



Chair Chat

I am writing this on New Year's Day and it is wonderful to write 2021 not 2020!

Let's look forward, hopefully to a different year with lots of opportunities to enjoy so many of the things we have missed this year.

New Year brings new hope that one day we will stand next to each other with confidence and perhaps even hug!

We might think about going on holiday again to foreign climes, or travel to different areas of the UK to visit friends and loved ones.

One thing I have learnt during this last year is to grab every opportunity for adventures, pleasures and laughter, to enjoy and value simple things before we get lockdowned again.

I have tried not to think about what it was like before, and what we should have been doing, for me that just leads to being sad and disheartened. And to be grateful that I am well and not in an intensive care bed somewhere.

It is not always easy to be upbeat when more days of isolation stretch ahead, but the vaccine is coming for all of us. Some members have already received the vaccine and I am so pleased for them, one advantage of being among the older generation!

One lesson of 2020 to take forward into 2021, which I am sure we will all agree, is to take care of one another, and how meaningful connections are, even when they are physically impossible.

Staying in touch in any way that works, by a phone call, letter, email, Facetime, Facebook, Zoom etc. Caring shouldn't stop, even if, one day, restrictions are eased.

We still can't make plans to meet again at u3a events but I am hoping that by the time the daffodils are in bloom we can have some good thoughts on the way ahead.

Meanwhile stay home and stay safe.

Sandra

Reminder - subscription renewals will now be due on 1st April 2021, this is to reflect the difficult year we have all experienced. Reminders will be emailed or posted nearer the time.

Our First Bexley u3a Zoom Talk is happening!

Please put in your Diaries our First Bexley u3a Zoom Talk

Talk Time is Thursday 14th January 2021 Start time 2pm until 3pm approx.

Zoom Code Meeting ID: 8707 968 5868

Paul Robbins (this is the Gent who running the Talk) is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Zoom Call for Bexley u3a

Time: Jan 14, 2021 1:45 PM London (1.45 pm is the time Paul will be on to help people. The meeting will start at 2.00pm)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87079685868> Meeting ID: 870 7968 5868

The talk is entitled: *East London. The Cockneys and Cockney Rhyming Slang*. Given by Paul Robbins from his home in Kent. Also a free lesson on how to speak Cockney.

Please join in; there will be an opportunity to ask questions after the talk.

You will be muted from the start of the talk. This will enable Paul to give his talk then you will be able to ask questions after Paul has finished.

I was working on Christmas Eve. During the afternoon I was feeling quite exhausted when a young girl about six years old, wearing a lovely festive dress, came in with her Grandmother, she was very chatty just before leaving and after I gave her the present from Santa she turned and said to me ,are you the real Santa ? My answer, What do you think ? She thought a bit then turned back and said, Yes you are the real Santa, I love you Santa ! I had done my job!

In case you wondering everything was made very secure for both Me, our Elves and the Visitors. I did not feel uncomfortable at all.

Stay Safe, well and Keep Smiling. All the Best for 2021 Hope to seeing you all as soon as we can. **Terry**

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“Happy New Year” to all our Bexley u3a members. Let’s hope it will not be too long into 2021 that we shall be meeting up again. Continuing with the London theme here are a few facts about some of the bridges.

There are thirty three Thames bridges within Greater London from Hampton Court Bridge in the west to the iconic Tower Bridge in the east.

From Roman times, **London Bridge** stood as the only link across the river, being replaced several times, during the Saxon era. The nursery rhyme “London Bridge is Falling Down” came as the result of a battle in 1015 when the medieval wooden structure was destroyed. In 1176 a stone bridge was built that lasted for nearly seven hundred years. Our present bridge opened to traffic in 1973.

In 1750 **Westminster Bridge** became the second crossing to be built in the London area. The bridge linked Westminster on the west side and Lambeth on the east. By the mid-19th century the bridge was in such poor state that it was replaced by a predominantly iron construction. The bridge is painted mainly in green - the same colour as the seats in the House of Commons.

Currently, the oldest surviving bridge over the Thames, in Greater London, is **Richmond Bridge** opened in 1777. A ferry service, dating back to the mid 1400s, had previously serviced this part of the river.

Towards the end of the 1800s increased demands for a new river crossing. downstream from London Bridge, led to the building of **Tower Bridge**. A fixed bridge at street level was not viable as it would cut off access by sailing ships to the port facilities in the pool of London. Hence a lifting bridge, complete with ornate towers, was constructed. Tower Bridge has since become a world-famous symbol of London, depicted on many tourist adverts and gifts besides being pictured at different times of day or night.

