



### Chair Chat September 2020

Hoorah! The children have gone back to school, even the most reluctant attendees seem very keen to get back to school after such a long break.

Of course, the lessons are essential but education in its broadest sense is so much more, and so valuable. The children have missed out on so much, being in class together, working as a team and physically playing together. Would you have wanted to miss out on playground games like skipping, Tag or It, kiss chase!!, all kinds of ball games and just running around?

They also learn tolerance of each other and being kind and thoughtful to classmates. Sport is an essential part of school for many children and matches against other teams is a learning exercise, especially having to say "Congratulations" to the team that just beat you is a lifelong skill. They go on trips where sometimes they say the coach journey is the best part, and residential trips, where they learn to be away from home and have to be responsible for all their own "stuff" and be ready the next morning at the allotted time. And eating food, which is a bit different from home.

None of this can be learnt via Zoom or home learning.

In 1880s, education was compulsory for children aged 5 until 10 years of age, the school leaving age progressively getting raised since then, most recently to 18 in 2015.

All through our lives we learn, taking exams to help us get on at work, sometimes learning just for pleasure at evening classes or golf or tennis lessons as it is very satisfying. We learn from reading, even a novel that may be set in a different country of which we know very little. I recently read a novel set in Wartime Cairo, which was fascinating.

We can even learn at a Quiz evening, if only we could remember the answers the next morning!

As we know as members of U3A, we continue to learn, from interesting talks and from each other, sometimes just having a conversation. We also learn to be tolerant of other members and work as a group.

Let's hope the children going back to school is a great success and they enjoy being back, even if they have to wear masks.

Stay safe

**Sandra**

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**ALL MONTHLY MEETINGS CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

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## THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR U3A

All these thoughts and plans are dependent on future Government Regulations and Guidelines.

We hope to resume Thursday monthly meetings in January 2021, if the restrictions on the number of people allowed to meet in one room have been lifted.

The AGM will be postponed until further notice. The Committee have agreed to continue in their roles until life is more normal.

The Annual Accounts will be completed and examined, and posted to members as soon as possible after September 2020.

Annual subscriptions will now be due on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

Monthly newsletters will continue to be published and distributed as they have been during the last few months.

Third Age Matters will continue to be printed and posted to members.

Group Leaders can decide if they wish to continue and/or recommence their activities, depending on their circumstances. Please contact Cynthia Allen for the latest U3A advice on group meetings.

The Committee will continue to meet every month to deal with any matters arising and any changes to Government policy that affect U3A.

I am sure that members will understand that we will get back to normal as soon as we possibly can and when it is safe to do so.

Bexley U3A is important to us all and we have missed all our usual activities.

Sandra and all the Committee.

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**FROM TERRY:**

Hi Everyone. I hope you are all keeping well & safe.

Yet another month gone by and we still not able to meet at our Thursday Meetings. Sadly, I cannot see the return to Roberts Hall for quite a while yet.

This however has not stopped a group of U3A friends meeting on a Tuesday morning for a walk around Danson Park. I must add this is not an official U3A group so does not have U3A insurance cover. The group is a very friendly bunch that tries to put the world to right, not much success however, as nobody can hear us! If you fancy a Leisurely Stroll around Danson Park with a Cup of tea after, come along 10.00 at the Main Gate opposite Crook Log.

By the time you read this article Our Evergreen Revellers Choir will have held our Meetup meeting at Hall Place. All being well I will have a full report on this event for the next newsletter.

Since the last Newsletter I have made a Visit to my friends in Devon. I usually travel to Devon by Train but for some reason Train fares have become very expensive. Bearing this in mind I chose to travel by National Express Coach from London Victoria. Incidentally half the Rail Fare!

It was a very warm day. My journey started by Train from Barnehurst to London Victoria. No problem on the Train, everyone keeping a Safe Distance, sadly a few did not wear face covering but they were nowhere near me. Train arrived spot on time!

I arrived too early so I had to wait to go into the Coach Terminal. I waited outside with a packed lunch to eat until I was allowed to go in 15 mins before my Coach departure.

