



MAY NEWSLETTER

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I am sure that most of us have been in a difficult situation in which we feel that we ought and need to say something whilst at the same time knowing that whatever we do say will be inadequate and, for all its good intentions, sadly lacking.

The virus, Covid 19, has brought to us a range of conditions and circumstances so complex in their implications and potential outcomes that in spite of all the words, and there have been a great many, we are facing collective and individual uncertainty on a global scale and are now compelled to review our lives in the light of events we never thought would apply to us.

There is, we are told, wisdom in uncertainty. It is all too human to seek to anchor ourselves in the security we need in order to make meaningful efforts to survive but security needs solid ground on which to build and establish a position. When uncertainty prevails, what then? The suffering generated by our current position is real and palpable.

We have a wealth of examples from our collective cultures to provide us with insight and direction should we wish to pause and consider them. Philosophers have tried to steer us away from the 'grand narratives' by which our lives are directed but few are able to face the void that might thereby be revealed. A more realistic approach might be to develop sufficient awareness to be able to choose wisely the narratives by which our lives might be informed and directed. We might become more aware of the



nature of those stories to which we subscribe and the consequences of doing so. The virus is interesting in that it has the capacity to invalidate some of our most cherished ideals, leaving us vulnerable and unsure.

In such a case I have always found the analogy of Noah's Ark helpful. Of course Noah had God to keep an eye on things and many now feel that God is a very dubious concept and is of little or no help in a pandemic in which the innocent are often particularly vulnerable. We do, however, have psychology and the vestigial sprouting of something that we like to refer to as science. Science may well come up with a solution that will enable us to get back to normal but we should not forget that it was 'normal' that got us here in the first place and the wiser scientists would assure us that their work can offer us few, if any, absolute certainties. The psyche is of course powered by consciousness, without which there would be no universe, at least not in any relevant human terms. Consciousness perceives the creation whilst the psyche struggles to interpret it.

It is interesting, in the above context, that multi-national corporations are constantly looking for people who can 'think outside of the box' and can engage in 'blue-sky' thinking. This is because we do not yet know what consciousness is and the psyche often fails to interpret it, together with the whole creation, effectively. It is now widely acknowledged that consciousness has the capacity to transcend the psyche and come up with solutions that logic and reason fail to address. If we remove God from the story of Noah we cannot deprive him of consciousness and its ability to go where logic and reason dare not tread.

The Ark had neither the sail nor rudder that logic would have provided. The story informs us that the whole world was flooded. In the days before 'sat-nav' there were no features or co-ordinates by which to navigate and with all that rain the stars would have been occluded. In a state of directionless ignorance a sail and a rudder were irrelevant.

Leaving the imagery aside it is clearly a story about the soul, no longer able to thrive in the ecology it had created for itself. Having now lost all its points of reference, confusion rules. When our aims and objectives, with their dependence on old landmarks, are proved inadequate, it is perhaps time to subject them to serious review.

The flood gave Noah time to reflect, to re-evaluate and to examine the very roots of meaning and purpose, if such there be. I can make one clear and unequivocal statement about the nature of consciousness, mysterious as I acknowledge it to be; history proves that it is exceptionally good at creating vehicles through which to manifest itself. When we eventually venture outside the box that we have created for ourselves and are able to re-connect with the blue sky that has always been there, those who survive, like Noah, will be able to 'go forth and multiply'.

Brian Gill

Chairman



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 23rd April 2020 - AGM postponed**
- 30th July 2020 - Last meeting before Summer Break**
- 3rd September 2020 First meeting after Summer Break**

PLEASE NOTE IN YOUR DIARIES: there are three weeks between the meeting on September 17th and the following one on October 8th after which they will continue at fortnightly intervals.

Windermere Walk Friday April 17th 2020

Cancelled for the moment

Gerry Riley



ART APPRECIATION GROUP

Dates for U3A Art Appreciation Group meetings. All meetings in Trinity Session room start at 10.15a.m. unless otherwise stated.

June 17th 2020 Tate Modern, Liverpool: Don McCullin Photography Exhibition

July 15th 2020 Session Room TPG: Understanding Paintings. (Presentation by Bernadette Hamilton)



NO MEETING IN AUGUST

A Poem sent in by Sandra Tinkler (by her daughter)

A screen between us
 Can you hear me better now?
 How's your day been?
 A pause, a laugh, what day is it?
 It's been the same as when you asked yesterday, probably



Are you still watchi...

