

# July Newsletter

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I expect most of us have settled into some sort of routine by now as we become used to the virus situation, except that the rules keep changing and if your life is anything like mine, what one has to do within the rules keeps changing too; for example we are still trying to sell our house whilst in lockdown. This is a situation that proffers endless opportunities for originality and vexation and, amazingly, we have now had four firm offers, three of which have been made since lockdown began. This of course means that we are pressured to find somewhere to move to; and here it gets really interesting.

My partner, Monica, who has very little sight and is registered blind, wearing an obligatory mask and gloves, was obliged to examine a house she had never been in before, alone and without touching anything. She was out again in five minutes. When on a second viewing we were allowed in together we had to go round the house without speaking to each other. Strangely and against all odds, we decided to buy the house.

So you never know! Our present situation certainly gives us plenty of opportunities to be ingenious and adaptable. Even when there is nothing to do and nowhere that one can viably go, one is faced with the opportunity to learn to be with oneself in a creative, constructive and informative manner, and in my own case this has to be done without recourse to the internet or an I-phone. I do not have a good working relationship with machines in general, even toasters and vacuum cleaners make me nervous and I refuse, absolutely, to own an I-phone; after all, the great cathedrals were built without such a device and we have produced nothing subsequently to equal them. Shakespeare of course did not have the resources of the internet to draw upon when constructing plays that were arguably richer in creative dynamism than anything that has been written since.

But of course, now that we are firmly entrenched in an age of technology, one has to concede that it produces amazing developments in the way in which we function as a race. Unfortunately machines, whilst extending our capacities in many directions, do not at the same time confer wisdom or enhance our basic level of being. This unfortunate state of affairs has produced collective and individual behaviour that mirrors the behaviour of the virus with which we are currently contending.

I will have mentioned this before but having since watched two programmes about the affect of discarded plastics on our environment, not to mention the general chemical cocktail with which we hourly contaminate our planet, it is clear that, like the virus, we are killing the host that supports us. We are literally impairing its respiratory and circulatory systems and consequently its ability to support life, much of which has already gone.

There is a basic rule in psychotherapy regarding our relationship with any phenomenon that we see externally as being 'the enemy' to the effect that we should first recognise its behaviour as being present in our own psyche. This may not be easy, particularly when it manifests in a different form from anything we might ourselves appear to manifest; even so, I am convinced that if we are to save ourselves from the effects of the virus and our own annihilating contamination of our host, we will have to recognise eventually that in many respects we are little better than the covid 19 that we are trying to control.

**Brian Gill - Chairman**

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## **BRIDGE GROUPS**

Tony Swarbrick would like anyone interested in joining on-line Zoom groups for Bridge during this time to e-mail him at: [groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk](mailto:groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk) this works quite well and has recently started up; Tony will explain and advise on how to go about it.

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## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**23rd April 2020 - AGM postponed**

**3rd September 2020 First meeting after Summer Break? (will be advised later)**

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

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Hopefully by September we will have found some way of working with smaller numbers for some of the groups and the way forward will be clearer. I will let you have as much information as is available for the September issue which you should receive towards the end of August. As usual there will be no newsletter for August when we normally have our break. Ed.

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## ART APPRECIATION GROUP

Dates for U3A Art Appreciation Group meetings.

Cancelled until further notice



Bernadette has recommended checking out the National Gallery on line: [The National gallery @ng-london.org.uk](http://TheNationalgallery@ng-london.org.uk) where there is a choice of virtual programmes and some interesting talks about a selection of paintings and painters to be found

Andrew Marr presented an interesting series from the National Gallery on ten famous paintings and the artists who created them. (BBC 2 Tuesday evenings) Well worth keeping an eye out for repeats if you missed them.

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## THEATRE OUTINGS - SOCIAL OUTINGS EVENTS

### NOTE FROM TONY SWARBRICK:

Bowness Trip (17<sup>th</sup> April)  
Blackpool Trip (7<sup>th</sup> October)  
Tony Swarbrick  
(Group Coordinator)

**Cancelled – hopefully postponed.**  
email [groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk](mailto:groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk)

Tony hopes to be able to reschedule these trips for 2021  
Ed.



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## A True Story sent in by Hazel Palmer

To fellow members, how I miss you all, I don't know everyone but I wish I did. At our ages we must all have a tale to tell and perhaps now is the time to tell it. Here is one of mine:

It was Sunday, I had just returned from my stint as a volunteer nurse at St John's Hospice. Unusually my husband Clive offered to make a cup of coffee and I was about to take my first sip, when he said - "Lindsey is missing!" Well, I never finished the coffee.

