



## CHAIR CHAT JULY 2020

Well, we are still in lockdown but it is easing and by the time you read this newsletter, I might have had a haircut (Hoorah).

Recently in Danson Park, a male swan was mauled by a dog and sadly could not be saved. So when on my regular walk, it is sad to see a lone female on the lake.

Once courtship is complete, male and female swans are bonded for life. If their partner dies the other, one could die of a broken heart.

There are six species of swan but only three are native to the UK, the Mute, Berwick and Whooper. The latter two journey thousands of miles each year between summer breeding grounds near the Arctic and the relative warmth of the UK in winter.

Mute swans, which are the most common in our area, are certainly not mute and communicate in coarse grunts. The wing beat of the Mute is slow, heavy and loud. You often hear them before you see them.

Swan was considered a great delicacy in the time of Elizabeth 1, nowadays only the two groups of people are allowed to eat swan: Royal Family, (there is no evidence that they ever do, Prince Philip is one of the founders of the World Wide Fund for Nature!) and the Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge and only on 25<sup>th</sup> June. (This practice is now discontinued too).

The Queen is the first monarch to participate in the annual Swan Upping when the Royal Swan Master (there's a job title you don't hear every day) counts and marks swans on the Thames. This is done for conservation purposes. Mute swans have been protected by law since 1998 so they cannot be eaten (thank goodness) and under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act, it is illegal to keep or kill them.

Shakespeare has always been associated with swans and is referred to in the Ben Jonson poem written 7 years after Shakespeare death. He refers to him as "Sweet Swan of Avon". Shakespeare mentions swans in Othello and Romeo and Juliet, he also writes about swans singing before they die. This is why there are so many references to swans in the Stratford on Avon area, pubs, hotels and swans on the River Avon near the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. There are many Shakespeare Festivals all over the world and I was lucky enough to visit Montgomery, Alabama and watch a performance of As You Like It. The theatre, the lake with swans, is paying homage to The Royal Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford on Avon.

There are black swans at Chartwell, which are native to Australia and have been there since 1927, foxes and mink have destroyed them regularly and another pair were sent as a gift from the Government of Australia. A floating island has been constructed in the middle of the lake to protect them.

Abbotsbury Swannery was established by Benedictine Monks in 1040 to produce food for their lavish feasts. Nowadays it is a wonderful place to visit with 600 mute swans, and is the only place in the world where you can walk through the colony. They are all free flying, it is a sanctuary and there are no cages. For me swans will always be associated with Swan Lake, the wonderful ballet by Tchaikovsky, based on Russian and German folk tales, premiered by the Bolshoi Ballet in 1877.

Apparently, there are no written instructions that have survived and ballet companies all over the world have produced many versions. So whether it is the Royal Ballet at The Royal Opera House or Matthew Bourne's all male swans at Sadler's Wells, swans are inspiring.

So a sad story in Danson Park and dog owners are now supposed to keep their dogs on leads, let's hope they do!

Swans are graceful, beautiful and fascinating, they are special.

I hope U3A can get together soon but we must stay safe.

Sandra

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**ALL MONTHLY MEETINGS CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

## AN URGENT APPEAL FOR A TREASURER

During Lockdown, the Committee have all been working hard doing all the background jobs that have to go on. Membership records have been kept, the monthly accounts are up to date, Group Leaders have been contacted, all the emails from Head Office have been dealt with.

BUT for the future we have a problem, we need a Treasurer; this is a vital role as we cannot continue as a U3A group without a Treasurer. The books are in good order, Ron has done a wonderful job, you certainly would not be taking over a mess, and Ron is very happy to help a new person.

We don't want to close Bexley U3A but we may be looking at that option if members don't volunteer.

Other members of the committee have completed 3 years and more, on the Committee and would like members to come forward and offer to help.

If you value your U3A, please think hard about helping. We are a good team and work well together, and you would be made most welcome.

Please contact any member of the Committee if you think you could help.

Thank you in advance

**Sandra** (who has completed 2 years as Secretary and 3 years as Chairman).

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**From Terry : As I Write this article in mid-June** we seem to be easing some of Lock down hopefully by the time you read this we will be getting back to some sort of Normality.

None of us knows when we can get back to meeting our Friends at Bexley U3A hopefully not too far away now.

I still have my wander around Hall Place , I have had it rumoured that the Buildings may be opening up again early this month ( July) at least you will be able to go to the loo.

All being well and the Weather Permits, our Lovely Choir the Evergreen Revellers will be meeting later in July in Hall Place Grounds, Social Distancing of Course! To have a picnic and maybe a singsong. It will be lovely to get together again. This should have been our Last Practise and Summer Meal before the Summer Break. This will have now turned out to be our First meet since March 9th.

