



# GILWERN U3A NEWSLETTER

## “UNSOCIAL TIMES”

Issue 5 on 1 June 2020

Dear Member

It seems that across the UK, as far as this pandemic goes, there are some mixed messages? We hope that the Gilwern U3A message is clear? We encourage you to follow the U3A ethos of ‘Learn, Laugh, Live’ plus at this time ‘Stay Healthy, Active and Connected’. Hopefully, during difficult times, in some way our newsletter is helping you do all of these? Many thanks to those who have contributed so far and can I remind ALL of you that we look forward to your input. In this way with, variety of contributor, topic and presentation we can keep the newsletter relevant and interesting. Special thanks should go to our Editor, David Hall. The U3A was set up as a community self learning organisation and Gilwern U3A is showing how we can work towards that aim even when we can’t meet. Who knows what we will be able to do when this is all over?

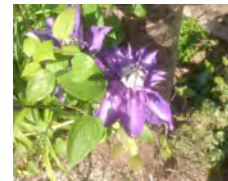
Hilary, Chair, Gilwern U3A

### Plant of the Month - Clematis ( Ranunculaceae) - Anita H

At this time of the year we don't have to go far from our homes in Gilwern to enjoy colourful, scented displays of hundreds of beautiful Clematis blooms. If you stand on the canal bridge on Church Road there is one trailing luxuriantly over the shrubs and trees. Every year it reaches a little farther and makes a memorable picture for us to conjure up in the dark winter months.

Most varieties of Clematis are climbers. The blooms are long lasting with the added bonus of dainty, silky twirls of seed heads afterwards. Easy to grow, they can be planted in well-drained (non-acid) soil in sun or light shade. They do not like to dry out so keep watering, especially if in a container. Take cuttings in April or divide clumps in autumn or spring.

The blooms of the Clematis are guaranteed to cheer you up on a long, lockdown day!



### Housebound Hugs No 5 Faithful Friends

Kay B

With libraries closed, I have had to return to my own many faithful friends – books. I know them all almost word-perfect.

I've listed a few of my favourite Literary Lockdowners, perhaps readers can send in their favourites for future issues?

1. “Pride and Prejudice”, Jane Austen: balm for my soul.
2. “A year in Provence”, Peter Mayall: transporting me to France and our many friends there.
3. “The Loving Spirit”, Daphne Du Maurier: it makes me cry every time.
4. “The Thorn Birds”, Colleen McCullough: wonderful Australian saga, I can still picture Richard Chamberlain as Ralph de Bricassart.
5. “The Genesis Code”, John Case: ingenious page-turner of a thriller.
6. “Conclave”, Robert Harris: intrigues in The Vatican.

There are so many more I could add, but I must dash, Mr Darcy is waiting.....

### Grow a fig tree

David H

Pick a delicious ripe fig from a large pot in your garden in Gilwern. I have successfully taken many cuttings of Brown Turkey fig, and would be delighted to give some away to Members. I provide a note of advice on growing the plant.

Just send an email to [webmaster@gilwernu3a.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@gilwernu3a.org.uk) and I will happily respond. You will probably need to collect the fig from our garden gate. It makes me happy to give them away to Gilwern U3A Members.



### Exercise for people over 60

Kay B

Begin by standing on a comfortable surface, where you have plenty of room at each side. With a 2½-lb potato bag in each hand, extend your arms straight out from your sides and hold them there as long as you can. Try to reach a full minute, and then relax. Each day you'll find that you can hold this position for just a bit longer.

After a couple of weeks, move up to 5-lb potato bags. Then carefully try 10-lb potato bags, and eventually try to get where you can lift a 20-lb potato bag in each hand and hold your arms straight for more than a full minute. (I'm at this level). After you feel confident at that level, put a potato in each bag.

**Try this puzzle** sent from Gwyn M. Take care to note that the last line shows only one of each item (remember to divide by 2!).

Answer is on final page.

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{👠} + \text{👠} + \text{👠} = 30 \\
 \text{💡} + \text{💡} + \text{👠} = 20 \\
 \text{👤} + \text{👤} + \text{💡} = 13 \\
 \text{👠} + \text{💡} \times \text{👤} = ?
 \end{array}$$

### Highgrove House

Phillie H

Take a tour of Highgrove House garden with the Prince of Wales.