So began weeks of sleepless nights and lots of crying. Then one day a bundle of letters arrived addressed to my youngest son Mark and advising him to read his before giving me mine. This was to tell me that his brother, Lindsey, had joined the Foreign Legion and in big letters, "I HAVE NOT DONE ANYTHING WRONG." What a relief, at least he was alive.

In December we received a letter saying he and another Legionnaire would try and get home for Christmas. This was forbidden and they didn't have passports, but they managed to find someone to take them across the channel by boat. They were asked for passports on landing and replied that they did not have them. The next question asked, "What is your uniform?" and when they said, "Foreign Legion," they were waved through.

I was so glad to find him alive after imagining finding a body somewhere. When he arrived home that Christmas I asked him, "Why all the secrecy?" and he replied that had he not been accepted he would have felt a fool! That was one happy family Christmas. My granddaughter Megan is his daughter.

Hazel Palmer

**P.S.** \*\*\*\*\*

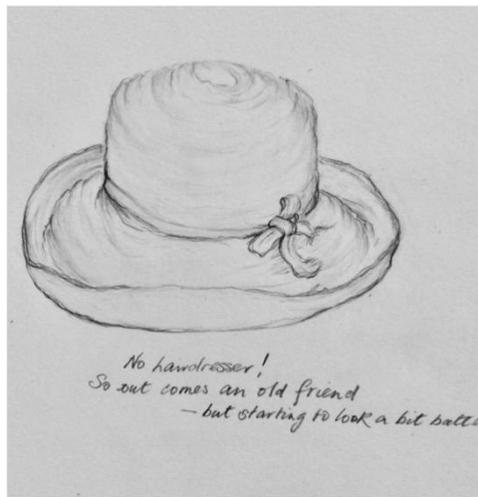
Having visited Corsica and watched the Legionnaires doing parachuting exercises over Calvi Bay, I was very interested in hearing more about them from Hazel.

Apparently new recruits arriving at Lille are first taken to Aubagne where they are stripped of all their belongings and given a new name. Lindsey's alias became Michael Pontus, his parents became Ann and John, he had no siblings and they lived in Manchester. Contrary to popular belief they do not take the likes of those who commit murder, but for some it is a great escape. They are given a thorough medical examination before going through three stages, (which takes place in three Nissan huts surrounded by barbed wire). The first sorts out mental and physical capabilities, the second sorts out the men from the boys and if you pass the third you become a Legionnaire. Next they were sent to Castelnaudary. There is a ceremony for the presentation of their Kepi and they learn the traditional Legion songs which are very impressive. Lindsey did well and when asked which regiment he would prefer, chose the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment Etranger de Parachutists based in Calvi.

Don, my late husband and I loved Corsica and spent three holidays in Calvi, an old citadel town with a beautiful sandy horseshoe bay backed in part by pine trees. Often the legionnaires were to be seen parachuting over the far side of the Bay and walking around the town in the early evening looking very smart in their uniforms. We hired a car and explored the island, which caters for walkers, historians and beach lovers alike. Forests, mountains, ravines, beautiful beaches, wild boars and good Mediterranean food can be found, with old villages to explore and no 'high rise'. Ed.

# Corinne Whitham, a talented artist, kindly sent a montage of her: **VIRUS LOCKDOWN DIARY**

“Keeping myself amused with a record of some of the things that have become important to me during this rather unusual time.” As Corinne describes it.



## Sent in by Corinne – DISTANCE EXERCISE

Four U3A members have been walking in Birkenhead Park (suitably socially distancing!) on a regular basis throughout the lockdown. Corinne Whitham, Judith Wheat, Mary O’Neil and Val Edwards - previously members of a larger Nordic Walking Group - have “poled up” to keep fit and to enjoy the beauties of the park.



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## A small selection of photos from the various activities of our U3A



Why not go on to our site and click onto photos for many more happy memories.  
Ed.

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Regional Web site: [www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west/events](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west/events)

For regional news and events.



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## **AND FINALLY -----**

*As you know there is no real U3A news at the moment as activities have been suspended, however our lock down does seem to be loosening and little by little life is starting slowly to return to something resembling normal.*

*There will be no Newsletter for August as it is normally our break month, but the September edition will reach you in late August by which time there should be some information available regarding how we will move forward.*

*I am sure that you are all looking forward to seeing friends and family in a more normal setting, as I certainly am. In the meantime I hope that you are all keeping well and managing to get out a little albeit in a limited way.*

***Eliane Davie --- Editor***

