



**Chair Chat**

Lately, there have been a lot of tips, hints and books written about decluttering. As, hopefully, we are at the end of lockdown restrictions, I would hope that all our house decluttering has been done! Not so in my house, I am still finding drawers, cupboards, shelves and nooks and crannies to sort out, some of them for the second or third time. I haven't been able to go out for so long, where has all this "stuff" come from?

At least the charity shops and the Council tips are open again, so the black sacks can disappear. I have deleted lots and lots of old emails and my replies, from my computer and phone and it made me feel really organised.

I find that doing that job that has been nagging at me is also good. At the moment, I only have one form that needs completing on my desk, it has been sitting there for over a week, so there will be a sigh of relief when I put it in the post box.

Because we have not been able to socialise, I have found myself having more time to think. And I have decided that decluttering the mind is a good thing too.

Going over past conversations, can make one re-live hurts, upsets and lots of negative thoughts. We can declutter negative people out of our lives, and horrible events. Some of these memories consist of times when I could have behaved better, been kinder, more patient, so "could do better" is the lesson, not just dwelling on it and beating myself up about it.

Of course, some painful and sad memories cannot and should not be removed.

I find that re-living traumatic visits to hospitals, awful events that have affected my loved ones, is not good for my mental health.

We took so much for granted before the virus, our family and friends coming to our house, u3a meetings, going to the cinema and theatre, going to the pub, stopping for a coffee, getting our hair cut and lots more. I will try and live for today, so when we finally can do everything we want, I will try and make sure they are enhanced moments to really enjoy and appreciate.

Let's hope our u3a can meet again in July leaving behind perfectly tidy houses!!!!

**Sandra Goulding**

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**NEWSLETTERS**

We hope to meet up again in Roberts Hall in July, so the June newsletter will be the last one being posted to members who are not on email.

I am sure that you all would like to thank Maureen Wright, who has stuffed envelopes, queued at the Post Office for stamps, and has tried to make sure that everybody who needs a paper copy gets one.

Thank You.

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Printed newsletters will be available in the hall, (subject to the meeting going ahead), for members who do not receive an emailed copy.

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**Local Lights - local theatre trips**

I am pleased to announce that Local Lights will be up and running just as soon as the government gives their permission. Local Lights is an open group and you are all most welcome to attend.

Organiser - Carole Alleway

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## JUNE ZOOM

This will be a very informative Talk on the Roaring Twenties Talk by Delia Taylor  
Relive the Decade of the four F's Fashion, Flappers, Film & Fun. A light Hearted talk with short Videos.

Topic: Bexley Talk Roaring Twenties

Time: Jun 10, 2021 01:45 pm

The website version of this newsletter does not contain the meeting details or password for obvious reasons; they are contained in the printed version which has been sent to members. Please contact Terry if necessary. Please make sure all TVs, radios, mobiles etc are turned off before joining as this will be picked up and stops others from speaking.

See you there, Terry

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Jo from SE London region: Can you go the distance for London's Air Ambulance Charity? They're calling on supporters to walk or run 116 miles (the length of London's border) over this summer, to help raise vital funds for their charity and lifesaving service. <https://fundraising.londonsairambulance.org.uk/event/miles-for-missions/home>. If you would like information on Miles for Missions or the work of London's Air Ambulance Charity then please email [community@londonsairambulance.org](mailto:community@londonsairambulance.org).

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## London Museums

As museums once again open their doors to visitors let us explore a few facts about some of the famous - and not so well known - 170 odd museums throughout London.

The oldest and largest of these is the **British Museum, Bloomsbury**, founded in 1753 and now covering an area equivalent to nine football pitches. It was the first national museum to encompass all fields of human knowledge and open to visitors from across the world. Sir Hans Sloane was the inspiration behind the building of the museum. A physician by trade, working for some time as a doctor on a slave plantation in the Caribbean, he had amassed a collection of 71,000 objects by the time of his death. In his will Sloane left his collection to George II, for the nation, in return for a payment of £20,000 to his heirs. Today, the artefacts have multiplied from further bequests, donations, purchases and commissions to fill the vast Greek styled building.