Something very enjoyable to see on my treks around Hall Place are the Baby Goslings that have grown over the time I have been going there. Also watching the grass go from Green to Brown and back to Green. This, of course ,was due to the Lack of Rain through May. I do wish People enjoying the Park would look after it more by taking their Rubbish home with them and not just leaving for someone else to pick up.

Another little Stroll I have started after being invited by our Chair Sandra was on a Tuesday morning around Danson Park, nice and leisurely, so far just five Ladies and me what could be nicer!

I have been asked if I am getting Bored the answer is no as there is always something to find to do. Recently The working members of the railway I volunteer on was asked to take a Virtual College Course, Subject ... You guessed it "Covid – 19" Why I am not sure. It took me over an hour to get it to load, another half an hour to go through the course with a Test at the end! The Questions were multiple answers. Well after what we have being told for the last three months why do you need a Test? I did however get 100% first time, all I got was a Certificate to confirm I knew about Covid -19, so no I don't get Bored ! Any more courses like this? I need more Certificates!

I must say how sad I was to hear of the passing away on Thursday 18th June of Vera Lynn at 103, not bad though. As the Choir were practising for the VE Day Celebration that did not happen, we were singing many of Vera's songs. I know several of the Choir after hearing "We'll Meet again" sung by Vera Lynn, sang along with the song with a tear in our eye. I certainly did, what a wonderful lady. I hope we see a monument to Vera Lynn appear before long, she deserves it! Rest in Peace Vera.

Stay safe, well and Keep Smiling

Terry

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### Local Lights

Cancellation of the Belvedere Band performance on 21st March '20

If there are U3A members who would like their money popped through their door as there have been no meetings, please would you let me know your name and address, and I will remedy the situation. Some members have already been refunded.

Carole Alleway

### September Trip to Chatham Dockyard Salute to the Forties.

As up to end of June, The Salute to the Forties, at Chatham Dockyard is still on. However I do not know the situation with the coach as yet. I will keep you informed but as it stands it is still on.

Just a reminder.

The coach is being paid for by Bexley U3 A .Special Entrance price £15 paid in advance to Maureen Wright  
Depart. Bexleyheath 09.15 return around 18.00

Date. Saturday 19th September.

Terry

### THE ARMY FLYING MUSEUM

The Army Flying Museum at Middle Wallop in Hampshire has produced a series of free "Lockdown lectures" currently running online from their website: <https://www.armyflying.com> . Local U3A members are viewing to ease the lockdown burden but the museum has emailed an invitation to members of London U3As who may also be interested.

"Now in its Second Season, these lectures have been viewed by over 5,000 people worldwide. The lectures have been available to watch via our website each Monday and, via the latest webstream technology, the audience is able to attend a live Q&A with aviation historian and broadcaster, Paul Beaver. We are proud to be one of the only military Museums offering this technology to our audience. Viewing is very easy with no apps to download and viewing directly from our website".

No fixed charge but donations encouraged.

Queries to Ella Clayton: [Fundraising@armyflying.com](mailto:Fundraising@armyflying.com)

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**From Chris Parascandolo:** My mother was born in Belgium; her father was a Diamond Merchant, so they were quite a well off family. They all had handmade shoes, clothes and coats. My mother was training to become an Olympic Speed skater and swimmer, her brother was training to become an Olympic swimmer and athlete on the rings and bars, then war broke out and that was that. All the Olympic Training stopped

They lived in a very large house in Antwerp. One day they had a letter from the Germans telling them they had five days to get out as they were taking their house over for German headquarters. In those five days all the silver was melted down and made into ladles and kitchen utensils. Some were made into brooches for the aunts with their initials and lots of swirls to hide the initials and made to look cheap. All the aunties of my Mother's family sat together to sew hundreds of diamonds into the curtains to make it look like the curtains had weights in them. My aunt had a ring made with a green glass stone in the middle and real white Diamonds all the way around so that the green stone would catch the eyes of the Germans and to be told it was only glass.

They all worked hard that week to hide all their worldly goods; the Germans never got any of the things they made look cheap. When they were told they could move back home, all their furniture was gone they stepped into a very large empty house but they didn't steal the curtains or the kitchen utensils. I have a silver ladle, a silver cigarette case and silver tablet case that are very dear to me

### ***Some facts about the West End of London – Did you Know?***

**Lincoln's Inn Fields** is the largest square in Central London. In 1586, Anthony Babington was brutally executed in the square as punishment for plotting to assassinate Elizabeth I. The process produced such a mess the Queen ordered that his thirteen accomplices should just be hanged.

**Soho** takes its name from a hunting cry used by the Duke of Monmouth, who had a house near to where Soho Square is now. Monmouth also used "Soho" as his battle cry at the Battle of Sedgemoor in 1685.

