

COUNTESTHORPE U3A

UPDATE AND CURFEW CHRONICLE No 6

Dear Member

Sadly, even though lockdown is now easing quite a bit, all our U3A outings, general meetings and group activities remain suspended until further notice. As many groups and the main meeting are dependent upon public venues these are unlikely to be early resumptions. Additionally, our U3A insurance would not yet cover us. More information as soon as we can. Also, I will post details on the homepage of our website for those who use internet.

Last time we passed on the Neighbourhood Watch information about the NHS Test and Trace System. One of our members has written with some sound advice, as she was once the victim of a telephone scam which was extremely convincing. *“The number 0300 013 5000 is offered as OK. I personally certainly would not go ahead and give details of my friends and those I had been talking to without checking it - after knowing what I know. Maybe there is a way on line to do it? But, again, many people won't bother because they will think any official number is OK. It's there, it's OK. There should be a way suggested to enable it to be checked. But also it should be pointed out that it must be checked. If, for instance, you used 1471, (having put the phone down and rang 1471) - you will be told what number has contacted you. If it's a scam, you have the number, which you can quote to Action Fraud. It's not foolproof, but the best I can offer as a way to check. It may be that the government has it all sewn up.”*

Many of you have already renewed your membership – thank you very much. If not, please don't forget to do this – full details have been shown in the last few Chronicles, so I won't repeat them all here. If you have internet access, you can also look this up on our website. See the 'membership' item featured on the right-hand side of the homepage. (Remember, it is now £15 or £8 for Associates, and you don't need to fill in a form!)

There has been a great response to the idea of recommending books – though not films, podcasts or the like so far. As this is so extensive, I will make this a separate list and attach it to the end of the Chronicle. The only snag is that I think we may need an even longer lockdown to get through all

these excellent suggestions – either that or perhaps a ‘speed reading’ course! Many thanks to all those who have contributed.

Do you get the feeling that your life is passing you by? The days seem to blur, and the weeks are flying past. I keep thinking that the sands in my personal egg-timer are running out and I’m not doing very much! Have you taken up any new activities or hobbies? (*I’m sure you have all tidied and cleaned out your cupboards/drawers/garages, cleaned the cooker, defrosted the freezer and got the garden all spick and span, etc, etc – I am saying that with my tongue firmly in my cheek, so no harassment, please!*) But, it would be interesting to know what new things you have tried out, though, so please let me know and I can pass on this information to the rest and it might just spur somebody else on to try something different. We cannot allow ourselves to simply stagnate. Our U3A motto is Live, Learn, Laugh and we can still do all of those things – even in lockdown.

For those of you who are suffering from the local extension to the lockdown – we hope that this will not have too bad an effect on your lives. My long-awaited hair appointment, arranged a few days before the Leicester lockdown, has now been cancelled – for how long, who knows!

Finally, If you are online, have you explored the national U3A website – there’s lots to do and enjoy. Visit: www.u3a.org.uk You won’t need to log in, or anything complicated – only necessary if you want the specific advice sections. The range of possibilities is wide, and you will surely find something to interest or amuse you for a while.

So now, relax and enjoy our next selection of items in the Chronicle. Keep safe, keep smiling and keep remembering the good times we had, and will have again, in our U3A! Don’t forget to send your contributions for Chronicle No 7 – these could become collectors’ items!

June Hawkins
Information and Publicity Officer



Contributions not later than 24 July, please, to me at:
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THE COUNTESTHORPE U3A CURFEW CHRONICLE

No 6

July 2020

Prompted by Jenny's "washday memories", Chris Harvey felt that this was a good time to recall her memories of Whitsuntide and their local traditions. Maybe they are common to other areas, but she has never known anyone who has mentioned anything similar, so here goes!

Anticipation began in the weeks after Easter when our thoughts turned to new outfits. Each child had been the focus of a special shopping spree. On the day itself, we donned our new outfits and feeling very special set out on our "tour", visiting family relations and neighbours, to show off our new clothes.