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

### The Common Phrase Dingbat in Unsocial Times No 4. Answers:

- Needle in a haystack
- Bang out of order
- Blood's thicker than water
- Full of beans
- Beat about the bush
- Bend over backwards
- Think outside the box
- Once in a blue moon
- The bottom line
- A turn up for the books

### One Good Churn

Kay B

When Her Majesty The Queen spoke on the evening of the VE Day Anniversary, she said that we must never despair and never give up. In a funny way this reminded me of a poem by local man Michael Tod entitled "One Good Churn" from his anthology 'Nearly there', so here it is:

*Two frogs fell in a bowl of cream  
 And started swimming round and round.  
 "There's no way out," the weak one said,  
 Gave up and sank and drowned.*

*The other frog, of sterner stuff,  
 "I won't give up," was heard to utter  
 And went on swimming round and round,  
 Then hopped out from the butter.*

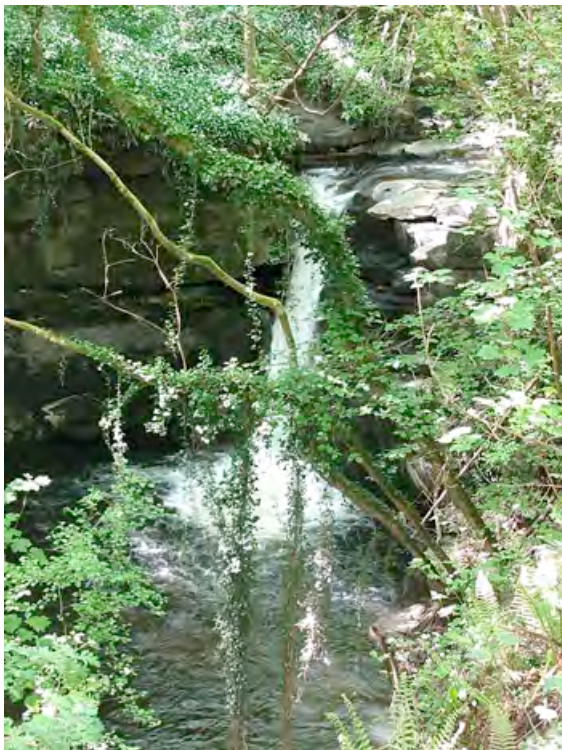
### What's this? To be seen on a slate memorial stone in Bethesda

Tony G

DAN YR YMA O HYD Tony says it is highly appropriate to most U3A members!

### Photographic Competition

May 31st is the closing date for our photographic challenge on 'Trees'. It is a very wide category so send those photos to [gilu3a@gmail.com](mailto:gilu3a@gmail.com). Good Luck.



Recent spring photo by Karen H

1	FIELDING GALLAGHER EDMONDS	2	JESUS 85kg
3	NIGHT	4	PPPPPP SOIL
5	IMMANUEL KANT ARISTOTLE CHARLES DARWIN	6	MAANWAGYER
7	BEQUEATHMENT ✓ ALL ALL	8	HELLO HOW ARE YOU? SUMMER
9		10	

Answers on last page

### A Retail Tale

Lynda O'K

Lock down has forced many to change their food shopping habits. Those of us who have plenty of time on our hands are generally called “promiscuous shoppers” i.e. flitting from supermarket to hypermarket, or convenience store to market stall, buying groceries. Most in lock down have been channelled, maybe unwillingly, into the world of online shopping, and whilst it does have its benefits in these strange times of social distancing, it can have its pitfalls. The first challenge is getting a delivery slot. Then there is the jeopardy of whether you have ordered one tin of soup or one case. Be prepared to receive a bag of carrots the size of a small pillow but there’s always carrot soup, carrot puree, carrot cake.....The ordered goods are then delivered to your door for a small charge.

However, the canny amongst us will know about the option to “Click and Collect”. Now here is a much better opportunity. Not only do you get to order your groceries online, but it comes with the added bonus of a legal trip out in the car. Small things become so important! This household now dresses up on the days of the “Click and Collect.” Asda in Brynmawr is particularly good, as you get to inspect the progress of the roadworks without the hassle of traffic lights or heavy plant spraying you with muddy water. A slight downside is that you don’t actually get out of the car to obtain your groceries. They are merely placed in the boot by a willing employee. The round trip is less than an hour, but by goodness, it’s great to get out of the house!

