



Chair Chat

I am so scared of the dentist that recently I cancelled an appointment! I have sleepless nights for about a week before and most of the time I steel myself and get myself there but not this time. I knew somebody who felt this way about going to the hairdresser, which I thoroughly enjoy! Being scared is very weird and very particular to the individual. Being scared of snakes, mice and snakes is very common, but pogonophobia is very rare, it is the fear of beards. Some very famous actors admit to being violently sick before going on stage, and then go on to give an amazing performance. Stage fright is considered by some performers to be necessary to give a good performance. Of course, for some people being scared is a delight, they love scary films and TV programmes and queue for hours to be scared on a roller coaster. I think for a lot of people coming out of lockdown is very scary, having been cocooned at home for so long. It is very safe at home and the big wide world does look scary. The first time I went out last summer was very weird and driving my car to the shops was very peculiar too. At times during this last year, I am sure that most of us have been scared of catching the virus, and even though I had the virus and recovered without any drama, and just felt rotten for 3 weeks, I knew I wasn't out of danger. Most of us have had 2 vaccine jabs by now, which really helps our confidence; I am still wearing a mask and trying to keep 2 metres away from strangers. We must get out and enjoy this summer, because before we know it, it will be autumn and we will be spending more time indoors. Hopefully our u3a will reopen in July and we look forward to welcoming lots of familiar faces to Roberts Hall again.

Sandra

PS Please see notice below about needing more committee members, otherwise we might have to close almost as soon as we reopen!!

ANOTHER PLEA FOR MEMBERS TO JOIN THE COMMITTEE – THIS IS NOW SERIOUS – WE WILL HAVE TO CLOSE IF MEMBERS DO NOT VOLUNTEER. SPEAK TO ANY MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE IF YOU FEEL YOU CAN HELP TO KEEP OUR u3a OPEN

Many of us have enjoyed the Town and Around trips arranged by Margaret Collins, with expert assistance provided by Maire Carr and Sabine Wayt. Margaret has been unwell recently and she and her two friends have decided that the time has come for them to step down for a well-earned rest, hoping that others will come forward to take over the planning and running of future tours. Although this has not come as a complete surprise to members of the committee, it is still very sad news. Most of us have enjoyed outings with Town and Around. They have invariably been interesting, educational and a thoroughly pleasurable day out. Those of you who have not had the good fortune to join a tour have been able to read Margaret’s entertaining reports of the latest trip in the monthly Newsletter.

We, as a committee, would like to express our gratitude to Margaret, Maire and Sabine for all their hard work, giving up so much of their time for our benefit, making our u3a the welcoming, sociable and lively place that it has always been.

THANK YOU, Margaret, Maire and Sabine.
 It is people like you who symbolise the spirit of the u3a.

With our very best wishes
 Sandra, Cynthia, Terry, Ron, Maureen, Vi, Thelma, Nino and Doug

If you would be interested in forming a new group similar to *Town and Around*, one that is open to all members so that they might have the opportunity to meet others and get to see places that they have never visited, or wish to visit again, please speak to one of us. We will do all we can to advise and assist you. Our names and 'phone numbers are on the back of this Newsletter.

Cynthia Allen (Group Liaison)

u3a Day - 2nd JUNE 2021

This is to celebrate the new experiences that come from being in your third age. There will be national coverage hopefully, with various podcasts. (to get access to podcasts go to the u3a website, follow the links and hear the regular podcasts and the special ones for June 2nd. We are sending an article to the News Shopper, which hopefully will be published.

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Subscriptions were due by April 1st so to make our job easier, and to save us sending out reminders, if you haven't paid yet, **PLEASE DO!**

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

Spring has Sprung and Lockdown is, hopefully ending, well almost. I doubt if everything will be the same for some time to come. We are hoping to get back see our u3a friends in July at our First Roberts Hall meeting for over 13 months.

By Now, I guess you have all had your second Jab.

And hopefully feeling a lot safer and feel you can get out and about more.

We are hoping to get our Evergreen Revellers Choir back into Singing mode again **Monday June 28th** of course all depends on how we are doing with Covid 19.

I am sure we will have stories of what we have been up to during Lock Down. I for one have been keeping busy, never a Dull Moment! What has been great was to Get Out and about having walks with some other members even though it was very local and social distancing. I did venture out recently with one of our Members to the Isle of Grain Coastal Path. I have never been there before; it was wonderful to go somewhere different. Mostly a Flat Path along the sea wall although we did have to climb a quite steep bank, I must be getting old as I needed some help to get up the Bank. We were able to sit on a bench seat and watch the ships joining the Thames Estuary while we Lunched. This certainly felt that life was slowly getting back to normality.

Another Day Trip this time by Coach was to Southend on Sea. We had a Great time at least the Sun was out but there was quite a chilly breeze. Coffee and Bacon sandwich on arrival, A trip down the Pier on the Little Train followed by Take a way Fish & Chips. what else do you want to cheer you up? Oh! a real Ale pint on return to Bexleyheath actually it was outside the Micro pub in Crayford!

I hope you have been enjoying the Zoom lectures, if you have not joined them yet, you should do.