We were expected sometime during the day, and at each house we were admired and then given a small token . . . often a 3d (threepenny bit, silver or otherwise) and then continued our journey. On the way we would meet friends, and show off our outfits. My own dress of red and white seersucker material was matched by pristine new white socks and white sandals. I remember feeling very proud and very lucky!

It was probably the only time in the year when we were so concerned with clothes - other than maybe Christmas when an occasional new jumper or pair of socks helped to fill the stocking at the end of the bed.

One particular Whitsuntide was so eventful that it will never be forgotten. Visiting over, we were able as usual to fill our afternoon in complete freedom - only reminded on this occasion to make sure that we looked after the new outfits and came back in good time for tea.

Armed with the usual bottle of water, we began our favourite walk out of the village to the local "big wood" and the river bank. Here, the more adventurous boys would swim on hot days (not an activity for the girls!) while we girls just formed an envious audience. On this day we ignored both wood and riverbank, aware of our precious new garments, and walked on along the little-used road which led alongside the wood to the next village.

As the day had improved steadily and the sun was now at its hottest, we decided to have a rest, drink our water and share our carefully carried jam sandwich picnic. Alongside the road we suddenly spotted a shady patch

below one of the trees, surrounded by the most beautiful patch of pristine grass. As one, we turned off and dashed to get a good place to sit. It was only the squelching sound as we moved and the feeling of water invading our shoes that brought us to a stop! Mud had begun to ooze over our feet, covering both socks and shoes. The luscious grass marked an area of green marsh.

After a careful retreat we stopped to plan our next move. How to try and put things right before braving angry mothers? The socks had to come off . . . and then it was decided that we could possibly improve things by returning to river bank and trying to wash out all the evidence - or at least improve things! Sitting on a nearby log we removed both socks and shoes and then realised that grass did not help much in drying and cleaning hands, so we made our way home in fear and trepidation to face the reaction of our parents - moving carefully, trying to avoid any more dirt on our new clothes.

Mum's reaction was initially exactly as anticipated, (angry and disappointed) but I was saved, to some extent, by having two elder brothers who saw all occasions as the opportunity to make fun of life. Thank goodness this was one of them! Slowly my mother relaxed and also began to see the funny side. But it took quite an effort on her part! How grateful I was. Eventually the socks were rubbed, scrubbed and boiled back to 'near' whiteness, and careful cleaning and coating with shoe whitener even restored the sandals - almost, but they remained a continuing reminder of an eventful Whitsuntide!

Written by Chris Harvey



FAN FAVOURITE

The advantage of marking the anniversaries of notable deaths is that one can tell stories that were inappropriate for the obituaries. *The Oldie* magazine makes a habit of this and, as it is 30 years next week since the *My Fair Lady* actor Rex Harrison died, they can say he was less than charming offstage. After one show on a rainy night, Harrison barged past an elderly lady who wanted his autograph. She then whacked him over the head with her programme. His colleague Stanley Holloway remarked: "That must be the first time the fan has hit the shit."

Sent in by Graham Surman



WORDSWORTH IN LOCKDOWN

I wandered lonely as a cloud
Two metres from the maddening crowd
When all at once my name was called
To enter Waitrose hallowed hall.
This was the pensioners' special hour
I'd gone to get a bag of flour.
But I forgot – when through the door -
What I had gone to Waitrose for.
The Waitrose staff are extra kind,
I told them it had slipped my mind.
They asked what else had I forgot –
They clear thought I'd lost the plot!
I phoned my wife again to ask.
She reminded me of this special task:
"I need some flour to bake a cake,
With all that cream you made me take,"
"Ah yes, I recall", I had to lie.
I dare not ask what flower to buy,
But then I saw them at the tills
A bunch of golden daffodils!

With apologies to William Wordsworth



When insults had class . . .

