



GILWERN U3A NEWSLETTER

THE UNSOCIAL TIMES

Issue 10: September 2020

Dear Member,

Hello, as the new acting Chair of Gilwern U3A it gives me great pleasure to introduce the latest edition of our newsletter.

Taking on the role of Chair is a somewhat daunting task, especially during such strange times. Firstly, I feel I must say a huge "Thank you" to Hilary Lipscombe, our outgoing Chair. Hilary was instrumental in the formation of Gilwern U3A and her leadership, enthusiasm and commitment has helped to ensure the continued success of our organisation. She will continue to play an active role as our Programme manager and as a member of the committee.

Many of you will know me from my previous role as membership secretary when I was usually to be found near the entrance during our monthly meetings. For those of you who don't know me, I look forward to meeting you at some point in the future when our meetings finally resume.

As the lockdown eases, we can look forward to resuming some aspects of our previous lives, albeit with some caution. As we emerge we all hope that the world will be a different, more caring place. It has made us all very aware of the importance of our local community and U3A has a key role to play in ensuring that people stay in touch and do not feel isolated.

I hope you enjoy reading this latest newsletter, many thanks to all who have contributed items and articles, please keep them coming.

Best wishes
Karen Harris
Chair, Gilwern U3A

The Ascent of Man

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Lynda O'K

As part of modern team building and bonding exercises in large city companies, it is usual for many of the young go getters to attempt our local three peaks walk i.e. Skirrid, Bloreng and Sugarloaf in one day. My son has done this many times over his professional career and has entertained us with many stories about how some less countryfied colleagues abandoned the walks and retired to the pub at the first sight of a gradient.

One particular year, the city dwelling would be Sherpas arrived in a borrowed Land Rover which they had been informed was a must for country travel. They set up base camp in the garden to discuss whether they were fully equipped for what was considered mountain climbing of Everest proportions. Double checking that they had everything they thought they'd need, I was amused to learn that they had included a supply of water purifying tablets for their hike. They obviously expected to be short of bottled water.

When they returned at the end of the day I asked how it had gone, only to be told that they were appalled during the final push to the top of the Sugarloaf by the fact that a small girl of about ten had overtaken them equipped only with a Mars bar!

HOUSEBOUND HUGS No 10

Gran knows best!

Kay B

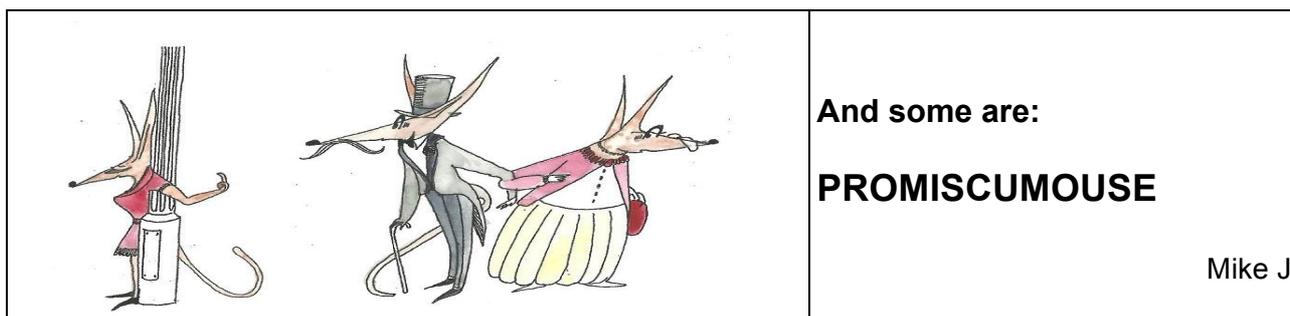
My Gran, Martha Eliza Keay, was a wonderful woman, I got my Christian name from her surname. She lived to the grand old age of 92, remembering seeing Queen Victoria on her visit to Manchester to open the Ship Canal, with a man with a red flag walking in front of the Royal car, and she also lived to see and accept space travel, although she sadly missed the Moon landings. But it's surprising how many times in the week that I think of things she used to say. When cooking vegetables her words come back to me: *"If it grows above the ground, leave the lid off. If it grows below ground, leave the lid on."*

And every time I change the bed linen: *"First the foot and then the head, that's the way to make the bed."* I always use that rhyme when making beds with our grandchildren, I wonder if they'll remember it as well.