We have two very good ones coming up. Details in this newsletter of the next Talk this month.

On Friday 14th May will be our First Zoom quiz. We have come this far with Vaccinations so Please keep safe, well and Keep Smiling. soon we will be together again! As the Famous song goes - *We'll meet again*

Don't know where (we do know where) Don't know When (we do know when), but I know we'll meet again some sunny day!

Terry

Details of Next zoom talk on the 13th May.

Charles Dickens was an Amateur conjurer for around seven years of his life. This talk includes performances By Ian Keable of Some of Dickens Tricks.

Topic: Charles Dickens Conjurer
Time: May 13, 2021 01:30 PM London

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.

Thank You

Terry
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Hello All

We would like to invite you all to Bexley u3a first Zoom quiz.

Date: Friday 14th May Start time 19.00 however please join the Zoom Meeting at 18.45
This is an honesty Quiz so please no checking Google or any other devices. It will be fun, easy quiz with a lot of the questions being Multi Choice. All you need is Pen & Paper and whatever you might have to drink and nibbles.

All further details of how it will work will be told to you on the Night.
There will be a Small Prize for the winner(s) and booby prize for just having a Go.
I must thank Nino & Chris for putting this Quiz together. Please support them.

Topic: Zoom Quiz
Time: May 14, 2021 06:30 (18.30) PM London

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Thank You

Hope to see Many of you on Friday 14th May

Terry

Dear Members – Spring is upon us and as many of us venture out to tend our own gardens, I thought a short history of some of the Garden Squares in London would be appropriate for this month.

Garden squares are one of the defining features of London, developed like no others in Europe. The layout of Georgian and Victorian squares created an ordered, spacious arrangement of streets and leafy open spaces. However, neglect, social change and two World wars took their toll on most of London’s squares. Fortunately, an act passed in 1931 went a long way in protecting more than four hundred from being built over in subsequent years. Recent awareness of open spaces and gardens has led to conservation of these precious areas.

St James's Square, Westminster was commissioned by the 1st Earl of St Albans in 1660 in the fields north of St James' Palace. It was a fashionable area, close to the royal court and heart of government. But, by the 18th century, filthy conditions led residents to petition Parliament for more control. This petition resulted in Charles Bridgeman designing a grand new garden. In 1817, eminent architect, John Nash, remodelled the gardens with winding walks and extensive shrub replanting. Two more 20th century restorations made the square into what it is today - one of London's finest.

Cavendish Square began around 1717. Built in line with Hanover Square it helped to establish a pattern of streets north of Oxford Street, making Marylebone into a new and fashionable part of London.

Brunswick Square, Bloomsbury was laid out in 1799. The square later suffered neglect and became a magnet for anti-social behaviour. English Heritage and the Borough of Camden worked together to renovate the area, reinstate the impressive railings and gates to make the square open and attractive once again. It is now a Grade II listed site.

Grosvenor Square, Mayfair was originally designed by John Alston in the 1720s – his “wilderness worke” reflected a celebration of the countryside. This square is the second largest in Central London after Russell Square. Reserved for residents use for much of its life it was opened to the public after WW2 under the auspices of the Roosevelt Memorial Act. The gardens have been modified over time to meet the changing needs of society.

London Squares during WW2 – Squares did their bit for the war effort. Grosvenor Square became known a “little America”, being the home to General Eisenhower's HQ from 1942

Air raid shelters were built in some, like Soho and Manchester Squares. Many, such as St James' Square were dug up and given over to growing vegetables. Belgrave Square became a tank park whilst Hereford Square was used as a baseball pitch by American GIs. And others, like Cleveland Square became sites for barrage balloon moorings or fire brigade water tanks.

During WW2, the railings of many London squares were removed to melt down to be used for armaments. Their loss had a huge effect on the appearance of a square and, sadly, most of the railings were left unused and later thrown away. However, the removal of railings created greater access and after the war, many squares remained open to the public – for us all to enjoy to this day.

Facts taken from the London Gardens Trust, A Short History of London's Garden Squares - **Maureen Wright**

Book Reviews for May

From Jenny: [A Town Like Alice by Nevil Shute](#)

Jean Paget is just twenty years old and working in Malaya when the Japanese invasion begins. When she is captured, she joins a group of women and children whom the Japanese force to walk for miles through the jungle leading to the deaths of many. Due to her courageous spirit, Jean takes on the role of leader of the sorry gaggle of prisoners. While on the march, the group run in to an Australian prisoner, Joe Harman, who helps them steal food and is horrifically punished as a result. Jean's adventures and her bond with Joe form the heart of this gripping and moving story. Excellent, curl up and read sort of book. I so loved it.

From Hilary: [The Crow Trap by Ann Cleeves](#)

I have just finished reading this. It's the first one in the Vera series and although there are some differences with the character in the TV, series the essence of Vera is still there.

I enjoyed the fact that a lot of background was given before the major crime took place, which is, I think, unusual in many of the American crime stories I read.

The story focuses on the potential development of land for a quarry, the developers and the people doing the environmental survey.

I thoroughly recommend this book, even if you're not too fond of crime fiction, as it's much more than that and I look forward to reading the second book in the series.