Yes

Still a queue at the supermar...

Yes

Your faces so big in overexposed lighting

I could almost trick myself

Into believing you're actually here

For once it doesn't matter

If we live close by

That our time zones align

Here we are

Enclosed

Within our own four walls

Our only obligation is to endure

But with low quality, jumpy, poor connection heads and torsos

At least we can endure it together



This is a poem written by Tabitha Tinkler- Ferguson who lives in Wirral.

The Outdoor Toilet

The recent Great Toilet Roll Rush brought on by the coronavirus scare has brought back memories of a more spartan time before Tesco's Finest or Andrex Quilted - before even tracing-paper-thin, rub-your-bottom-raw Izal. Memories I shudder at even now! So this is what it was like c1949.



When I was a little girl, our house in Redvers Road had an outdoor toilet. It was a few paces from the back door - but in those few paces you could get soaked if it was raining, frozen in winter, or stung by wasps in mid-summer. Inside, my stepdad put up a tiny light - a bulb and battery affair - on the window sill, but the place was totally without heating of any kind and, as temperatures dropped and evenings lengthened, I frequently ended the day with damp knickers from waiting too long. The prospect of baring delicate nether regions in such chilly surroundings, not to mention the

regular parade of woodlice that marched earnestly around the bottom of the distempered walls, was not an inviting one. Nor, in principle, was the wad of torn newspaper squares strung on a hook beside the chain that hung from an almost ceiling-high cistern. These, gentle reader, were what we used for wiping our bottoms.

They consisted of pages from The Daily Express (not very interesting to a nine or ten year old) but also pages from The People and the News of the World, both of which came out weekly, and which my parents seemed to devour eagerly. Without properly understanding what I was reading, these latter provided me with the only sex education I ever received. They seemed to be full of people being 'intimate', whatever that meant. But as it was in the newspaper, surely they must have done something wrong? My parents devoured these weeklies eagerly and my stepdad seemed to develop a kind of leery grin when he read them - an expression I never saw on his kind face at any other time. I puzzled and puzzled over those reports but got no further for some years.

My mother hated that toilet and yearned for an indoor bathroom, but all we had was a partitioned off corner of the main bedroom with a bath and a vicious hot water geyser that only my step-dad was allowed to light. Otherwise it was a potty for when you were ill and developing weather-hardy buttocks the rest of the time. It remained like that for the whole time I lived there, until eventually they must have found enough money to pay for a kind of covered little walkway, rather like a tiny conservatory, which made things a lot more civilised. It was only corrugated plastic, not glass, but how proud my mother was! By then, of course, the mystery of 'being intimate' had been revealed to me, first by my best friend at primary school, Helen Guimaraes.

Helen was a year older than I was and had a lovely sympathetic and understanding mother. She also had a brother, George, and an absent father. Their corny family joke was that, as Helen wanted to be a nurse and George a vicar, she would do the hatching and he would do the dispatching. I think it did actually did work out like that! But one day in between turning somersaults on the railings during our long school lunch break, she told me how babies were made. I was totally disbelieving and remember saying, 'Well, my parents never did that!' Then, with all the worldly wisdom of my ten years I added sagely, 'I think they should put the woman under an anaesthetic!' Enough said ... But it was still some time before I realised the connection between that and 'being intimate'. By which time toilet paper was a whole lot more comfortable, though less interesting.

By Maureen Kermode

BIRKENHEAD PARK IN LATE MARCH 2020

and APRIL 15TH

I am fortunate to live within easy reach of Birkenhead Park where I have been enjoyed my daily exercise 'moments'. It really is beautifully laid out and great place to observe the changing seasons. Ed.



A friend sent me this poem by Pam Ayres which I thought I'd share with you for the benefit of those who have not already seen it. Hope you enjoy ! Ed.

