



GILWERN U3A NEWSLETTER

“UNSOCIAL TIMES”

Issue 8 on 15 July 2020

Dear Member,

As I write this introduction to our eighth newsletter, changes to our current restrictions in Wales are on the way. There is a difficult balance to be made between the scientific/health risk information and our political and economic needs. Although this increased liberty will be a great relief to most, please continue to take care as it may also come with some increased risk.

Despite social distancing we are currently sharing our home with at least ten other families! There are various families of tits in the stonework, a wren in a plant on the wall, and numerous sparrows in the eaves. That is not counting all those in the garden and sheds. They are a little noisy, but good neighbours, which is what we all need at present.

Take care.

Hilary
Hilary Lipscombe, Chair, Gilwern U3A

Previously I have often written Keep Safe at the end of my newsletter introduction. Here is an explanation, provided by our Editor, as to why that is probably not the best word to use.

What's “safe” around here?

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David H

“Is it safe to go to school?” “I will only go if it's SAFE.”

Safe is normally taken to mean that there is NO risk. Most would agree that there is always a risk, many risks being impossible to eliminate, one at present being Coronavirus. The *risk* might be small and acceptable, but it is not necessarily in the common meaning of *safe*! I wish those broadcasting would stop using the blanket word safe, using instead such terms as *Comparitively safe* or *of acceptable or sensible risk*. Safe is rather a risky word to use these days!

A Costume Drama

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Lynda O'K

Hilary's story about the “rag and bone man” brought back memories of my childhood. How we remember the strangest things! I would have been about five years old at the time of this one. My mother was a prolific and very skilled knitter, and the whole family were never short of school jumpers, cardigans, scarves, gloves, even socks. A stickler for not wasting anything, there were always bits of left-over wool kept in a pillowcase for future use. I was delighted one day when she presented me with an orange and white horizontal striped swimming costume, which I proudly wore around the house.

As church goes, the highlight of our summer was the annual Sunday School outing to Barry Island, and I couldn't wait to get on that beach with my 4 ply tailor made creation. As soon as we arrived, I changed and ran down to the sea with my father, jumping over the breaking waves. It wasn't long until I floundered in the shallows and had to get out of the sea. Arguably the two most iconic moments of people emerging dripping from the ocean are Ursula Andress in Dr No and Daniel Craig in Casino Royale. I could have qualified for third. To my embarrassment as I stood up, I felt my swimming costume, now heavy with the weight of the waterlogged wool, slowly stretch downwards to my knees. From then on, my mother stuck to knitting winter woollies.

Housebound Hugs No 8 Handshakes and Kisses

Kay B

"I feel so sorry for the French." That's not a statement you will hear me say very often, but it's true at the moment.

You see, the French are one of the most tactile nations in Europe, shaking hands and kissing at every opportunity. You only have to watch a group of men greeting each other with handshakes only a couple of hours after having watched a football match together. Even teenage lads shake hands – *shake hands* – with fellow classmates outside the school gates every morning. You don't see that in Crickhowell or Abergavenny!

And what about those kisses? For over 30 years Jim and I have visited Abergavenny's twin town of Beaupréau in Western France, to be greeted by our many friends there with 4 kisses – left, right, left, right – the norm for the region. But woe betide anyone trying to give a haughty *Parisienne* 4 kisses – she will pull away with horror after only two, considering four to be extremely vulgar! If you're lucky enough to be in Brittany, expect a single peck on the cheek, but travel south to Provence, and you'll receive three smackers, often reeking of garlic!

Yes, the French custom of kissing is a minefield for the foreign visitor, so much so that tourism bodies have published numerous guides on the Internet showing what is *de rigueur* in which Département. But not now. Not today. Centuries-old traditions have been swept away by France's 1 metre self-distancing rule. *THAT'S* why I feel sorry for the French, and for myself, to tell the truth, because if or when we visit our friends again, I shall miss all those kisses.