In 1732, the Theatre Royal, the most luxurious theatre that London had ever known, was built on the site of the present **Royal Opera House**. Many of Handel's operas and oratorios were written for this grand theatre and had their first performances there. In 1808, the theatre burned down and a second one was built but, sadly, this was to meet the same fate in 1855. A third opened in its place three years later, finally being renamed the Royal Opera House in 1892 - considered today as one of the world's leading opera houses.

Opposite the Royal Opera House, in Bow Street once stood **Bow Street Magistrates Court**, the most notorious court in London. The novelist Henry Fielding, who sat on the bench at the court, came up with the idea for the Bow Street Runners, formed in 1714 by his brother John, as Britain's first paid police force. Later, when Sir Robert Peel established the Metropolitan Police in 1829, Bow Street opened as Britain's first police station and the policemen became known as "Bobbies" in his honour. Bow Street was the only police station to have a white light outside instead of a blue one because, when Queen Victoria visited the Opera House she said the blue light reminded her of the blue room where Prince Albert had died.

Although born in Leytonstone, film director Alfred Hitchcock was the son of a **Covent Garden** greengrocer and spent much of his childhood getting to know the area. He later used Covent Garden as the setting for his film *Frenzy*.

**Facts taken from "I never Knew that about London" by Christopher Winn.**

**Maureen Wright**

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### **Child neglect – an article from Crime Stoppers**

Imagine being a child or young person, being hungry, no food in the house, not knowing if you'll be fed that day. Imagine not knowing where your adult is, or when they'll come back or IF they'll come back. Or even if an adult is present, imagine they're intoxicated, high on drugs, or angry and abusive.

At a time when home should be the safest possible place for children, we know that the home is where some of them are suffering neglect, being harmed and abused.

Everyone has the responsibility to keep children safe. Learn how to spot the signs of abuse and speak up if you have concerns.

If you have concerns over a child's welfare and want to remain anonymous, you can contact us, Crime Stoppers, online or on the phone - **0800 555 111** - 24/7, 365 days a year. We've kept our promise of anonymity since we were founded in 1988. In an emergency, always call 999.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, spotting the signs of abuse and neglect may be more difficult due to social distancing. It's feared that during this time, whilst children are not as visible without school or support networks, they could be exposed to home environments with domestic abuse, or where their parents or carers have increased drink or drug abuse problems, or unsupported mental health issues. We're encouraging key workers and members of the public who are on essential trips to learn the signs to spot, so that if you do see something that doesn't feel right, you can speak up. What is child neglect?

Child neglect is a form of child abuse. It's where a parent or carer is not meeting the child's basic needs, including failing to provide adequate food and drink, supervision, medical aid, clothing, or housing, as well as other physical, emotional, social, educational and safety needs. It is abuse through omission. In an emergency, always call 999.

If you don't mind waiving your anonymity or are seeking support and advice, please contact the NSPCC. Call the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000, email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) or fill in our online form.

How do you know if someone is a victim of neglect?

These signs don't always mean that a child is being abused, but if you have concerns, even if you're unsure, please speak up. It's better to be safe than sorry. Signs to be aware of:

- Children appearing withdrawn, anxious or frightened. Hearing shouting, things being broken or hitting. Children crying for long periods of time.
- Children appearing guarded around a particular individual.
- Very young children left alone or being outdoors by themselves. Children looking dirty or not changing their clothes. Children being withdrawn or anxious.

Other emotional and behavioural signs of child abuse are often presented in the following ways:

- Impaired capacity to enjoy life - abused children often appear sad, preoccupied and listless. Stress symptoms - for example: bed-wetting, tantrums, bizarre behaviour, eating problems etc.
- Low self-esteem - children who have been abused often think they must be worthless to deserve such treatment. A generally negative, uncooperative attitude. Hyper-vigilance - typified

in the "frozen watchfulness" expression

- Compulsivity - abused children sometimes compulsively carry out certain activities or rituals
- Pseudo-mature behaviour - a false appearance of independence or being excessively "good" all the time, or offering indiscriminate affection to any adult who takes an interest.

These signs are more relevant outside a pandemic:

- School learning problems - such as lack of concentration
- Social withdrawal - many abused children withdraw from relationships with other children and become isolated and depressed

The NSPCC has further information and advice on different types of child abuse, how to spot the signs and what you can do to help keep children safe. Exploited children and young people don't always look vulnerable and may not act like victims. Download the Children's Society #LookCloser leaflet to learn more about the signs to spot.

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**Yet another repeat article** from July 2011 when we visited the Lavender Fields at Castle Farm. I had booked this for July 2020, and sadly had to cancel. So I hope this article gives you a flavour of its beauty. I do hope that we can go again in the future.