I found my Coach Bay where the spotlessly clean National Express Coach was waiting. Face Mask on, I had my Temperature Checked. Despite me being rather hot due to being a hot day, I was allowed on. The Coach departed spot on time.

I was advised to only use a Window seat so the seat next to me was vacant which allowed me to spread out, lovely! A very comfortable journey to Devon. It does take a little Practise using the Coach Toilet though!

The journey took 5 hours, so I was able to listen to the Whole of Jeff Waynes War of the Worlds plus more on my MP3 Player, with Head Phones of course. The coach arrived in Newton Abbot just 5 minutes late.

Despite the weather being rather damp I had a lovely time with my Devon Friends.

One reason I wanted to go over a weekend was they have been holding Outside Hymn singing on Sunday Morning. My friend Ken is an expert on Sound for theatre and outdoor events. First thing on Sunday, well it was 09.30, Ken set up his Speakers and Amplifier and the iPad. At exactly 09.55 lovely African Music was broadcast to the Cul de Sac, Spot on 10.00 the first Hymn was played, with almost all the residents out Singing. They were supplied with the words a few days before.

After the singing it was time to have a chat with the neighbours. I had met some of them on other visits so it was really nice to catch up. I did offer to help clear up but it was too late Ken had finished the job while I was Chatting! (As most of you know I'm not very good at that!) At midday the three of us set off to a Lovely Old thatched roof Pub in a small village for a Sunday Lunch.

What a lovely way to spend a Sunday.

Sadly I had to return home on the Monday. Again, Face Mask on and Temperature checked I boarded the coach which was running 15 minutes late leaving Newton Abbot. However even after a 5-hour journey back we arrived in London Spot on time. Across to Victoria Railway Station to catch the Train back to Barnehurst. I must admit I have never seen Victoria Station so quiet.

The moral of all this, with taking a few precautions you can get out and enjoy Life. Yes it is a bit different but the world is still out there.

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

Terry

Dear Members – Visits to London parks and open spaces have been difficult over the past few months but I hope, like me, you have been able to take advantage of those in our local area during the fine summer weather.

Here are a few unusual facts about London parks etc. that you may enjoy reading:

During the reign of Charles 11 relations between England and France were strained. When a French soldier and writer called Seigneur de Saint-Evremond was exiled from France for criticizing the French chief minister. His arrival in London meant the King had a problem. Saint- Evremond was very well connected and a popular figure in London but, unfortunately very low on funds and he was hoping for employment at the royal court. Charles, not wishing to offend his guest nor the French government, came up with a novel solution. He appointed Saint-Evremond governor of Duck Island in the middle of the lake in **St James Park**. The governorship entailed no duties and carried a substantial salary. This delighted the Frenchman who had no idea where Duck Island was. It also met with the approval of the French ambassador who knew exactly the island's situation. Duck Island, today, is joined to the rest of the park.

**Hyde Park** is the largest of London's Royal Parks. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was a well- known duelling ground, used in 1792 as the venue for the so-called "petticoat duel" between Lady Almeria Braddock and a Mrs Elphinstone. They squared up after an altercation about Lady Braddock's age. The outcome was even, a result achieved when Lady Braddock's hat was blown off by a pistol shot and Mrs Elphinstone was wounded in one arm during a subsequent sword fight. Mrs E eventually apologised and the ladies retired for some tea.

**Kensington Gardens** – Beside the gardener's cottage at Victoria Gate on the northern edge of the park is a dogs' cemetery created in 1880 by the Duchess of Cambridge for her beloved pet dog. Over the following 35 years there have been 300 dogs brought here to be buried in the park where they had so enjoyed their lifetime walks and games. The cemetery closed for new clients in 1913.

**Chelsea Physic Garden** – Established in 1673, Chelsea Physic Garden is the second oldest botanical garden in Britain. In 1732 some cotton seeds from the garden were sent to James Oglethorpe, founder of the state of Georgia, who used them to start the American cotton industry.

It was in this garden, during World War 11, that writer John Wyndham working as a censor at the Ministry of Information, used to take his lunch breaks. Apparently, a strange looking shrub growing in one of the beds, gave him the idea for his bestselling book "The Day of the Triffids", published in 1951.