And as a teenager, going out for the first time to a dance, *"Remember, nothing any good's done after midnight!"*

She was certainly of a different generation, and she was a stickler for routine in the home. Sunday was for family, but woe betide anyone playing outside with friends on the Sabbath. Monday was washing day, Tuesday for ironing, Wednesday upstairs day, Thursday downstairs, Friday baking and Saturday shopping. Even at 90, she would supervise Mum and Aunt if they were doing the bedrooms. *"Pull out the bed, Madge, because I don't think you've hoovered under there! Olive, have you dusted on top of the wardrobe?"*

Life is very different today, and I can't help thinking that our grandchildren won't have those sort of memories, living as they do far away from us. But I hope I'll be remembered as their golfing granny, not some old lady sitting in a chair.



Lame Duck

Lynda O'K

Those of you who are fellow canal walkers will no doubt have noticed that there are now rafts of ducklings enjoying their new life on the water. One duckling caught my eye as it was really struggling to keep up with its family. Its legs could be clearly seen under the water, and one was obviously lame.

Ducks have quite fragile legs and feet, so, if you should catch one, you should never pick it up by its feet. Occasionally, a duck may strain a leg muscle which can also result in a limp. In this case it is good for the duck to exercise by swimming to help the muscle to heal, handy if you live on a canal. Sometimes a deficiency of Vitamin B3 (niacin) can cause limping. This can be found in Marmite. It is not advisable to feed ducks too much bread, we should instead feed them: corn, lettuce, defrosted peas, duck pellets, oats or seeds, but if you should spot the wonky duckling, (he's the one paddling like crazy to maintain a straight course, and is always bringing up the rear in the duck line), please feed him some of your leftover Marmite on toast until his limp has improved. He'll either love it or spit it back at you!

<https://www.treehugger.com/why-you-shouldnt-feed-ducks-bread-4868829>

https://www.omlet.us/guide/ducks/duck_health/feeling_blue

September Art Challenge: "A walk in the park". Details on the News page of the web site

American Army in Gilwern

Thelma G.

I was interested to read about Memories of the US Army in Gilwern in the war, (1 July issue of *The Unsocial Times*). My cousin and a friend of hers came to Gilwern to walk along the canal during the war. They were in the village near the chemist when her friend was knocked over by an American army truck. They were taken to the hospital in the American camp. The accident resulted in the cousin's friend losing her leg.

Does anyone have other stories about the American army presence during the war?

Thelma continues:

At Brynmanst on a Sunday both in the afternoon and the evening, walking down the tramroad, you couldn't put a pin between them (as they say). There were families in the afternoon and teenagers in the evening. On Alma Street alone youngsters were five or six abreast. They'd walk up and down from 7 o'clock to 10 o'clock pairing up.

I remember one Sunday I was walking with my friend, and an ex boyfriend of hers asked her if she'd come back with him.

She said: "Well I'm not leaving Thelma!" He said "Hang on a minute, I'll be back, and there was a gang of boys with him. He said I could pick anyone I wanted. I picked one of the lads, knowing that he was a lovely chap. There we were, a foursome! She remembers that on dark nights it was difficult to see, the gas lights being far apart.

The oddest of nights

David H

The old bus blustered its way into a silent and dark Libyan oasis of Mizda at ten at night after its 150 mile journey from the coast, and emptied quickly with all dispersing, carrying their belongings, including quite a number of live chickens, to their dwellings. I left on this moonless night to find somewhere to sleep and made my way to the fort where I banged hard on the large, solid metal gate, disturbing a sleepy night watchman who, wrapped well against the cold desert night, opened the gate a crack, holding his old paraffin lantern high. He let me in and led me to a room with two empty metal beds - no mattresses or bedding. I was soon deeply asleep. In the morning I woke, and to my amazement found a Tuareg from the southern Sahara waking up in the other bed. I greeted him in his own language, learnt when on a three month leave living largely with the Tuareg in Niger and Mali, but he seemed furtive and deeply suspicious. Gathering up his belongings, he left quickly, never again to be seen by me in the oasis as I arranged for my camel and guide.