### **Town and Around**

Visit to Castle Farm, and Lullingstone Castle

By Margaret Collins

The travel Gods were not with us on our July coach trip. Both the M25 and A2 were blocked, so our outward and homeward journeys were so much longer than anticipated. However, as I was not driving I did not get too stressed about it, but we all felt very sorry for our driver.

When we finally arrived at Castle Farm the view of the Lavender Fields took our breath away. To see such a rhapsody in purple was extraordinary. The farm is now owned by Caroline and William Alexander with their three children returning home to help in the summer. The land was originally purchased in 1880 by William's great-great-great grandparents to grow hops. The farm is now a mix of arable farming, livestock, flowers for drying, and a small hop garden. The lavender is planted in 55 of their 1,200 acres. Advice was taken from the Lavender growers in Provence, and gradually the fields were planted with various species of lavender and lavender. Two plants of Maillette Lavender, known for its high oil yield, were secreted in a suitcase, brought back to Castle Farm, and propagated to stock the huge fields. We were then taken to the distillery just in time for a huge tractor and trailer to arrive, which allowed us to view the process of extracting the essential oils. The tractor cuts two rows of lavender at a time, the flowers and stalks go into a trailer, which is then brought to the custom-designed distillery on the farm. This is an ingenious system where steam is forced at high pressure through the lavender to extract the oil. We returned to the well-stocked Hop Shop for lavender shortbread and homemade apple juice with lavender essence – very nice indeed, and to purchase some delicately flavoured lavender ice cream.

Back on the coach to go to the Visitor Centre at Lullingstone for lunch. It was nice enough to sit outside and enjoy our meal, and time for a gentle stroll along the river or over the field at the back.

Then to Lullingstone Castle for our guided tour of the church and house. Lullingstone is one of England's oldest family estates being recorded in the Domesday Book. The present owner Guy Hart-Dyke is the 19th successive generation of the family to live at Lullingstone. The Parish church of St Botolph, which is on the lawn just by the house, is of Norman origin and contains some of the oldest stained glass windows in the country. This survived the Puritan and Cromwellian purges and a Second World War flying bomb that landed close by. A beautiful Tudor rood screen, memorial brasses, as well as the magnificent splendid tombs of the Hart and Hart Dyke family members gave the interior a lovely calm and peaceful atmosphere.

Lullingstone Castle is an impressive brick house first built in 1497 with two gatehouses and a moat protecting it. The house was remodelled in the 1700's, the moat filled in and the stream that fed it becoming the extensive lake in front of the house. Our guide took us into the Great Hall, with its fine Queen Anne decorative plasterwork ceiling, large paintings, armour, but also a cosy fireplace and comfy sofas. Up the grand staircase, with their shallow stair treads, erected especially to help the ailing Queen Anne on her many visits. Then into the State Drawing room with its high barrel vaulted ceiling with its intricate strap and pendant white plasterwork decoration. Many fascinating artefacts were displayed in cases along the walls. Mementoes of when Lady Zoë Hart Dyke founded and ran the Silk Farm from 1932 until 1956 on site were on display. The woven silk was used in the many royal wedding and coronation dresses over the years including the Queen's. Ceramics, fans, gloves, glass as well as other family mementoes were all of interest. A large trunk belonging to Queen Anne was on display inside of which was a really old doll. Other rooms we viewed were The State Dining Room which had over the fireplace a tilting helm of Sir John

Peche who used it at the Field of Cloth of Gold in June 1520, the cosy Library with fine views over the front lawn, the Ante Room holding souvenirs collected by family members from their tours abroad, The State Bedroom, and Queen Anne's Powder Room with a small square four poster bed, believed to date from the early 1700's.

Tom Hart Dyke was waiting for us on the lawn to take us into his World Garden, first conceived whilst he was held captive for months close to the Colombian border when plant hunting with his friend. His enthusiasm is infectious and entertaining. Through a Moon Gate into the old walled kitchen garden now the World Garden, which is so dense with plants that you could hardly make out the continent shaped beds with appropriate planting. It was looking really lush and interesting, and dotted about with sculpture correct to the continents, a cobra, Europa, Ayres Rock, even a Baobab tree made of metal. Tom took us through the continents, ending up in the cactus house and the Cloud Garden, a temperate house with Venus flytraps, air plants, banana plants, and other exotic species. Then into the nursery where we pounced on the plant goodies on sale coming home with interesting specimens to create our own world garden at home.

It was a very full day, but we covered the ground without getting wet, which was a bonus, but sadly no time for a cup of tea. Many members had not visited these interesting places before, even though they are on the doorstep, so it made for an enjoyable day out.

### Executive Committee 2019- 2020

Chair	Sandra Goulding		
Vice Chair	<b>VACANCY</b>		
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		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 contributors. Contributions are published on a first come-first served basis.*

*All contributions for August newsletter to be submitted by Midday Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July*

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