(Information taken from *I never knew that about London* by Christopher Winn and *A Curious Guide to London* by Simon Leyland). *Maureen Wright*

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### **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. Email Mary Jupp.

*In September 2009, yes it really was that long ago, we had a coach trip to Cherkley Court and Gardens. Some of you will remember it. As I was reading this review, it was coming back to me. It was a happy day out.*

## TOWN AND AROUND

### VISIT TO CHERKLEY COURT AND GARDENS

By Margaret Collins

Our coach took us through the beautiful small towns and countryside of Surrey until we eventually entered the estate through elegant stone gateposts, up a winding drive and suddenly saw the large Victoria house first built in 1860. This building was extensively fire damaged and rebuilt in 1893. It was then acquired by the MP and newspaper proprietor, William Maxwell Aitken, the first Lord Beaverbrook in 1910 and was his home until his death in 1964. His widow lived on in the house, but the house and gardens fell into considerable disrepair during this 30 year period and were also badly damaged in the great storm. Upon her death, it passed to the Beaverbrook Foundation who started the huge commission of extensive renovation of the house and its 400 acres of park and woodlands, as well as the 16 acres of landscaped gardens. The house is located at the top of a series of terraced gardens overlooking the Mole Valley and towards Norbury Park. All is in spectacular order and has only been opened to the public from 2007.

Our most informative guide took us around the ground floor of the house, explaining that it was not now lived in, but used extensively for weddings, conferences etc. During the Beaverbrook years, it was a family house, but also used for entertaining and the large, light and airy rooms reflected this. Amongst the guests would have been Bonar Law, Asquith, Rudyard Kipling, Duff Cooper, Harold Macmillan, Winston Churchill and their families. We were taken into the Cinema room, light wood panelling, and very art deco in style reflecting the heyday of the house in the 30's and 40's, where films would be shown after dinner. We were told the tale that the piano in this room had been used by the celebrated black cabaret artiste Hutch, who was not invited again after the great scandal broke regarding the alleged affair between him and Edwina Mountbatten. The hall and staircase had been completely rebuilt to the original plans after the damage caused by the great storm. Then into the library, which had mementoes of Beaverbrook's journeys across the world. We were told of the part that Lord Beaverbrook played trying to stop the gossip surrounding Edward and Mrs Simpson's affair spreading from America. Then into the lovely light reception rooms, with huge windows overlooking the terrace and across the valley, we were all entranced. Many beautiful paintings, clocks, ornaments, family portraits, and cranberry glass covered the surfaces of these rooms. Then into a small breakfast room, again hung with lovely pictures, and decorated with small pieces of green glass ware. The final stop was the huge dining room. A massive table which could seat 22 dominated the room, again hung with lovely paintings, and exquisite side tables and mirrors. We could only imagine the conversations held around this table at the many dinners held here during the turbulent war years: must have been exciting times.

After a welcome lunch in the Orangery terrace we tackled the well laid out gardens. Despite it being the beginning of September there was still plenty of colour. By the house was an exotic planted border, with cannas, and bright dahlias. Down on the first terrace by the old stables were beds beautifully planted in yellow and purple. The lower terrace had a blue and silver theme. The white themed Italian garden had white roses and Japanese anemones surrounding a lovely low

pool and elegant stone seat. The Mediterranean gardens were spectacular, with paths lined with flints, masses of grasses, sliver leaved plants, and flowers covering acres of land in a most pleasing manner. The lawns were beautifully kept, and at either end elegant Pavilions allowed you to sit in the shade for a while.

The terraces and steps were all immaculate, and the surprise was the shell grotto housed underneath the stone double staircase from the main terrace. The mermaids holding up the columns were decorated with all sorts of lovely shells; the mermen and Neptune were carved and decorated with coral. The ceilings were covered in intricate patterns of scallop shells, with water dripping and splashing into the shallow pools. It was a delight.

We had time for a quick cup of tea and of course cake, before seeking out the plant shop and heading back to reality and the M25. A most enjoyable day and even the weather was kind to us for a change.

### 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.*

*All contributions for October newsletter to be submitted by Midday Monday 5<sup>TH</sup> October*

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