These glorious insults are from an era "before" the English language got boiled down to 4-letter words.

A member of Parliament to Disraeli: *"Sir, you will either die on the gallows or of some unspeakable disease."*

"That depends, Sir," said Disraeli, *"whether I embrace your policies or your mistress."*

"He had delusions of adequacy." (Walter Kerr)

"He has all the virtues I dislike and none of the vices I admire." (Winston Churchill)

"I have never killed a man, but I have read many obituaries with great pleasure." (Clarence Darrow)

"He has never been known to use a word that might send a reader to the dictionary." *William Faulkner (about Ernest Hemingway)*

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your book; I'll waste no time reading it."
(Moses Hadas)

"I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it."
(Mark Twain)

"He has no enemies, but is intensely disliked by his friends." *(Oscar Wilde)*

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend, if you have one." *(George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill)* "Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second . . . if there is one." *(Winston Churchill, in response)*

"I feel so miserable without you; it's almost like having you here." *(Stephen Bishop)*

"He is a self-made man and worships his creator." *(John Bright)*

"I've just learned about his illness. Let's hope it's nothing trivial." *(Irvin S. Cobb)*

"He is not only dull himself; he is the cause of dullness in others." *(Samuel Johnson)*

"He is simply a shiver looking for a spine to run up." *(Paul Keating)*

"In order to avoid being called a flirt, she always yielded easily." *(Charles, Count Talleyrand)*

"He loves nature in spite of what it did to him." *(Forrest Tucker)*

"His mother should have thrown him away and kept the stork." *(Mae West)*

"Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go." *(Oscar Wilde)*

"He uses statistics as a drunken man uses lamp-posts . . . for support rather than illumination." *(Andrew Lang 1844-1912)*

"He has Van Gogh's ear for music." *(Billy Wilder)*

"I've had a perfectly wonderful evening. But I'm afraid this wasn't it." *(Groucho Marx)*



You cannot hope to bribe or twist,
thank God, the British journalist.
But seeing what the man will do
unbribed, there's no occasion to.

Humbert Wolfe
Sent in by Ruth Westley



VEG QUIZ (Sent in by Tricia Brown) Answers later on!

1. Egg Plant	11. Digit in a pan
2. Also a fern	12. Time of the taxi
3. Blonde European	13. Sounds like a dog plant
4. Makes you weep	14. Hit the road
5. Dangle it to entice	15. Equal cut
6. Full of	16. Strangle on culture
7. Need a plumber?	17. Rotate on a penny
8. Sprouting ...	18. Spoil a line
9. Apes about	19. Foot trouble on a horse
10. London hotel	20. Pulp in space

LOCKDOWN MUSINGS

Talk about role reversal, my children say I'm grounded and can't go out!

For those who have lost track, today is Blursday the Fortyeenth of Maypriluny.

Did you see a Leicester gin distillery is now making hand sanitiser (this is true)? I bet it tastes foul.

I'm that bored, I'm thinking of phoning a random person in India to see if they've had an accident in the last three years.

Golf, but no hairdressers, that's what you get when you put men in charge.

Speaking of which, I would never have believed 15 weeks of uncut hair would weigh over half a stone. But if that's what the scales say it must be right.

Finally, a message from Darth Vader, "Come to the dark side – we have masks!"

(Sent in by Tricia Brown)

A SENIOR'S VERSION OF FACEBOOK

For those of my generation who do not, and cannot, comprehend why Facebook exists: I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook while applying the same principles. Therefore, every day I walk down the street and tell passers-by what I have eaten, how I feel at the moment, what I have done the night before, what I will do later and with whom. I give them pictures of my family, my dog and of me gardening, taking things apart in the garage, watering the lawn, standing in front of landmarks, driving around town, having lunch, and doing what anybody and everybody does every day. I also listen to their conversations, give them “thumbs up” and tell them I “like” them. And it works just like Facebook. I already have 4 people following me: 2 police officers, a private investigator and a psychiatrist!