### Song names for Lockdown

Lynda O'K

John Lennon	Don't stand by me
David Essex	Don't hold me close
Georgie Fame	Not sitting in the park
Bryan Ferry	Let's not stick together
Girls Aloud	I wont stand by you
Elton John	Don't kiss the bride
Tom Jones	Not with these hands
Paul McCartney	We don't all stand together
Otis Redding	Not sitting on the dock of the bay
Shirley Bassey	Don't kiss me honey honey, don't kiss me
Beatles	I don't want to hold your hand
Carpenters	Not so close to you
Drifters	Don't come on over to my place
Diana Ross	Don't reach out and touch

**More in the next issue.** What can you think of in the meantime to add to the above? Please send to the Editor: [webmaster@gilwernu3a.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@gilwernu3a.org.uk)

## **A cat's tale**

Lynda O'K

In 1974, and newly married, we lived in leafy Hampshire with our two cats, Jet (the black one), and Eira (Welsh for snow, so obviously the white one). Being a one car family at that time, hubby would take the car to work, as he had to travel around from place to place with his job, while I walked up a country lane to the village to take the bus in to work.

On returning home one day, about halfway down the mile-long lane, I was amazed to come across Eira at the side of the road near a small terrace of houses. Scolding her for being so far from home, I picked her up and carried her the rest of the way. She jumped out of my arms and sniffed around the kitchen while I went into the lounge. It was a shock to see that there, nestled on the settee, were both my cats. They jumped up and led me straight to their feeding bowls in the kitchen. Eira stopped short and blinked as if to clear her vision. Jet put his hackles up and spat at the intruder.

At this point my better half returned, just in time to prevent the fur flying. He grabbed the plus one, while I got the car keys. Together we bundled the cat into the car and drove back to the point where I'd picked her up. Opening both car doors, despite words of encouragement for her to get out, the stubborn cat refused. It was only when we lifted her out and place her on the side of the pavement that we could throw ourselves back in the car and drive away. I looked out for the cat every time I walked up and down that lane and often saw her near where I picked her up. I wonder if her owner ever knew she'd been on an adventure.

**How about a story from you for the next issue?**

## **Films that should have been in Wales**

Lynda O'K

The Full Ponty, Bridge over the River Wye, A fish called Rhondda, The Welsh Patient, Carry on up the Clytha, Crouching Tiger Welsh Dragon, Osian's Eleven, Black Rock Down, Ba La Land, The Road to Llanishen. **Can anyone think of any more?** Please send to [webmaster@gilwernu3a.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@gilwernu3a.org.uk)

## **Swallows – a symbol of joy, peace and hope**

Hilary L

On the morning of Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May I wrote this article below. At lunch Graham said I would never believe but an almost exact piece (better written/more technical) had been printed in the Chronicle that day! So I put it away. But then I thought not everyone reads the Chronicle so here goes:

Every year Graham and I wait for the arrival of the swallows that nest in our stables and record the date they arrive. They are amazingly consistent sometimes arriving on exactly the same date (18<sup>th</sup> April) for a few years running. It lifts your spirits to see them and we needed that, this year particularly.

We saw our first pair very early on in April but, not unexpectedly, they did not stay as they were probably heading off further north to their usual home for the summer. Swallows do return to generational nesting places but they do not pair for life, a commonly held fallacy. Local travel writer Horatio Clare has written a fascinating book *A Single Swallow* (2009) which we can highly recommend.

Then on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April we saw another pair. When they first arrive (it is after all a very long journey) they spend about a week feeding and building up their strength before nesting, but these disappeared as well. Perhaps, we decided sadly they had up graded to our neighbour's new barn but as there were none in the sky we became concerned. I googled and it seems that on the night of April 5th the migrating swallows and swifts were caught over the Aegean Sea in a massive storm, high winds, low temperatures and rain. The nearest landfall was Greece and thousand of bodies and exhausted birds were discovered that next morning. Our hearts fell, perhaps we would not have swallows for the first time in the 35 years we have lived here.

Then on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2 pairs arrived whilst Graham was in his vegetable garden and he ran in to tell me. They are building nests, chattering to each other on the wires and skimming around the fields and making us very happy.

