



CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021

It seems a long time since we held an AGM but at last we can hold one with an audience!

The first few months of this year we were in lockdown, but during that time, the committee continued to communicate by email meetings, which were far from ideal. And then we started to meet outside The Stables, and luckily the weather was kind and we could actually drink coffee and get on with running the u3a, not sure what the other patrons thought, but we really appreciated the chance to talk face to face.

During this time, the newsletter continued to be produced and distributed, thanks to Maureen who stuffed envelopes and queued at the Post Office so that we could keep in touch. The bills were paid, monthly accounts produced, Third Age Matters was posted to all members, and the database was kept up to date. This meant that all communications from National Office could be sent out by email.

Then August came and we could meet in Roberts Hall and chat to all our friends we hadn't seen in such a long time.

We were advised by Christ Church that Roberts Hall would no longer be available for our meetings (after over 25 years!!), but that we could meet in the church.

There are advantages and disadvantages to this arrangement:

Chairs do not have to be got out of the cupboard, (they are dangerously stacked), and put away at the end of meetings by a group of very willing volunteers, but we sit on pews which are hard with no cushions.

We have the services of the Verger to deal with all our speakers' IT needs. So no storing, transportation and carrying heavy box speakers and a projector and screen, into the hall and connecting all the wires etc.

We have been given a locked cupboard to store our tea making requirements. No other organisations can get access to this cupboard.

Having social events is nigh impossible with fixed pews. There was an idea we could perhaps hire Roberts Hall for a different afternoon to enable social events to take place, but until the problem of the chairs is solved, this would be difficult.

Apart from the Committee, and the Group Leaders, there are lots of people who very quietly help every month, too many to mention but a few stand out, Edna who sends out condolence cards and celebration cards to our members, and has been doing it for several years, Brenda Evans who has looked after our new members when they arrive at the door, Mary Jupp who edits and prints the newsletter every month and also prints AGM papers for us, and Chris Parry who has kept a lot of us sane, amused, and thoughtful during lockdown and continues to this day! We mustn't forget the Tea and Coffee Team who buy the milk on the way to the meeting and serve us tea and coffee (and biscuits!).

We held two "appreciation" lunches during October to show our appreciation for everybody who contributes regularly to make our u3a work.

The future - we were in danger of closing but thanks to some willing members, we can continue.

We have a member who is willing to act as Treasurer (we could not continue without this role being fulfilled).

dominates in **Trafalgar Square**. This tree is traditionally given by the city of Oslo as a token of Norwegian gratitude to the people of London for their assistance during the years of 1940 – 1945. Huge Christmas trees are, in fact, displayed in many places throughout London, including **St Pancras, Leadenhall Market, Granary Square at King’s Cross and Paddington**. At **Claridge's Hotel** and **Liberty’s store**, along with many more hotels and shops, there are also some stunningly dressed fir trees to see.

A new idea that has become popular in recent years is the setting up of Christmas markets in the capital. **Hyde Park** has the largest of these winter wonderland villages – wooden chalets glittering with a multitude of goodies from hand-made crafts to mulled wine sold by the glassful. There is a temporary ice rink there too for those brave enough to skate. Similarly, the **South Bank** is transformed with its own “village”, as well as **Leicester Square** and various other places.

Christmas would not be Christmas without a visit to see the overhead lights in **Oxford Street** and **Regents Street**. The “lights” tradition started in Regent Street in 1954 when local retailers and businesses arranged for a display. In the 1950s and 1960s the installations spread to other streets with Oxford Street first participating in 1959. These days the switching on of the lights is a big event usually shown on the TV news as the start of the Christmas season.

If it’s food you are after then **Harrod’s Food Hall in Knightsbridge** is the place to go; an emporium set out with counters full of mouth- watering, luxury Christmas delights. Or there is **Fortnum and Masons in Piccadilly** that attracts visitors from far and wide to buy its famous festive fare. **Hamley’s in Regents Street** is the most well- known for its toys - an absolute Aladdin’s cave for children. Originally founded by William Hamley as “Noah’s Ark” toy shop in High Holborn in 1760 it moved to its present location in the late 1800s.