Lockdown

Lynda O'K



More wit from American military manuals

Kay B

"Cluster bombing from B-52s is very, very accurate. The bombs are guaranteed always to hit the ground."

"A slipping gear could let your M302 grenade launcher fire when you least expect it. That would make you quite unpopular in what's left of your unit." Army's magazine of preventive maintenance.

"Five second fuses only last three seconds." Infantry Journal.

"Don't ever be the first, don't ever be the last, and don't ever volunteer." U S Navy.

"Any ship can be a minesweeper. Once." Unknown.

"Flashlights are tubular metal containers kept in a flight bag to store dead batteries."

"Flying the aeroplane is more important than radioing your plight to a person on the ground who is incapable of understanding or doing anything about it."

"You know the landing gear is up and locked when it takes full power to taxi to the terminal."

"You, you and you – panic. The rest of you come with me." U S Marine Gunnery Sgt.

"If your attack is going too well, you're walking into an ambush." Infantry Journal.

Fund raising

Lynda O'K

On Saturday 13th June, Anona and Steve Fitzgerald from Orchard Close held a fund-raising event to raise money for Tenovus Cancer Care, the Welsh cancer charity that supports cancer patients and their families. This has been very successful annual event for many years, and usually takes the form of a coffee morning. This year, with social distancing rules applied, the coffee and cake took a back seat, and Anona concentrated on selling plants and homemade marmalade from her front garden wall. There was also a wide range of her hand crafted greetings cards, innovatively displayed on the inside of her windows! A steady stream of visitors ensured a welcome donation of £340 for the charity.



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Greetings cards were in the window



Plants were on sale, all to raise funds.

Crickhowell gardens – pictures

Phillie H

How many Crickhowell scenes can you recognise? Click on the link below:

https://youtu.be/5QO0961Wn_I

Scouting stories

Pat H

I've been involved in Scouting for over 30 years, and in the early days I was Group Scout Leader, nominally an administrative role, but you have to get your hands dirty at times. Here are a few stories of the things the boys got up to:

My son's first Scout camp was a joint adventure with Abergavenny at a basic site on the Gower. When they returned, the main story that everyone wanted to tell was that James X had tripped over a full chemical toilet bucket whilst carrying it to the disposal point.

There was a Chief Scout's Challenge badge for older Scouts, similar to DofE 3-day hike. Our first team to try this managed pretty well with a route following the old railway for part of it. The only problem they mentioned, with wry grins, was that by the last meal, they were low on instant mash and it was really sloppy. The only way they could thicken it was with custard powder. At least it turned out to be less sloppy!

Our next team a few years later went from Pandy, across the mountains to Brecon, and finally along the canal to home. The Scout Leader and I took turns to meet them at the campsite and other points along the route. The weather was appalling for August, but they kept to the route and were determined to carry on. On the last day one of the parents was due to collect them from Llangattock, and he arrived at my house with the wet tents and some other gear to dry while they finished the last few miles. When everything was spread out in the garage, the only dry thing I found was a facecloth!

Hunting

Harriet H

I am conscious that in the pieces I write about my equine adventures, I talk a lot about hunting. I followed hounds throughout my childhood and adolescence, was terrified by it and sometimes got huge enjoyment. A local hunt was a hierarchical organisation in my day, so breaking the rules added to the fear. Now, I no longer fancy chasing animals to their death and being 'blooded' if you are in at the kill!

Llanelly Quarry

Tony Godfrey

The Susreus Route 46 passes at a high level of the remains of the extensive workings. Crushed and baked lime was produced here, as well as stone for the rail and canal.



This continues Tony Godfrey's paintings of scenes in times past and present around Gilwern.

Tony, a biochemist, was at Bangor University, worked for ICI Pharmaceuticals, ran a vinegar factory for Heinz, worked for a while for the Danish company of Novo, and was for some time a Government Adviser.

He has enjoyed his days of teaching the young to paint.