What was your oddest night? There must be many interesting stories in our membership. Please send your story to webmaster@gilwernu3a.org.uk



One of my favourite photos of the Tuareg people

U3A quiz food and drink

Pat H

- 1/ What do the French call their long loaves?
- 2/ Which cut of beef is the only one worthy of being knighted?
- 3/ What is the French dish of cooked courgettes, tomatoes, onions, aubergine and peppers called?
- 4/ What is the national dish of Hungary?
- 5/ Which tonic wine was advertised as "fortifying the over 40s"?
- 6/ Which town is the premier producer of pork pies?
- 7/ Which opera singer had a peach and ice cream desert named after her?
- 8/ Which curry is named after the pan it is cooked in?
- 9/ Which hotel in Vienna first baked the chocolate cake for which it is famed?
- 10/ Which fortified wine comes from an island in the Atlantic Ocean?

Answers are on the last page.

Recycling logos

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Hilary L

Following on from the notes in Unsocial Times No 9, how many of these do you know?



Answers: From Left to right

Top Row

Mobius Loop – no precise meaning, generally recyclable but depends on facility – some will have a % figure in the middle but irrelevant really

Green Dot – a European symbol not relevant to the UK. The Producer has made a contribution to the recovery and recycling of the material in its country of origin.

Recycle Now – should indicate the material is recyclable but often qualified with a text such as ‘not currently’ or ‘depends on local facilities’.

Made of glass – only food, beverage and toiletry jars and bottles are recyclable and will have this mark.

Plastic Resin code – the number between 1-6 identifies which type of plastic resin it is but it does not tell you necessarily that it is recyclable as varies from council to council.

Suitable for Home Composting – a fairly new logo

Aluminium that is recyclable

Bottom Row

Made from steel - all of which is recyclable.

National Association of Paper Merchants Mark – tells you that the product is made from 75% genuine waste paper.

Forest Stewardship Council Logo – the wood came from well managed forests certified by the FSC

Play “Misty” for me

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Lynda O’K

Last week, I arrived at the checkout of the Nisa in Raglan (great meat and bread!) to find that I had left my bank card in the pocket of a coat I was wearing the previous day which was now in the wardrobe at home. Not to worry – I had my back up card which I use once a year for emergencies but don’t remember the pin number. The pin number is stored on my mobile phone under an alias so no-one else can work it out, well that’s the theory!

With the queue behind me now starting to get agitated, I scrolled through my phone but needed my reading glasses to see the pin number correctly. These were in the bottom of my bag, but I was encouraged by the kind checkout lady that I should take my time. All the while sporting my protective mask and disposable gloves, I managed to swap my driving glasses for my reading glasses only for them to mist up as I let out a sigh of relief that I could see. I now had to take these off and guess the pin number, which I hastily inputted into the payment machine and hoped for the best. At least no-one would be able to recognise me later, as between the mask and the misted glasses, I was well disguised. When I got home, I did two things – put my bank card back in my purse, and looked up how to prevent your glasses from misting up while wearing a mask:

“Immediately before wearing a face mask, wash the spectacles with soapy water and shake off the excess. Then, let the spectacles air dry or gently dry off the lenses with a soft tissue before putting them back on. Now the spectacle lenses should not mist up when the face mask is worn.”

Saving peaches

Southern Living in the USA has lots of wonderful recipes. Here's a link about saving peaches.

https://www.southernliving.com/how-to/freeze-peaches?utm_campaign=southernliving_southernliving&utm_content=evergreen&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_term=5f2dcf2f563cdc00018162b5

Graduation from ponies

Harriet H

William Rufus was the last of the ponies, but I had in the meantime, ridden ponies belonging to other people. I also, much against my will, spent a summer showing Ranee, the pretty Arab pony pictured. I disliked showing, so I resented being coerced by friends of my parents into doing so. She was elegant, but fussy and lacked warmth – I was surprised when we succeeded in winning a competition.