Even the London Museums have their Christmas events, too numerous to mention here except for the Geffrye Museum (now the Museum of the Home) in East London. This recently renovated museum regularly presents its rooms decorated for Christmas through each period of time from the 1600s to the modern day – what a transformation can be seen. But Christmas was celebrated then as it still is now.

Happy Christmas to all our u3a members.

Local Lights

I hope to have your tickets for the Belvedere Band on 11th December ready for distribution at this meeting. Please collect them from me at the desk near the entrance.

In the event I do not yet have the tickets, please collect them from me outside St Peter’s Church from 7pm, ready for a 7.30pm start. Tickets are not numbered so you can sit wherever you like.

Organiser Carole Alleway

If you would like to join my *Peep Behind the Curtain* mailing list then please make sure you give me your email address.

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Book Reviews

From Jenny:

The Marble Collector by Cecelia Ahern

The second book I have read by this author. I loved it.

When Sabrina Boggs stumbles upon a mysterious collection of her Father's belongings, her seemingly uneventful life suddenly alters and shifts.

In a single day she has to search for answers about the man she thought she knew, a man who can no longer remember his own story, Sabrina uncovers far bigger secrets than she could have imagined; and discovers that sometimes it's the people closest to us that we know the least.

From Cynthia:

Exit by Belinda Bauer

This is the first book by Belinda Bauer that I have read. Although it is primarily of the Crime genre, it is also very funny, bordering on farce.

The plot centres on a group of people - the Exiteers - who attend the deaths of the terminally ill, or folk suffering severe pain who wish to be euthanized.

Felix Pink is one such Exiteer. Alas, all goes wrong when he accidentally involves himself in the death of the wrong man.

This may not sound like a suitable basis for a humorous novel, but it is!

Festive Markets in Bexley Borough

There seems to be a proliferation of markets, Christmas events etc. this year. Here are just a few.

The Exchange Erith - Christmas Craft Market

10am to 1pm, Sunday 19 December.

Christmas is nearly here. So, get those last-minute gifts - and maybe a treat for yourself (you deserve it) at The Exchange's first on-site local craft market. Expect a range of items on sale including jewellery, candles, and other gifts, as well as a few well-crafted food and drink products including Bexley Brewery beers, cheeses, and sweet treats.

Hall Place

Christmas Craft Market

10am to 4pm, 11, 12, 19, 21 and 22 December.

An opportunity to purchase that special gift from a small selection of stalls on each date. Hall Place will be welcoming some of our popular craft sellers through December in a series of specially selected weekend small markets located in the courtyard by the Visitor Centre.

Regular posts on Facebook will give you an advance notice of who will be attending each week.

Deck the Hall

4, 8, 10, 15, 18 and 22 December.

£8 adult, £4 child (5 to 16-year-olds), under 5's free.

Get into the festive mood with our twilight self-guided tours of the historic house shimmering and twinkling, dressed for Christmas. Complimentary glass of mulled wine or orange juice. Bookable time slots from 4pm to 6.30pm. Suitable for all, children must always be accompanied by an adult. Please note only stepped access to the first floor. Tickets must be booked in advance either online or in person.

Did you know?

We have a members-only private Bexley u3a Facebook page administered by Mary Jupp and kept wonderfully entertained by the fabulous Chris Parascandolo.

If you would like to join, please email Mary Jupp who will send you a link. The page is not public in anyway and is not searchable on Facebook.



Executive Committee 2021- 2022

Chair	Wendy Scott		
Vice Chair	VACANCY		
Secretary	Maureen Wright		
Treasurer	Keith Scott		
Membership	Douglas West		
Speakers	Paul Morris		
Group Liaison	Cynthia Allen		
E-mail & IT	Keith Scott		
Social Secretary	Thelma Wilkes		
Catering	Vi King		
Database	Keith Scott		
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 3rd January 2022**

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

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A huge thank you to all the wonderful people that have contributed to the newsletter this year.

There would be no newsletter without you.

Mary