**The Victoria and Albert and Science Museums, Kensington**, were both built as part of the Victorian Great Exhibition in 1851. The V&A was one of the main beneficiaries for which Prince Albert and the tireless Henry Cole, art patron and educator, had striven to provide to inform and educate the public. The Arts and Crafts era in which the magnificent building was born is best shown in the Morris, Gamble and Poynter Room, now the museum's restaurant where sometimes the notes of a piano linger between the tiled pillars and the Burne-Jones windows. The Science Museum, also a product of the Great Exhibition, was opened in 1857 with various machine exhibits. As the scientific collections grew it was realised a separate institution was needed, dedicated just to science. With the endless progression of discoveries and technology the exhibits, today, range from antiquities to the ultra-modern.

**The Natural History Museum, Kensington** opened its doors in 1881. Again the museum traces its origins to Sir Hans Sloane and his bequeathed collection. The wonderful building is the work of Captain Francis Fowke who also began the Royal Albert Hall until his sudden death when Alfred Waterhouse took over. The amazing sight of an 85 feet cast of a diplodocus in the main hall has thrilled children, and adults alike, for generations as well as the glorious gallery with its painted ceiling and grand staircase. The museum houses

the largest and most important natural history collection in the world. Added to this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century Darwin Centre with its research facilities and 22 million zoological specimens.

**The Old Operating Theatre Museum, Southwark** – A bricked up operating theatre for women was discovered in the roof of St Thomas’ Church, London Bridge in 1957, almost a century after it had ceased to function. Dried opium poppy heads found in the rafters were evidence that it had also been an herb garret. The operating theatre is the oldest surviving of its type in Europe dating from 1822. Tiers of seats, for former students, surround a centrally placed, wooden operating table where surgery was carried out without the use of anaesthetics or antiseptics. The museum has a collection of surgical instruments including knives, saws, leech jars and an ancient vibrator contraption used to control hysterical women. (sounds very unpleasant).

**The Foundling Museum, Bloomsbury** – Captain Thomas Coram, a philanthropic merchant set up The Foundling Hospital in 1790 for orphans and the children of poor mothers who could not afford to support them. Keepsakes left by mothers for their abandoned babies are the most poignant items displayed. Bows and ribbons were tied to their children’s’ clothes. The hospital carefully noted, and kept, 5000 items from every one of the 200 or so infants who arrived each year before dressing them in the Foundling’s own uniform. Childless, William and Jane Hogarth, fostered foundlings and William was a governor at the hospital. He painted pictures to decorate its walls and these are on display along with works by Reynolds and Gainsborough. The museum was re-created from the original building when it moved out of London in 1926 and includes the handsome rococo Governors’ Meeting Room.

**Fashion and Textiles Museum – Borough and Bermondsey.** This modern museum, founded by fashion designer Zara Rhodes, is sited in one of south London’s regenerated “coolest quarters”. The building, designed by Mexican Ricardo Ligorreta, is painted in lively pink and orange. The museum aims to be a cutting-edge centre for contemporary fashion, textiles and jewellery. It hosts regular exhibitions with themes to inspire and encourage creativity.

Information taken from Readers Digest “The Most Amazing Places to Visit in London”. **Maureen Wright**

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#### BOOK REVIEWS

From Hilary: *Shuggie Bain by Douglas Stuart.*

This is Douglas Stuart’s first novel. The story is set in and around Glasgow from 1981 to 1992, focusing on Shuggie’s childhood from the age of 5 to 16. Shuggie’s mother is an alcoholic. His father is a womaniser and moves them to a pit town with no working pit, so a rather depressing place, and leaves them for another woman. Shuggie tries to take care of his mother, but his life is made harder as he is gay and is picked on by the other kids.

The book sounds very depressing, but it has its funny moments and some more uplifting ones. It’s beautifully written. It won the Booker prize last year. I didn’t think I would like it, but I really enjoyed it and recommend it.

From Jenny: *The Husband’s Secret by Liane Moriarty*

Mother of three and wife of John Paul, Cecilia discovers an old envelope in the attic, written in her husband’s hand it says, “to be opened only in the event of my death”. Curious, she opens it and time stops. John Paul’s letter confesses to a terrible mistake which if revealed would wreck their family as well as the lives of others. Cecilia wants to do the right thing, but right for whom? If she protects her family by staying silent, the truth will worm through her heart. But

if she reveals her husband's secret, she will hurt those she loves most. A real page-turner, well written and I enjoyed the characters.