2 pairs of swallows do a summer make, although we are still technically in Spring!

## **Ninfa Garden in Italy**

Phillie H

Take a tour, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr6NflJhcJo>

In the Eighth Century the garden was given to the Pope, but in 1297 the Pope gave it to his nephew's Caetani family. Its name, Ninfa, comes from a temple dedicated to water nymphs. Join the walk through the stunning garden.



### Anniversaries - One from Timbuktu 1961

Nearly 60 years ago (though not the exact date as in the VE Day celebrations) I was spending some days in the mystical sounding desert town of Timbuktu at the end of one of my Saharan expeditions. A Ghanaian soldier and I had spent two months on camel recording ancient rock art. Now Corporal Davis and I were on our way home to Ghana in my long wheel based Land Rover by way of Timbuktu – rather a long way from Gilwern! There we were taken to see Laing's house, the British explorer, who had lived there until his death in 1826 – 206 years ago. Not far from it we were horrified to see a wretched man chained to a log in an opening to a basement.

Timbuktu – a trading centre



Punts arriving loaded with goods for the market

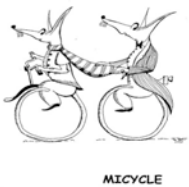
Timbuktu was an important desert centre being not far from the River Niger, with a canal leading to the river. Salt is brought down by camel from Toudenni 600 km north across the desert. The site of punts polled along the canal, bringing fruit and pasture to the market was too tempting, and I amused the locals with my skill with a pole taking a trip down to the river and back. I remember the town as a rather unfriendly and suspicious place, but it was good to have seen it.



DNH at the helm with the pole – as on the Thames

### Gilwern Mice

Mike J



**Spring** (by an 11 year old grandson of a member) - Spike D

Watch as the animals emerge, bleary eyed from their long, long sleep.  
Watch as the butterflies perform their jubilant dance, showing off their wings.  
The daisies shoot up, competing with the dandelions for pride of place,  
And the tree's blossom shows its flawless, pristine face.

The shouts of children,  
Full of the joys of the world, as they run down to the river.  
The surface is broken as they see who can reach the bank first.  
And overhead a swallow flies, cartwheeling, sailing through the azure sky.

And the trees, finally free of the bare, merciless spell of winter,  
They celebrate with their vivid shades of green,  
Each trying to outdo the others,  
In a bid to win the cherry tree's heart

Spring brings forth an avalanche of emotions.  
Spring comes from inside.  
Spring comes from the heart.

## Govilon Station

Tony G

Current buildings derive from the original station. The clock and the gradient worker remain circa 1935. The first station of significance out of Abergavenny. The most common engine was the 'Coal Tank' and some Saddle Tanks were used for freight.



Old



New

## Gilwern U3A Gardeners' Question Time

For National U3A Day on June 3rd we had planned a special Gardeners Question Time with a panel consisting of Lynne Allbutt (BBC, WM & Chronicle), Terry Walton (BBC) and Gareth Davies (President of Wales Rose Society). Sadly, it has had to be postponed and the new provisional date is Thursday Oct 1st - all being well by then?

Meanwhile, we have asked the members of the panel to answer a gardening question each in the next couple of editions of the newsletter.

If you would like a question to go into the pool for selection please send it to Anita Harris, Garden Group leader (neet830525@aol.com) before May 31st.

Lynne Allbutt - any question on flower gardening or garden design

Terry Walton - any question on vegetables, allotment gardening

Gareth Davies - any question on growing roses.

Lynda, our Secretary celebrating VE Day in traditional fashion. Gilwern put on a great showing on the day, with bunting and all kinds of decorations.



## Answers to the Dingbat on page 3

The first Noel, White Christmas, Silent night, Peace on Earth, Three wise men, Away in a manger, Santa Claus, Season's greetings, Goodwill to all, Sleigh bells.

**Answer to Gwyn's puzzle on page 2:** 1 shoe(5) + [1 boy(5) wearing a pair of shoes(10) holding 2 cones(4)] that's 19 x 1cone(2) 5 + 19 x 2 And this is where BODMAS comes into the equation. Multiplication comes before addition, therefore: 5 + (19 x 2) 5 + 38 = 43