The **Millennium Bridge** is our newest arrival - a steel suspension bridge for pedestrians crossing from Bankside to the City. After its opening, in June 2000, it earned the nickname by Londoners as “the Wobbly Bridge” because of its constant swaying motion, especially on a windy day. This led to its closure for almost two years, until February 2002, when the structure was finally stabilised.

A recent proposal for a pedestrianised **Garden Bridge** in London, after costing several millions of pounds in planning, has since been abandoned.

Maureen Wright . *Information taken from Internet sources.*

Welling Library Book Group

As you will all know, due to the spread of COVID-19, most of our groups have been unable to meet face to face, so many have tried to keep in touch via Zoom, WhatsApp, Facebook or e-mail.

Having canvassed the membership of our group regarding Zoom, I found that several did not have the technology to use it, and a number did not wish to. I was concerned that if we used Zoom it would split the group, leaving out a few of our longest members, so we have continued to keep in touch via e-mail.

When I started the group in March 2013 I was determined that we would not all read the same book, as several of our members were against the idea, so each month I suggest a theme. Some examples that we have used are:

Good and Evil - The Book has a Verb in the Title - Written Before 1900 - The Author's First Novel - Something Cheerful - Translated from Another Language - The book has a Red Cover

Our topic for this January is JOY.

I explained it thus - "Still following December's theme, it is something to cheer us all up. Interpret this however you wish. You could even have a book by an author whose first name is Joy (if you can find one). If you were presented with a book for Christmas, one that you wanted, then it might have given you joy just to receive it. That counts too, even if it is a gory crime book or a romance with a sad ending. It is your choice".

Now here are a few of our recent critiques:

From Isabel – a review of “Hamnet” by Maggie O’Farrell

Hamnet was the name given to one of Shakespeare’s twins who died at the age of eleven. The story is told from the viewpoint of his wife, who is called Agnes in the novel. This was the name her father used when he wrote his will. We know her as Anne Hathaway. The narrative viewpoint is not first person, however, and she is accorded a rather mystical status who gives out healing herbs to the villagers. Shakespeare is never referred to by name but as ‘the father’, ‘the husband’ etc.

It cannot fit into the theme of Joy for next month’s read, as after her son’s death she is consumed with grief. As a reader, this weighed down on me.

Maggie O’Farrell is an author I did not know but she won the Women’s Prize for Fiction’ in 2020. She has also written children’s fiction. In case you are wondering, the novel does explain why Shakespeare left her the ‘second best bed’ in his will.

From Norma –

“At the Corner of King Street” by Mary Ellen Taylor

After a childhood of conflict and loss, Addie carves out a new life on a vineyard in the country. She feels obligated to return when her sister is in trouble and then has to face the agonising choice of whether to stay where she is needed or abandon her family and return to her hard won independence. I enjoyed this one and might follow it up with others by the same author.

“The Curious Case of Faith and Grace” by David B. Lyons

Two years ago, Faith and Grace Tiddle arrived home from their Saturday morning dance class to find both of their parents face down in pools of blood. Five days later the twins, only 9 years old at the time, were arrested for the double homicide.

Perhaps you can see why I had high hopes for this book, but for some reason I was convinced right from the start that the lead detective was a woman, and when I realised my mistake everything he said and did felt wrong to me. The book has excellent reviews on Amazon but over rated I think. A good idea but not well written. I couldn’t bring myself to care what happened to these children.

“Paris for One” by Jojo Moyes

It’s always good to have a book of short stories on the go to dip into when you only have five minutes. The stories vary between 5 and 131 pages and the two longest are both set in Paris. All of the stories feature women making important decisions in their everyday lives, sometimes with life changing results. I enjoyed it.

From Cynthia –

If you like both Ann Cleeves and Agatha Christie, there is a book just for you. It is a Pan Heritage Classic, "A Day in the Death of Dorothea Cassidy" by Ann Cleeves. She wrote it in 1992 and the style is reminiscent of Christie. No graphic descriptions of blood and chopped up corpses, just an interesting, low key story line.

Now, onto my "Festive" choice - the 23rd in Terry Pratchett's Discworld series. It begins with guests arriving in Lancre to enjoy a celebratory party/naming ceremony for the King and Queen's new baby. Due to an excess of naive regal

hospitality, the king has invited a family of vampires. Hence, the title, "Carpe Jugulum" - not seize the day, but seize the jugular.

If you like Pratchett you will love it. If you don't, you won't.

From Hilary –

I have just finished reading "Cold Malice" by Quentin Bates. It's a crime novel set in Iceland so the characters' names are a bit of a mouthful. Officer Gunnhildur re-investigates a woman's death that was cleared accidental 6 years before. And fellow officer Helgi believes he has seen someone declared dead 15 years earlier. I liked the writing but thought the story concerning the man who was presumed dead was a bit thin.