Sent in by Sue Wyllie



A WALK DOWN TEATIME LANE

Do you remember Sunday tea? Oh yes, and all those long forgotten foods and brands, with some that survive to this day. Food, I have to admit, is one of my favourite things – disastrous in ‘lockdown’ but nice, too, so join me on a stroll down this nostalgic foodie lane!

First, the sandwiches! Corned beef (Fray Bentos) or Spam – that’s if you actually managed to open the tin with those wretched little keys. On special occasions there might be a tin of John West salmon (pink, or red if one was really pushing the boat out!). Ye Olde Oak ham came out for Christmas, or perhaps at other times there might be a little fresh, very thinly cut, sliced ham with orange breadcrumbs on the edge, or even ox tongue. When times were hard, it might be just Shippam’s paste, or Marmite. Sometimes, it could be egg with some of that fine cress, or grated cheese with a texture like soap! One of my grandmothers used to make potted beef and potted shrimps as well. Then came Heinz Sandwich Spread – basically salad cream with minced up vegetables!

Bread – well how things have changed. Originally it would be home-made or loaves from the local baker, but probably Hovis was the first real commercial bread (*remember ‘Coming Home’ as the little lad pushed his bike wearily up the hill in the TV advert?*). After the invention of the Chorleywood Process in 1961 there was a revolution in bread for mass

production. Remember Wonderloaf, Sunblest, Wheatsheaf (from the Co-op) and Mother's Pride? If you were watching your weight, then it was a choice of Nimble or Slimcea! "*The best thing since sliced bread!*" became a very popular saying, still heard occasionally today (and one which aptly describes the U3A movement!)

Next came tinned fruit! I remember as a child having the difficult task of choosing which one to open for Sunday tea – would it be peaches or apricots or pears in syrup, pineapple or fruit cocktail (not fruit salad)! Fruit cocktail (Del Monte) was much finer cut and had cherries and tiny grapes in it, and so was much more desirable. Opening the tins with the tin-openers of the times was not too easy, I recall, and could lead to minor injuries! Once opened, the precious fruit might be served with Carnation evaporated milk, or Nestlé tinned cream, or even just 'top of the milk'. Carnation milk tins still come with two dents opposite each other – one to be pierced to allow the air to enter, and the other for the milk to come out!

Ice-cream came later and may have been Wall's, Lyons' or Midland Counties'. Flavours were very restricted – vanilla, strawberry and occasionally chocolate. It came in blocks which could be sliced and sandwiched between wafers.

Alternatives might be jelly (usually Rowntree's or Hartley's) or blancmange. One gummy square of jelly a day was supposed to help keep your fingernails healthy! My memories are of pink blancmange rabbits, perhaps sitting on 'grass' made from chopped up green jelly! Do you recall the Tupperware individual jelly moulds? Later came Bird's Trifle packs, with sponge fingers, jelly, custard and Dream Topping - still available, I believe. (I have a recipe for slimmer's tiramisu which uses Dream Topping mixed with crème fraiche as the creamy bit. It sounds a bit 'iffy' but actually tastes very good, and nobody knows unless I tell them!) Then came Angel Delight – lots of flavours and still available today. A favourite of mine was Honeycomb Mould – no, not that sort of mould! It was made from a packet of 'magical' powder, mixed with boiling milk and poured into a mould. On cooling it separated, and when turned out had a light mousse base and a jelly top. It came in strawberry, vanilla and chocolate and our family loved it. Sadly, it's no longer available, though, and I think that Symington's table creams have gone the same way. (*I think I may have strayed into desserts here, but it is still a meander down memory lane!*)

Lastly, the main teatime event – the cake, or more often cakes. How many of you still use the good old Be-Ro cookbook? I admit to it, and have one of the very old sepia versions as well as a newer one. The recipes are still good today, and always work out well. Then, shop-bought cake mixes

arrived – do you recall Mary Baker and Betty Crocker? Favourite shop-bought cakes included angel cake, Battenberg and Swiss roll. All a bit of a faff to make at home, and readily available, along with iced fancies, of course.