From Norma: *The Most Fun We Ever Had by Claire Lombardo*

This is a big book, over 600 pages, with lots of characters. Marilyn and David Sorenson have been married over 40 years and have 4 daughters. It's a dramatic family saga about a seemingly perfect marriage and the ups and downs of the daughters' lives. All the characters are believable and kept me interested till the very end. I found the descriptions of the love and rivalry between the sisters very moving. They struggled to form relationships that could match the love and loyalty between their parents, and each was jealous of her siblings in one way or another. Well worth reading and I hope she goes on to write more.

From Rosemary: *American Dirt by Jeanine Cummins*

This novel is set in Mexico. Julia, the Protagonist, is married to a journalist who investigates the Cartels, hence a dangerous career. Julia owns a book shop. One of her customers turns out to be the head of the cartel. He orders the murder of her family. Julia has a son, Luca, 6 years old. Julia and Luca survive the massacre, hence they need to flee. The plot then develops as she escapes from Mexico to America. This involves jumping onto moving trains, grabbing the handles of the train. The behaviour of the cartels is horrendous. Some nuns take risks to help people needing to leave Mexico.

The story has moments of pathos. I recommend this novel, as it gave me some insight of the problems of people trying to get to America.

From Carole: *Imperium by Robert Harris*

For those who have not read this, it is the first in a trilogy about Marcus Tullius Cicero, Roman statesman, lawyer, scholar and philosopher.

It is a fictional biography narrated by Tiro, his slave secretary, who looks back on times gone by in his old age as his master claws his way up in Roman society to become a successful and influential lawyer and eventually to become a member of the Senate. This first book deals with his various appearances as orator in the Senate and with several courtroom dramas in which he takes part. To quote the blurb on the book: "When Tiro opens the door to a terrified stranger one morning, he sets in motion a chain of events that will eventually propel his master to fame and power." Cicero is shown to be a very ambitious lawyer and orator, determined to get to the top and attain imperium: the supreme power in the state. I could not warm to him because I felt he was devious, calculating and completely lacking in any empathy with his clients but I suppose he was a man of his times in the violent and treacherous world of Roman politics and Tiro certainly respected him although even he sometimes was critical of Cicero's actions...

As is usual with Harris's historical novels, this one is peopled with various familiar real life characters such as Pompey, Julius Caesar, Crassus and there is even a mention of Mark Anthony. It is also filled with actual events that took place. I am an avid Robert Harris fan, but I did not particularly enjoy this one because I kept waiting for something to happen. There were too many words and not enough action for me and far too many names ending in 'us'. I cannot say that it spurred me on to read the next part of the trilogy. This is only my opinion of course and probably coloured by memories of studying Latin and that particular period in Roman history.

From Maureen: *Fall of Giants by Ken Follett*

I think Follett is a great storyteller, and although this book is another huge tome – over 850 pages – it flows and keeps the reader engaged on every page. "Fall of Giants" is the first in a trilogy of his "Century" series. The book begins in a Welsh mining village in 1911 and moves quickly on, encompassing the lives of five families from different parts of the world, both rich and poor. We move from Wales to America, Russia to Germany and London as the story leads up to the outbreak of WW1. There seems a cast of thousands in this novel, but I have not got at all lost as the sections of the story are easy to follow. Politicians and real historic people of the time are included on the pages, making it authentic and believable. I am nowhere near finished but, if you like a good story, then I can recommend this novel

## From June 2019 : Town and Around - Visit to Royal College of Physicians by Margaret Collins

Just opposite an entrance to Regents Park behind the trees we could glimpse this modernist building, set in amongst a fine Nash Terrace, which is the fifth headquarters of the Royal College of Physicians one of which was burnt down in the Great Fire in 1666. This building was opened in 1964, designed by the architect Sir Denys Lasden and now Grade I listed.

