



# GILWERN U3A NEWSLETTER

## “UNSOCIAL TIMES”

Issue 2 on 15 April 2020



### Dear Members

We have been delighted and a little overwhelmed (pleasantly) by your response to the 1<sup>st</sup> issue of the Gilwern U3A Newsletter. Hopefully this is a positive reflection on what we are doing and not that you are all bored! Thank you for your feedback and contributions.

David Hall and the contributors to this 2<sup>nd</sup> issue certainly don't have time to be bored, and I would like to thank them all, on your behalf, for the work they have put into its production. By the time the Covid-19 crisis is over everyone will have the honed skills of professional publishers and journalists.

Alongside the newsletter the website is being updated regularly with information from the local organisations providing support. Go to the News page.

With an Art Challenge under way, there will be a photographic one in the near future so keep an eye out for the details.

We are happy for you to share the newsletter with family and friends – who knows it may encourage them to join a U3A in the future.

Now it is over to you to keep it going. Please tell us what you like best, contribute when and what you can and most of all keep in touch and stay safe.

**Hilary Lipscombe (Chair)**  
**Gilwern U3A**

### The Blink of an Eye - by Lynda O'K

How quickly things change, in the blink of an eye  
A virus upon us, is the end really nigh?

Gone are the days when loo rolls were plenty  
Supermarket shelves, now they're half empty  
Thank goodness for Whatsapp, and Skype, virus free,

For long distance chats with friends and family  
How quickly things change, in the blink of an eye  
Twelve weeks will be over, time will fly by

Think summer, blue sky, the smell of the sea  
The sand in my toes, can't wait to be free!

### Getting about - Rhiannon W

Tuesday 24th March 2020 - Day 1 of new restrictions but also the date for one of The Walking Group's short walks. So, for the "once-a-day exercise", I decided to follow one of our routes along the Canal and up to the Old Railway Line.

Minutes into the walk, at the Bridge by Dan-y-Bont Mill, while admiring how clear the Clydach's waters were running after weeks of roaring, muddy torrents, a text message. From the Government!

"CORONAVIRUS ALERT .....You must stay at home".

Come on! Barely any mobile signal in this part of Gilwern, yet the Government can reach me as soon as I leave the house. Even though not particularly paranoid, I defy anyone not to look about - a drone.

Satellite? - well I do watch Homeland.

When I arrived home, I read on the BBC that the Government had arranged with all mobile networks to send all users this message over the course of the day. I had simply been a lucky(?) early recipient.

Anyway - it was a beautiful day for a walk. As it was the next day, when my walk passed with no further Government surveillance. Or did it? Pretty quiet but encountered the same runner on The Old Railway Line and then again on the Canal towpath. On reflection I'm sure someone who ran considerably faster (or indeed with any show of speed) would have been less conspicuous.

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**Answers:** Replace the “?” - 4  
ELF - the rest are French

## Family meetings on the screen

One thing we nearly all miss is being able to be with our offspring and family living far away or even in the next village or town. No hugs, but only talking over the telephone. Social Media is helping enormously to enable family meetings on the screen using softwares such as Zoom or Skype. They provide an excellent way of feeling close, being able to chat and see each other, laughing together. Daughters from London, Germany and, with grandson, from Llanellen, we all assemble on Zoom at 11am on Sunday mornings to talk as a family. It succeeds in bringing a real closeness. One of the younger ones acts as host, telling us what we should do to join the call. Try it!

## Loo rolls - Lynda O'K

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2H4ZdkH1V4> Let's see the best effort!

## Making time passing a pleasure

### A very relevant book review - Hilary L

I recently put down the best book I have read for a long time. The sort you can't stop reading but don't want to finish. A GENTLEMAN IN MOSCOW by Amor Towles. Chatting over the garden gate (at 2m!) another member of U3A said he thought exactly the same thing.

In 1922 a Russian aristocrat, Count Alexander Rostov, is placed under house arrest in the Hotel Metropol in Moscow. Although the book is fiction the author chose to set the story in the real hotel, built in 1905 and which still exists today in a prime position opposite The Bolshoi Ballet.

The plot takes place over 32 years, during a momentous period in Russian history, but the fact that it appears to be centred around just one location, where he is incarcerated does not sound all that promising. A little like some of our lives at the moment perhaps?

However, the story which is written so well is full of humour, history and humanity. Count Rostov manages to make 'time passing' a pleasure and I became charmed by him and fascinated by all of the supporting characters that work or pass through the hotel. I thoroughly recommend this book.

## Family problems in our times - Dave H

<https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2020-03-21/hilarious-video-shows-typical-valleys-family-coping-with-social-isolation/>

## An extra - Hilary L

Why there is an arrow on the fuel gauge of your new car (after 2010). It indicates which side your fuel cap is on.

## Lock down, open up! - Lynda O'k

### Why not trying your hand at painting?!

This invitation is open to **ALL** Gilwern U3A members regardless of artistic ability.