Then just to complete the picture there might have been malt-loaf (Harvo, then Soreen), sliced and buttered, or marshmallows (Munchmallows), caramel wafers or iced gems, etc. The list goes on, but by now your tummy is probably rumbling, so I'll stop! I recall many years ago taking my children to my mother-in-law's home for tea. There were no fewer than 14 different types of cakes/biscuits – a bit OTT, I thought, and bewildering for the children. They certainly didn't get that at home!

Just a quick word about the tea itself. Originally it would have been loose-leaf, of course before the dawn of the tea-bag. Typhoo, Brooke Bond (*remember the chimps?*), Lyons or Co-op 99 were the order of the day – often complete with picture cards to collect and mount in albums. The loose leaves were decanted into a tea caddy, then measured out into the teapot using a special spoon (now usually more of a collector's item), and a tea strainer and little bowl to sit the strainer on were required. All this to avoid a mouthful of tea leaves, but not helpful for those who wanted to foretell the future from the tea leaves! Teacups were fine china, though the teapot was more likely to be a Brown Betty, plus a tea-cosy. The milk jug and sugar bowl would be on the table, often covered with a little crochet 'hat' weighted down with beads to avoid the flies enjoying themselves. Ah, how times have changed. Now it is usually a teabag straight into a mug – or more often coffee instead of tea! And not so much cake! I hope this brought back a few memories of (tea)times gone by!

Written by June Hawkins



*A thought from Ruth Westley: "I think I'm in my 'anecdoteage'!"
I think I agree with her, but I hope you enjoyed the tea-time ramble anyway.*



ANSWERS TO VEG QUIZ:

1. Aubergine
2. Asparagus
3. Swede
4. Onion
5. Carrot
6. Beans
7. Leek
8. Broccoli
9. Peas
10. Savoy
11. Potato
12. Cabbage
13. Cauliflower
14. Beetroot
15. Parsnip
16. Artichoke
17. Turnip
18. Marrow
19. Corn on the cob
20. Mushroom

THE SHAPE THAT I'M IN

There is nothing the matter with me
I'm as healthy as can be.
I have arthritis in both my knees,
And when I talk, I talk with a wheeze.
My pulse is weak, my blood is thin,
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

Arch supports I have for my feet,
Or I wouldn't be able to walk down the street.
Sleep is denied me, night after night,
But every morning I find I'm alright.
My memory is failing, my head's in a spin,
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

The moral is this, as this tale unfolds,
That for me and you who are growing old.
It's better to say I'm fine, with a grin
Than to let folks know the shape you're in.
How do I know that my youth is all spent?
Well, my get-up-and-go has got up and went.

But I really don't mind as I think with a grin
All the grand places my get-up has been.
Old age is golden, I've heard it said,
But sometimes I wonder as I get into bed.
With my ears in the drawer, my teeth in a cup,
My eyes on the table until I wake up.

Ere sleep overcomes me, I say to myself:
"Is there anything else I should lay on the shelf?"
When I was young, my slippers were red.
I could kick my heels over my head.
When I grew older, my slippers were blue,
But I could still dance the whole night through.

Now I'm old, my slippers are black.
I walk to the store and puff my way back.
Get up in the morning, dust off my wits,
Pick up the paper, and read the Obits.
If my name is still missing, I know I'm not dead!
I have a good breakfast and go back to bed.

Written by a patient many years ago at the LRI, and sent in by Allen Donkin

History repeats itself. Came across this poem written in 1869, reprinted during 1919 Pandemic.

This is Timeless....