On this beautiful June morning we were invited to go into the medicinal garden for a welcome cup of coffee and jolly nice biscuits and where we were met by a Garden Fellow who gave us a most interesting and entertaining walk around the quiet and well-tended gardens. It was an unexpected pleasure to see this lovely garden with its huge Plane tree offering shade on this sunny day, this was grown from a cutting of the Plane tree still on the Island of Cos under which Hippocrates was said to have taught his students. He explained that the garden had started with little more than 12 medicinal plants, but now has some 1,300 plus plants which can be used for medicinal purposes from all over the world. The garden was set in beds according to continent, and we were well entertained as well as educated in the uses of these plants. The leaves or flowers of plants were once identified as parts of the body that they would help to heal. He pointed out to us ones which looked like tubercular lungs, others which looked like a uterus and which were once used as an abortion medication, and others which were hallucinogenic or had aphrodisiac powers, sadly I have forgotten the name of those! Some medicines used the leaves, or seeds, or roots, most were toxic if used incorrectly. Most modern medicines are now chemically made, but the old plant based formulas are still valid and new plant discoveries are being made to treat modern diseases such as war injuries, drug related illnesses, HIV and Hep C. However he continued to advise us not to bother with supplements as “most of them did no good at all” and confirming that “money can always be extracted from the gullible”. Be warned. It was recommended that gloves always be worn when gardening. We all recognised plants in our own gardens, foxgloves, roses, poppies, as well as much more exotic plants which all seemed very happy and well cared for. Each one had a story, some going back to ancient Greek or Rome, or about the Physician who discovered its medicinal properties, or the native cultures which had long used these plants for healing.

We then went back to the front of the building to meet our new guide who was going to tell us about the building and the history of the Royal College of Physicians. Although the seemingly brutish modernist architecture looked incongruous amongst the beautiful Nash Terraces and Villas, the front being rather a plain tiered shape, it is covered in small white shiny marble mosaic tiles which originally blended in with the white stucco of the surrounding buildings. Another amazing feature is the brickwork wall which encloses the Wolfson Theatre and part of the garden. Curvy dark blue/black bricks swirl around all specially made to fit and provide a stunning backdrop to the white building hidden behind trees. The RCP was founded by Henry VIII in 1518 by Royal Charter with a view to regulating physicians and the first premises were in the home of Thomas Linacre (1460 - 1524) then as membership grew moved to other London addresses, including the now site of Canada House in Trafalgar Square. The RCP is the body which help to improve healthcare, inform its members, report to NICE and others the results of their investigations into new medicines. It has a membership of some 30,000 physicians. Ladies were only allowed to join in 1909, and the first female President took office in 1934.

We went inside and saw the floating ceremonial staircase which is used once a year for the procession when the outgoing President hands over to the new President. They are accompanied by the RCP officers in their historic gowns climbing from the ground floor Censors Room to the Dorchester Library led by an officer carrying the 1556 silver caduceus which is a symbol of office. There were glass topped cases displaying interesting books showing ancient home remedies and records of how patients had died (what is rising of the lites?), walls covered in ancient and modern paintings of past Presidents, marble busts of

worthies, also an interesting drawing of the old dissecting theatre where the staff could take bodies from the scaffold for student training – horrors.

The building was very busy with a conference and other meetings, including a Headache masterclass, so sadly some of the rooms were not open to us, however, there was still plenty to see. We were taken into the Treasurers Room, which really is full of treasure. On display were several collections donated by past members, including a huge box full of surgical instruments from the 17<sup>th</sup> c some really scary, a collection of apothecary jars, beautifully wrought silver ware including the ceremonial mace, a collection of spoons, droppers, nipple shields, and medical instruments that would have been used for home medication in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. On display were the wonderful traditional black and gold braided Presidential robes, which had been in use for centuries in the ceremonial processions. Then up to the first floor to view the exhibition about breathing problems and the way they were treated in the past and now. Up again to the second floor where we were unsure of what we were looking at as there were large boards with strange “drawings” on them. Our guide explained that these were known as anatomical tables. The tables are visually spectacular varnished wooden boards upon which were displayed the human veins, nerves and arteries. Well what an experience we had. We certainly learnt a lot, and feel very honoured to have such a College to help in the expansion of our knowledge of plants and the way they help us in illness. Our group went their separate ways, some home, and some to Regents Park Rose Gardens to be wowed by the colours and smells of June. A lovely day out.

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#### 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		
<b>NON-COMMITTEE ROLES</b>			
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 **July** newsletter to be submitted by Midday **Monday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021**. Please ensure you contribute before the cut-off and have an email acknowledgment from me that I have received your contribution!

Thank You