This month the theme is *April Showers*

### Guidance

1. Artwork should be based on the theme of the month, as notified on the Gilwern U3A web site
2. Any Medium can be used
3. Permission must be given for the artwork to appear on the Gilwern U3A web site
4. Submissions must be received by 25<sup>th</sup> of the month, if not earlier
5. All works must be submitted electronically, easiest way is to take a picture and send to [lyndaookeefe12@yahoo.com](mailto:lyndaookeefe12@yahoo.com)
6. Artwork will be judged by independent adjudicator, Sarah Hoddy, Chair of Abergavenny Art Group
7. There are no prizes, just the glory of winning, and your name on the Art Group Roll of Honour!

Please see the note about it on the News page of the web site. It includes links to notes in the form of a brainstorm, and also some useful links on the Web.

## Some helpful videos for painting - Lynda O'K

Bowl of cherries

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gR2RETMRGyE>

Apples

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Y-Y0mK2JXY>

Acrylic paint techniques

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDzcoyaeaRKI>

Landscape

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFpViQO1G\\_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFpViQO1G_k)

Birds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ8gxTIVN3>

## U3A QUIZ (Answers) - Dave H

- 1) How long did the Hundred Years' War last? **116 yrs**
- 2) Which country makes Panama hats? **Ecuador**
- 3) From which animal do we get cat gut? **Sheep & horses**
- 4) In which month do Russians celebrate the October Revolution? **November**
- 5) What is a camel's hair brush made of? **Squirrel fur**
- 6) The Canary Islands in the Pacific are named after what animal? **Dogs**
- 7) What was King George VI's first name? **Albert**
- 8) What colour is a purple finch? **Crimson**
- 9) Where are Chinese gooseberries from? **New Zealand**
- 10) What is the colour of the black box in a commercial airplane? **Orange**

## Playing the Welsh Goat - Phillie H

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPnC6a-GkB4>

### Thought for the day - Maurice G

We are survivors (for those born before 1940) We were born before television, before penicillin, polio shots, frozen food, Xerox, contact lenses, video and the pill. We were before radar, credit cards, split atoms, laser beams and ballpoint pens, before dishwashers, tumble dryers, electric blankets, air conditioners, drip dry clothes...and before man walked on the moon.

We got married first and then lived together ( how quaint can you get). We thought "fast food" was what you ate in Lent, a Big Mac was an oversized raincoat and crumpets we had for tea. We existed before house husbands, computer dating and sheltered accommodation was where you waited for the bus.

We were before day care centres, group homes and disposable nappies. We never heard of FM radio, tape decks, artificial hearts, word processors or young men wearing earrings. For us "time sharing" meant togetherness, a chip was a piece of wood or fried potato, "hardware " meant nuts and bolts and "software" wasn't a word.

Before 1940" Made in Japan" meant junk, the term "making out" referred to how you did in your exams, stud was something that fastened a collar to a shirt and going all the way meant staying on a double decker bus to the terminus. In our day cigarette smoking was fashionable, grass was mown and coke was kept in the coal house, a joint was a piece of meat that you ate on a Sunday and pot was something you cooked in. Rock music was a fond mother's, lullaby. Eldorado was an ice cream, a gay person was the life and soul of the party, while aids just meant beauty treatment or help for someone in trouble.

We who were born before 1940 must be a hardy bunch when you think of the way in which the world has changed and the adjustments we have to make. No wonder there is a generation gap today.... But  
By the grace of God we have survived.



Photo by Kay B

### Know your rivers? - David S

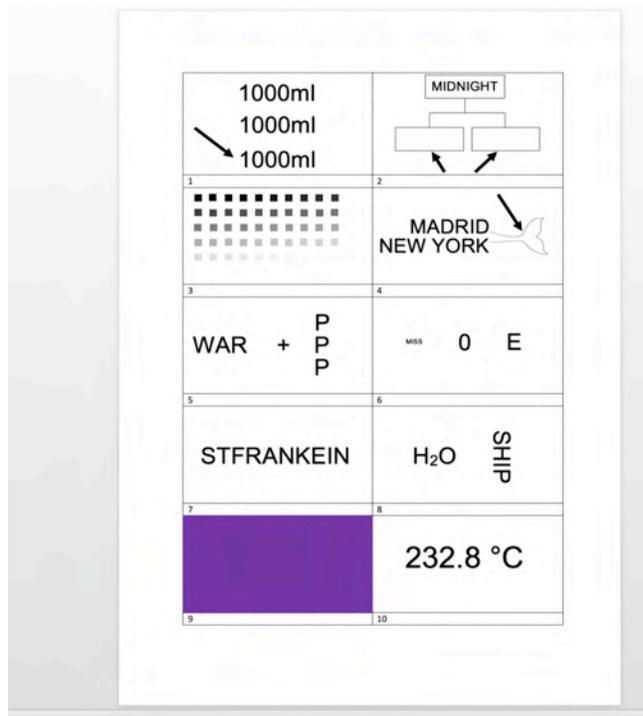
In 1612 there appeared a long poem, called *Poly-Olbion*, by Michael Drayton. It lists all the rivers in England and Wales, and ours are not omitted. Here is how our part of the world features in it:

First our triumphing Muse of sprightly *Uske* shall tell,  
And what to every Nymph attending her, befell:  
Which *Cray* and *Camlas* first for Pages doth reteane;  
With whom the next in place comes in the tripping *Breane*,  
With *Isker*; and with her comes *Hodny* fine and cleere,  
Of *Brecknock* best belov'd, the Sovereigne of the Sheere:  
And *Grony*, at an inch, waits on her Mistress heeles.  
But entering (at the last) the *Monumethian* fields,  
Small *Fidan*, with *Cledaugh*, increase her goodly Menie,  
Short *Kebby*, and the Brooke that christneth *Abergeny*.

Song 4 in Part One, lines 119-28 (p. 58 in the edition of 1622)  
courtesy of Special Collections, Cardiff University Library)

### Do you know Dingbats? - Nicky C

The answer to 2<sup>nd</sup> down on the left, gives a clue how they work: *Tale of two cities*. The dingbat in the next issue might be harder!



### Monet's Garden - Phillie H

A lovely video showing a garden when many here are finding it impossible to procure plants for the garden. It is a soft and refreshing scene in these increasingly difficult times:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjWx2WNXFF4>

## How many remember these? - Denise K



The jacket with the reindeer. I remember my friend's mother knitting these during the 60s. She and her brother had ones with poodles on them which involved an incredible amount of work and looked amazing to me at a young age. Before all this outbreak we were in London visiting our son and opposite our hotel was a retro clothes shop. I was immediately drawn to the window because of the jacket and the fact it was similar to my friend's. However I had a shock when I looked at the price – £125!!! I know it was an adult's jacket but such a pity my friend hadn't kept hers. So if anyone has one of these stashed away – you know how much you could possibly get for one.

## Housebound Hugs No 2 - Kay B

Already two weeks have passed since our first Newsletter, but in the meantime, we're still keeping safe in lockdown in our homes.

I've been thinking about a positive slant on our situations, and initially I couldn't think of hardly any at all. But then I really put my mind to it, so here's my list of cheerful facts about COVID-19:-

1. What a wonderful thing the NHS is, and all the associated people ranging from cleaners and porters to administrators, Medics and other front-line staff.
2. Where would be without supermarket staff and suppliers, food producers, farmers, and all involved in bringing food to our homes?
3. Let's not forget the police and other emergency responders, the postal workers, and the media – in all forms
4. A big 'thank you' goes to local volunteers who perhaps collect our groceries from supermarkets, or medicines from pharmacies, or post letters for us.
5. And what about the strangely wonderful evening when at 8pm clapping to acknowledge the NHS could be heard all along the road, even though separate residents could not be seen.
6. The feeling of not being alone even though there may not be anyone else in the household, as a sense of Community has been felt throughout the village, and indeed in every town and city throughout the country.
7. One scientific point, apparently for the first time in decades, people in China have seen blues skies in the daytime and the stars at night – due to a cleaner atmosphere, and in New York, the air has been declared as clean as it was some twenty years ago. All of this is due to lack of human activity, ie no factory chimneys or cars belching out fumes.
8. And lastly, if you've any library books that are overdue – don't worry. no-one will ever know!

## Ponies in my life - Harriet H

For a number of reasons – chief among them being my gender, my parents decided against any formal education in favour of what is now termed 'home schooling'. In order to instil the effort and discipline absent from their curriculum, it was decided that I should have a pony. On my fifth birthday, Brownie arrived having been sold to us (cheaply – a teacher's salary didn't run to show ponies) by a riding school as a suitable first pony. After what must have been nearly 20 years being ridden by heavy handed children, Brownie was solely focussed on doing as little as possible and who shall blame her? She looked permanently depressed and regarded my puny attempts to manage her with understandable scorn. The moment the leading rein was removed, she would set off for home with me wailing and tugging impotently on the reins. After two years of a not very happy relationship, Brownie took ill and had to be put down with her carcass being sent to the local hunt for consumption by the hounds. I was assured that she would therefore continue to enjoy hunting. I don't remember mourning her – only in later years did I realise how miserable her lot had been.



Harriet's 1<sup>st</sup> pony - Brownie

## Did You Know: – Hilary L

What the hole on the bottom of a padlock is for? It is to let the rain water escape and if you squirt in WD-40 or oil it will help to release it when stuck.

Why pots and pans have a hole in the end of the handle? It is so you can slot your stirring spoon through it to prevent putting it down.

What the little bumps on F & J of the keyboard are for? It's to help you navigate about the keyboard. Your left pointer finger should be on the F and the right pointer finger on J – if you type correctly!