From Irene -

My October book was "A beautiful poison" by Lydia Khan. The story was set in the gilded age of Manhattan in 1918. Incorporated into the story are interesting historical elements such as the beginnings of forensic medicine, the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, and factories employing women to paint dials with radium.

The story begins on the night of Allene's engagement party and a young woman is found at the bottom of the stairs. Allene's father, a powerful businessman, who wants to avoid a scandal, persuades the police that it is an accident. Jasper, Allene and Birdie, who had once been inseparable friends will join together to solve this mystery, convinced there is poison involved in the death.

As the story unfolds there are more deaths and we also learn more about the reasons of the initial breakup of the friendships as the characters evolve.

The story is well written, the development of the characters is great, it introduced me to a time I knew nothing about, all the medical facts are accurate as the author works as a doctor.

There were many twists and turns but I am afraid it didn't work for me on the murder mystery level. I think the problem was that the novel wasn't sure what it was supposed to be: a murder mystery, historical novel, romance. That said it was a fairly easy read and I did want to finish it but I think more due to the good writing than the plot.

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During the past months we have not only shared book reviews, but also news of our activities, photographs, jokes, silly videos, a 90th birthday - albeit at a distance, and suggestions for where to go for pleasant exercise that will enable us to see friends, possibly share a cuppa, have a gossip – and all without causing us to break the 2 metre rule. Having said this, I think I speak for each and every one of our members when I say that we cannot wait to get back to "normal" and see each other again.

Cynthia Allen

Another wonderful commentary from Margaret Collins, 2011

Town and Around

Visit to

BRICK LANE MUSIC HALL

By Margaret Collins

Fifty of us, in high Christmas spirits, made our way to the Brick Lane Music Hall to have a three course Christmas meal and a good old giggle at the old fashioned always enjoyable Christmas show - this year entitled Vincent's Christmas Cottage. We were welcomed and shown to our tables already set out for our meal, crackers were pulled, hats put on, jokes told and orders for drinks were taken. The three course traditional meals were swiftly served, carefully cooked and presented, and enjoyed by all.

The Brick Lane Music Hall was started some 16 years ago by Vincent Hayes, the then Landlord of The Lord Hood PH in Brick Lane who is our very camp MC for the evening. The venue has moved twice before settling in St Mark's Church a deconsecrated gothic building near Pontoon Dock DLR station. A nice touch was the mural painted on the wall in the car park showing the dock area as it was in former days, and also the original War Memorial which is used every year for a Remembrance Service. The church had been completely redecorated inside with painted Victorian people in the balconies: flirting and waving, having a drink, falling off the balcony, seducing and kissing in the style of Donald McGill's saucy seaside postcards, with fat ladies, and hen-pecked husbands. New lighting, heating, kitchens, bar and relaxing areas had to be built at a cost of over one million pounds. Even the loos were painted to replicate music hall mischief.

The curtains opened showing a Christmas gingerbread cottage and a decorated Christmas tree to get us in party mood. On the small but perfect stage the fun started by introducing the cast to us and giving us a Christmas song medley to which we were invited to join in – and so we did with gusto. Our Master of Ceremonies warmed us all up with his naughty but nice style of humour. Although only a small company consisting of a lovely soprano, Joni Talks, two other lovely young ladies, one with thigh bones longer than my entire leg, who sang and danced for us, and a tremendous baritone, Andrew Robley, who entertained us with Christmas songs. The other member of cast was a comedian, Paul James much the same age as ourselves, who reminisced of times gone by and had us all laughing. The cast were versatile constantly changing costumes, all very sparkly and well made, and performing various silly sketches to entertain us.

During the interval raffle tickets were sold to fund the outreach performances they take to residential homes, hospices and others who cannot travel to the show. One of our members was lucky enough to win a prize. Vincent explained to us that this theatre is completely self-funded, and nothing comes from the Lottery, Art Fund or Heritage funding. Well done them.

The second half was also full of vitality: comedy sketches interspersed with song and dance routines, the comedian entertaining us, and of course the grand finale with all the cast in succession on stage all quick changing costumes to give us maximum enjoyment. The final line up was hilarious with Vincent coming on dressed in full padded costume as a very naughty fairy complete with a bent wand, and slightly tarnished red sequined tassels and G string.

You can't beat a good old giggle to get us all in party mood, and this afternoon certainly provided that. I thoroughly enjoyed myself, and I am pretty sure from the feedback that the others did too. Although Music Hall is not now widely produced as it was in its heyday of the late 1800's it is good to know that the tradition continues in this grand old style.

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		

*All contributions for January newsletter to be submitted by Midday **Monday 1st February 2021** Please ensure you contribute before the cut-off and have an email acknowledgment from me that I have received your contribution! Thank You*