. Over the centuries the meat has been replaced with suet.

Holly and Ivy – rooted in Christian symbolism with holly representing Jesus and Ivy for the Virgin Mary. These plants have been used for decorating churches at Christmas since the 15th/16th centuries. "The Holly and the Ivy" Christmas carol was composed in the early 1800s.

Santa Claus – Father Christmas or Saint Nicholas is a legendary figure originating in Western Christian culture who is said to bring gifts to good children on Christmas eve.

Reindeers - according to tradition eight reindeers pull Santa Claus' sleigh through the night sky on Christmas eve to deliver presents to children. The reindeers' names are based on a poem written in 1823, by Clement Clarke Moore, called "A visit from St Nicholas".

Icicles and Snow - images of snow scenes are often used on Christmas cards and decorations. Over past decades a "white Christmas" is becoming less likely, owing to our warmer winters.

Stockings – stretching back thousands of years the tradition of filling stockings with small gifts has its roots in paganism long before Christianity was introduced to England.

Trees - Germany is credited with starting the tradition of first bringing trees into homes to decorate for Christmas. It is a widely held belief that Martin Luther, the 16th century reformer, first added lighted candles to a Christmas tree.

Mince Pies – like Christmas puddings these were originally made with a meat filling unlike the dried fruits and spices mix used today. In past times they were made in an oval shape to represent the manger and, sometimes, they were even topped by a pastry baby Jesus. A custom from the middle ages says that if you eat a mince pie every day from Christmas to Twelfth night (5th January) you will have happiness for the next twelve months.

Happy Christmas Everyone

Unscramble the capital letters in bold type to make the relevant word.

*Taken from research on the internet. **Maureen Wright***

Hi Everyone

I hope this Newsletter finds you well. What a Strange time it is? Normally I would have been booked to go to at least four different Christmas concerts this time of the year, of course this year ,none ! Our Choir should have Sang at The Hawley Garden Centre by now to welcome Santa, plus a couple of other Venues, again not this year! At least there is hope and light at the end of a very long tunnel with these Vaccines, let's Hope & Pray they all work for us

I will certainly miss our Christmas Social this year. I was looking forward to the great Buffet our lovely ladies put on for us .I am sure they are missing all the cooking and preparation they would normally be doing now? Instead, I guess they're putting their feet up with a cup of tea and watching afternoon Television.

On the Brighter side of this, we are getting out a bit more, not on Holidays, although three of us had a Great Time at a Warners Hotel on Hayling Island for five days, but walking around places like Hall Place and Danson Park. Watching the seasons change from the glory of the buds of springtime, the new plants popping their heads out, to the Hot summer sun, the Brilliant Browns and Golds of the Leaves as Autumn arrives. One thing I enjoyed at Hall Place was to see the New Born Goslings grow so quickly .Despite the troubles at the moment we do live in a wonderful world that is all around us. The animals, the trees ,the Birds, fish etc. don't know about Covid and lock down, they just go about doing what they always do and this is the joy we are lucky to experience.

Don't Forget Our Special U3A Christmas Sing along with Tom Carradine Thursday 10th December at 16.00. And download the Song sheets beforehand.

Finally, on **Thursday January 14th 2021**, Bexley U3A will try our first Zoom Lecture. For those not on Zoom yet please try to sort it out before the 14th It is easy and will be very safe. You will need a code to get in,

which we will supply nearer the date. This is open to Bexley U3A and our friends at Welling U3A, no one else.

The time will be our normal meeting time 14.00 -15.00 The Title of the Lecture

EAST LONDON and COCKNEY LANGUAGE. You will also have a chance to learn Paul Robbins will give some good old Cockney Slang .The talk from his home in deepest Kent. Should be lot of Fun so please join in at 14.00 on the 14th January 2021

If I do not see you before, I hope you all have the Best Christmas you can and Please stay Safe, well & Keep smiling.

Terry

From December newsletter 2017, another amazing review by Margaret Collins

TOWN AND AROUND
BACKSTAGE VISIT TO ROYAL OPERA HOUSE
BY MARGARET COLLINS

It may only be November but the Christmas lights were up in the Strand, and when we reached Covent Garden we were greeted by a huge silver stag, decorated with lights which was really impressive and we began to feel a little Christmassy.

After security checks we were met by our most enthusiastic guide who took us to sit in the foyer to give us some history of the building. This is the third theatre on this site. During Cromwellian times theatres were banned, so after the reformation of the monarchy Charles II gave letters patent to allow a theatre to be built. Performances began of plays but by 1719 George Frederic Handel had become Musical Director and many of his operas and oratorios were premiered here. In 1728 the Beggar's Opera was commissioned, which was a great financial success and this funded the building of the 1738 theatre. This building burnt down in 1808, and was reconstructed only to be burnt down again in 1856. By 1887 the building was known as Royal Italian Opera as all operas, even those composed by other nationalities, were performed in Italian. By 1892 the theatre was known as the Royal Opera House and performances of ballet as well as opera were in the programme. During WWI the building was used as a furniture depository, and during WWII it was a dance hall, but by 1946 the ballet and opera were being performed once again with Sadlers Wells Ballet as the resident ballet company. During the 1990s a major rebuilding on this two and half acre site, comprising of ten floors, was undertaken. The main pillared façade, foyer and staircase, along with the auditorium was retained but refurbished. The building is now the home of The Royal Opera Company, The Royal Ballet Company and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House. Major renovation works to open up the facilities are now in progress. Our tour began.

Walking up the wide chandelier lit staircase, double the width of ladies crinoline skirts, allowed us to enter the Paul Hamlyn Hall. This is also known as the Floral Hall as it used to be a flower sellers' market area. The hall had been reduced by half, with the portion of unrequired beautiful ironwork now fixed in one of the London Markets. We then were taken to look through glass on the enormous backstage area. We viewed a video of the way the sets and scenery were manufactured in Thurrock before being brought by road to the Theatre for assembly. The complicated pallet system, devised and built by Rolls Royce, could change sets on stage in a flash. However there are approximately 1,000 staff employed so we could appreciate how expensive it is to put on a show. When a production was finished for the season the sets, costumes, and props would be taken to Wales for storage until the next production of that particular ballet or opera. Some sets have been recycled up to 40 times. The ballet rehearsal spaces were our next viewing through glass although sadly nobody practicing just then. We were told that the junior dancers have their ballet school in the White House in Richmond Park, and the senior pupils have their schooling in a building next door reached via a bridge. I just loved the hat and jewellery department we visited next. We were allowed

to handle the different type of hats, or headdresses required for performances following design instructions. What a job. Walking through long corridors and peeping through viewing windows down into the backstage area continued to engage us with the enormity of it all. Our guide kept us entertained with stories and information all the time. Sadly we could not visit the auditorium as a rehearsal was in progress. Eventually we returned to the ground floor where our guide left us.

Coming out into the busy Covent Garden we slowly walked through admiring the decorations, huge baubles and mistletoe, towards the piazza to admire the beautifully lit Christmas tree before making our way back to Charing Cross and home.

Executive Committee 2019- 2020

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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		

Thank you to all our wonderful contributors who have kept the newsletter alive.

*A huge Thank You to **Maureen Wright** for all the work she has done posting newsletters to our members who are not able to access the online copy.*

All contributions for January newsletter to be submitted by

Midday Monday 4th January 2021

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