And people stayed at home
And read books
And listened
And they rested
And did exercises
And made art and played
And learned new ways of being
And stopped and listened
More deeply
Someone meditated, someone prayed
Someone met their shadow
And people began to think differently
And people healed.
And in the absence of people who
Lived in ignorant ways
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless,
The earth also began to heal
And when the danger ended and
People found themselves
They grieved for the dead
And made new choices
And dreamed of new visions
And created new ways of living
And completely healed the earth
Just as they were healed.



Sent in by Bharat Khetani



Finally, don't forget to browse the national U3A website – you'll probably be quite surprised by the variety of things on offer, from interesting pieces on various topics and how other U3As are coping with the pandemic, to more quizzes or learning opportunities. It is open to all, so no need to register.

Go to:- <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>

COUNTSTHORPE U3A MEMBER SUGGESTIONS FOR LOCKDOWN READING

Matthew Shardlake series by C J Sansom - about a lawyer during 16th c, during the reign of Henry VIII.

Falco series by Lindsay Davies - a whole series of books about an informer set in Rome in the time of Vespasian. Light, funny, but full of detail about Roman life for ordinary people. Reading this series of nearly 20 books for 3rd time.

Gordianus the Finder series by Steven Saylor. Again, Roman timed, but rather more serious than Falco.

Cadfael series by Ellis Peters. We're likely to have seen the TV series, but the books are excellent.

Mapp & Lucia series by E F Benson.

Short Stories by H P Lovecraft.

Ghost / sinister stories by M R James.

The Dark is Rising - a series of books aimed at older children, useful if you've grandchildren that age.

Father Brown stories by G K Chesterton.

Anything by Dorothy L Sayers; Agatha Christie etc.

S J Parris – Giordano Bruno series.

'Unsheltered' (2018) by Barbara Kingsolver,
A fascinating and well written take on middle-class life in USA pending the Trump presidency and its historical comparison with life in the 1870s.

"The Lacuna" – also by Barbara Kingsolver

Tolstoy's "War and Peace"

Pasternak's "Doctor Zhivago"

Sholokhov's "And Quiet Flows the Don"

Solzhenitsyn's "August 1914"

Grossman's "Stalingrad" and "Life and Fate"

Golden Adversity by Colin Norman (*the author is one of our members*)

Absolute Pandemonium – autobiography of Brian Blessed
No Cunning Plan – autobiography of Tony Robinson
A Fortunate Life – autobiography of Paddy Ashdown

Andrew Taylor and his historical crime thriller series that starts with *The Ashes of London*, set during and just after the Great Fire of 1666. It is the first of a series set in Restoration England. In 2018 he published a sequel - *The Fire Court*, and the third of the series, *The King's Evil*, was released in March 2019. If you like Hilary Mantel you'll like these.

Books by Kate Ellis - set in Devon; police and an occasional interruption by an archaeologist. Blend history with crime. See Wiki for full list – about 30 titles! Not deep but a good read.

The Daughter of Time is a 1951 detective novel by Josephine Tey, concerning a modern police officer's investigation into the alleged crimes of King Richard III of England.

The Cadfael Chronicles by Edith Pargeter writing under the name "Ellis Peters". Historical murder mysteries.

Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men - Kindle Edition by Caroline Criado Perez

“A Story of Marmite, Queuing and Weather” by Ben Fogle

J D Robb books (Norah Roberts by another name). Very fast moving with a romantic twist, not only with the main characters but as the series goes on so you follow the other characters too, almost like a family. Browse author for the numerous titles

Another author to try is Lee Child, the Jack Reacher books. The first book is “The Killing Floor” which tells you where Jack comes from, after that you don't have to follow the series if you don't want to.



I hope you'll find some new ideas here for your future reading! Any further suggestions, or good films, box sets, programmes etc – just let me know and I will add to the list next time. Let me know on 0116 277 6330, or mobile (text only, please) 07985 013015 or email: jhawkins45@talktalk.net