A poem by Pam Ayres re LOCKDOWN

I'm normally a social girl
I love to meet my mates
But lately with the virus here
We can't go out the gates.
You see, we are the 'oldies' now
We need to stay inside
If they haven't seen us for a while
They'll think we've upped and died.
They'll never know the things we did
Before we got this old
There wasn't any Facebook
So not everything was told.
We may seem sweet old ladies

Who would never be uncouth
 But we grew up in the 60s -
 If you only knew the truth!
 There was sex and drugs and rock 'n roll
 The pill and miniskirts
 We smoked, we drank, we partied
 And were quite outrageous flirts.
 Then we settled down, got married
 And turned into someone's mum,
 Somebody's wife, then nana,
 Who on earth did we become?
 We didn't mind the change of pace
 Because our lives were full
 But to bury us before we're dead
 Is like a red rag to a bull!
 So here you find me stuck inside
 For 4 weeks, maybe more
 I finally found myself again
 Then I had to close the door!
 It didn't really bother me
 I'd while away the hour
 I'd bake for all the family
 But I've got no flaming flour!
 Now Netflix is just wonderful
 I like a gutsy thriller
 I'm swooning over Idris
 Or some random sexy killer.
 At least I've got a stash of booze
 For when I'm being idle
 There's wine and whiskey, even gin
 If I'm feeling suicidal!
 So let's all drink to lockdown
 To recovery and health
 And hope this awful virus
 Doesn't decimate our wealth.
 We'll all get through the crisis
 And be back to join our mates
 Just hoping I'm not far too wide
 To fit through the flaming gates!



THEATRE OUTINGS - SOCIAL OUTINGS EVENTS

NOTE FROM TONY SWARBRICK:

Bowness Trip (17th April)

I have cancelled the coach, but not the trip!!! I am hoping that when things return to normal I will be able to re-schedule this trip.
 Full refunds will be available for anyone not able go on a re-arranged date, but hopefully most will still want to go.



If too many wish to drop out we would have to cancel completely.

Blackpool Trip (7th October)

I have not yet cancelled the booking for this coach.
Hopefully by September / October things will be returning to normal and the trip can go ahead as planned.



I will send further updates as the situation becomes clearer.

Best wishes to all,

Tony Swarbrick
(Group Coordinator)

**A Trip to See “The Northern Lights” Wednesday 7th October 2020
YES! A Trip to see the World Famous Northern Lights Blackpool
Illuminations**

Coach will leave Trinity at 1pm. Arriving Blackpool about 3pm, you will have an hour or so to walk the prom and see the sights followed by a Fish&Chip Supper before the coach trip through the lights. Return trip will leave Blackpool at 8pm to arrive back at Trinity about 9.30pm. Cost will be about £16 (+ Fish&Chips) dependent on numbers. Coach needs to be booked well in advance and I need to know that we will have sufficient numbers before booking. So please let me know if you are interested (There is NO COMMITMENT at this stage). Please add your name to the list on notice board or email groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk

Cancelled – hopefully postponed.

Manchester Ship Canal Tuesday June 9th

Cost: £42 **Cancelled – hopefully postponed**



Regional Web site: www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west/events

For regional news and events.



Registered Charity number 1159091

AND FINALLY-----

I do hope that you are all coping with the isolation and strangeness of the current situation and are perhaps finding new possibilities in our new spare time. It is remarkable the range of ideas for amusing the children (and ourselves) which appear on the media; dance classes, puzzles, games via Skype, cooking, sewing, exercise and a host of other ways of using our imagination.

The army of volunteers who are helping the NHS and the housebound and of course those who soldier on in those jobs which are able to operate during the shutdown, in difficult circumstances not to mention the whole of the NHS staff in every department who are working so hard to save lives, all deserve our heartfelt thanks and appreciation at this time.

Like many I found the lovely gentleman, Captain Tom Moore who celebrated his 100th birthday by walking for the NHS, raising millions of pounds to their causes, totally awe inspiring both for his original idea and for the determination with which he carried it through with such amazing results. He must have brought a tear to many eyes.

Perhaps very soon we may have some news of when we can start coming out of lockdown and slowly we can all get back to some normality. How lovely it will be to see our friends again, to enjoy their company in 'real' time and to exchange our experiences. I have a feeling that many things might change but in the meantime please send me any snippets of news or stories that will help to keep us going.

My very best wishes to you all,



Eliane Davie - Editor