From Cynthia: The Truth by Terry Pratchett

I have now finished yet another Terry Pratchett. "The Truth" is about journalism. In true Pratchett style, the workers on the "Times" newspaper include dwarfs, trolls and a vampire. There is also a werewolf in the local police force, and a group of tramps have a talking dog. I think it is one of the very best of the Discworld series, and laugh-out-loud funny.

From Norma: I Wish I Could Say I Was Sorry by Susie Kelly

Kelly's dysfunctional family emigrated from grey, post-war London to a colourful life in tropical Kenya, when that country was in chaos and seeking independence.

When she is seven, her parents' divorce and she is forced to choose which one to stay with. She chooses to be with her father in Africa, not realising she would not see her mother again for many years.

Her life is blighted by her father's remarriage, her stepmother's hostility and boarding school in England, until she takes control and leaves home at 16 to start a career. Well written and I'll definitely look for her other books; she seems to have had a very interesting and varied life!

From Carole: Becoming by Michelle Obama

I have at last finished *Becoming* by Michelle Obama, which has a photograph of her lovely face on the front cover. She has been many things in her life: lawyer, First Lady, bestselling author, inspirational public speaker, but also daughter, wife and mother too. This memoir explores all of these roles.

I found her early life growing up within her family to be particularly interesting and her upbringing certainly influenced the way she approached her adult years.

She tells it how it is, does not mince words and certainly does not duck the racist issue, but her confidence and determination to succeed shine through and I cannot help but admire her for her dignity, tenacity and graciousness. She obviously, like her husband, subscribes to his mantra 'Yes we can'. Sadly, recent events make that hard to believe. I only hope that things improve. The Obamas are an example to us all.

From May 2017 - Town and Around - Visit to Nymans N.T. Handcross

By Margaret Collins

Nymans had not seen much rain for two months but the day we visited in May the drought came to an end. However, it really was not too bad, although the trees were dripping, and there were puddles, the umbrellas only went up to shield us from drizzle intermittently. The gardens were looking glorious.

We were met by our guides, and a buggy, to take us around the gardens and to listen to the history of the family, the house, and the gardens. There have been three generations of Messels at Nymans since the 1890s. First purchased by Ludwig Messel, a German émigré who was a very successful stockbroker. He purchased the original Regency style villa on the site and altered it with a Germanic influence as a home for his wife Annie and their six children. It was he and his gardener who started to create a garden from farm land. In 1915 after Ludwig's death, it was inherited by their son Leonard and his wife Maud who lived here with their three children, Linley, Oliver and Anne. Maud decided that she really wanted a medieval style country manor house and the Regency house was transformed using salvaged stone window frames, stained glass, ancient doors, and fireplaces previously in country houses now being demolished. It certainly was a beautiful house until during the particular cold winter in 1947 and on Leonard's 75 birthday it caught fire. The fire consumed most of the house and its fabulous contents as the water in the lake was frozen and the pumps could not work properly. As this was just after the war there was very little building materials, or builders able to undertake such major works, so it was decided only to repair what they could of the original servant's quarters and just use it whilst they visited the gardens. The house and gardens were given to the National Trust in 1953. When Anne, the Countess of Rosse, was widowed in 1979, she returned to live at Nymans and helped to supervise the running of the gardens. Anne was the mother to Tony Armstrong Jones and when she

lived here Princess Margaret, their children Lord Linley and Sarah would often visit. Lord Snowden also had a small cottage here.

The gardens are magnificent, the land was originally farm land, and the first field to be planted was the Pinetum with seedlings brought back from all over the world. Ludwig's Head Gardener was James Comber who was responsible for the overall planning in conjunction with Ludwig. We were shown trees from China, Japan, America some of which Harold Comber (James' son) brought back from his plant hunting travels, and also the recently found living fossil Wollemi Pine from Australia. We sauntered along the meadow viewing the topiary hedges, enjoying huge rhododendrons in flower, and through the lime avenue and into the wall garden (yes that is its correct name not walled). The spring borders were beautiful with tulips and other spring plants. The main herbaceous borders were not yet planted up. Down some beautiful curved steps towards the ruins of the house the walls of which are covered in climbing roses, wisteria, magnolia grandifloras all looking very romantic. We turned back and saw the rose garden, then along a border with tree peonies in flower, alliums and interesting acers and back to the café for lunch. After lunch, we returned to go into the house, with its beautiful flower arrangements, the interesting garden room, library, dining room, and beautiful sitting room. There was an exhibition upstairs telling the story of the gardeners and the gardens. We then walked down into the lower gardens with its Pergola of wisteria just coming out, the heather gardens, zingy rhododendrons, and back to the exit with just enough time to look around the nursery and shop. Just then, the sun came out! *Oh well it was still a lovely day and I am glad we came.*

Executive Committee 2019- 2020

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Vice Chair	VACANCY		
Secretary	Maureen Wright		
Treasurer	Ron Clayton		
Membership	Douglas West		
Speakers	Terry Moseley		
Group Liaison	Cynthia Allen		
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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		

All contributions for **JUNE** newsletter to be submitted by Midday **Monday 31 MAY 2021**

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