However, all this time my adult mount, Caprice, was growing up. Having decided to retire his hunter mare, my father elected to breed from her. She was mated with a thoroughbred stallion when I was about 12. A neighbour was shocked that I had been allowed to watch the impressive breeding proceedings. A pretty foal was the result, and she grew up beautiful and talented. I broke her in and schooled her to be a three-day-event horse – able to do lovely dressage and to jump beautifully. Sadly, we could not afford to keep her, and at 18 I was beginning to look for another kind of life, so Irish Caprice had to be sold. Rather than going to a star rider of the event world, a silly woman bought her, jumped her over a swinging gate and fell, never to ride again. What became of Caprice I never heard, but the price we got for her did pay my parents overdraft.



There are many ways of looking at Ruins

Professor David Skilton*

We all see ruins around us on a daily basis, and we're lucky to be in this part of the world to enjoy so many of them. These ruins connect us to real and imagined pasts, and most often we like to think that they summon up or revive a long gone world. But ruins have always had far more functions than that. To begin with they can often summon up a fictitious past – something we'd like to believe to be part of our heritage, but never was, or never was *like that*. Our part of the world was central to the cult of ruins which grew during the late eighteenth century as an essential part of the craze for picturesque scenes. To complicate the record, landowners would annex real or false ruins – for example buying up a patch of land on the other side of a valley and build a folly on it to give the impression they owned the whole intervening space. Equally, they might build a ruin nearby, to claim a grander past than their forebears had left them with. They might import a foreign ruin, stone by stone, and column by column, for the same purpose. In another case, they might find it inconvenient to admit that their irreproachably genuine ruin came to them via a socially embarrassing marriage, gift or gambling winnings.

More intriguing still was the habit which developed in certain periods of building in such a way that the new structure should in the future fall into particularly impressive ruin and glorify the builders and their family in ages to come. When in 1809 a visiting Swedish poet wrote that London could boast “no houses in *grand* style (although some admittedly in *heavy* style). Few palaces — and these not beautiful — no monuments whose ruins should, in a future age when London is no more, speak to future generations.” This judgement is, in itself, harmless. But when Albert Speer convinced Hitler that German buildings should be built so that after a thousand years they would become ruins which took the people's breath away, we are less easy about the approach. Final thought: shortly before the recent great credit crisis of 2007-08, the Washington Mutual Bank placed stainless steel replicas of fallen columns and capitals outside its headquarters.



Why on earth?

* Professor David Skilton was due to give us a talk on 16 September on “There is a fascination frantic in a ruin Romantic”.

To set, or not to set?

Kay B

My strawberry jam just *won't* set,
I don't know what to do.
I've done what Delia told me
But it's more like strawberry stew.

I weighed the strawberries carefully,
Added sugar, like she said.
Then lemon juice and simmered
But no 'wrinkles' - juice instead.

I poured it into jam jars,
Then poured it back again!
Boiled it up and timed and tested,
'Til my wooden spoon went red.

One last go and then I give up.
If it doesn't 'wrinkle' now,
My scones will be served jamless
Just with clotted cream , oh wow!

Hours later, looking liquid,
Total disaster, I suspect.
Thank heavens I've got Waitrose
And next week's 'Click and Collect'.
A pot of Kay's delicious looking raspberry jam



Diction Corner 2

Grahame N

M	Y	P
N	E	S
O	D	U

Grahame invites you to try this test, finding three or more letter words. Beat a total of 183, plus 59 abbreviations!" If you succeed, please let the Editor know on webmaster@gilwernu3a.org.uk.

Another road closed – down from the Corn Exchange – landslip! Now open?



**Monthly Art Challenge – August
Winner of art challenge August 2020**

David Hall's "Sea gone to desert". "This is a picture for any sci-fi fan. The foreground would assume a sea close by but the title and the sand ranging to the horizon tell a different tale. The fantastically shaped rocks lead the eye to the vanishing point and continue the mystery! David's limited colour palette draws the picture together as do the shadows falling over the sand. The well drawn seagull makes us wonder "how did that get there!"



Answers to food puzzle. Baguette or Baton, Sirloin, Ratatouille, Beef Goulash, Sanatogen, Melton Mowbray, Dame Nellie Melba, Balti, Hotel Sachersachertorte, Madeira.