Another two good photographs from the Photographic Challenge



Pony Number three – part two

Harriet H

I was 8 or 9 when William Rufus was delivered from the market, traumatised and hungry. After a year, during which I sat in his field a lot, we managed to get a headcollar on him. Bright chestnut, nice looking, and with an uncertain temper, my father and I nonetheless 'broke him in' successfully. The first time I got anxiously onto his back was exciting and the start of a partnership.

Once, after I had been away, he took my skirt in his mouth and led me away as if to say 'don't leave me again', but he would flatten his ears and bare his teeth if my mother went near him – he knew she was frightened of him. The scary Scot who had taught me to ride Bambi better, helped me train Rufus to show-jump, and though he was erratic, sometimes refusing to perform at all, we did have some modest success against a few well-known names. I think we came third at the show pictured when I must have been 13. His reward was a glass of beer from the bar tent and he loved Mintos. Alas, I grew out of him and he had to be sold. I hope he liked his next owner. If he did not, he probably terrorised them.



Bodnant Garden

The Welsh Garden of Eden on the edge of the Snowdonia National Park, owned by the National Trust.

<https://youtu.be/TGC9p1pfZtE>

<p>7</p> 	<p>8</p> 	<p>Can you identify these? Answers will be in the next issue of The Unsocial Times.</p> <p>The two in the previous issue of The Unsocial Times were: 5. Ayers Rock 6. Angkor Wat</p>
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Cover up

Lynda O'K

We are being advised more and more to wear facemasks to prevent the spread of Covid19, and in some situations it is becoming compulsory. Disasters like the current pandemic always throw up opportunities for entrepreneurs, and over the last few months the production of snazzy facemasks has really taken off. Gone are the days of the plain blue number. Now we can buy any design we want.

With the reopening of non-essential shops, will we be tempted to venture out for a spree after months of lock down? What burning questions will be on everyone's lips? What's changed? Is anyone still trading? Is it safe? Can we travel more than five miles? Will the toilets be open? How long is the queue for Primark?

In order to survive, shops will have to adapt to the "new era of shopping". At the economy end will there be a "Primask" on every corner? Will we have "Masks and Spencer" where we can expect to have a discreet mask fitting service ensuring a snug fit that doesn't rise up with wear? Or will we go upmarket to "TK Mask" where designer masks for every shaped face will be found at everyday prices. Will "Fat Face" deal exclusively in vertically striped masks to slim down our faces, and for the heavy-duty mask will we still rely on "B and Queue"? The biggest question of all, however, when we get to the changing room has to be, "does my chin look big in this?"

Monthly Art Challenge

Lynda O'K

<p>Winner of Art Challenge for June 2020 David Hall was the winner of the Art Challenge for June 2020 with a painting entitled <i>Waterfall</i>. The judge, Chair of the Abergavenny Art Group, said: <i>"The moss laden branch and rocks are beautifully painted and the water reflects the sky and rock very well. Again the quiet, cool, minimal palette emphasise the natural beauty of the scene and also creates a tranquillity."</i></p> <p>"Flavours of Summer" is the chosen topic for the July Challenge. Details can be found on the News page of the web site. Do have a go!</p>	
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A One Liner puzzle in the previous issue of the newsletter

Hilary L

If Monopoly scores 15 and Cluedo scores 9, which board game scores 14?
The Answer is Scrabble. The numbers are the scrabble scores of the letters in the names.

Indoor Vertical Rainforest

Phillie H

A video of Monty Don being shown a remarkable indoor rain forest in Paris.
https://youtu.be/aYXGb_oMslk

Time Passing

Harriet H

It is a cliché that time speeds up as we age, but the way time has passed for me during the lockdown has been staggering. No doubt it has been exaggerated by the fact that while I have watched our garden develop daily, I have only seen the rest of the countryside outside Gilwern at widely spaced intervals during surreptitious visits to my daughter in Llanellen. Each time I have watched as the landscape has jumped from a faint greening, to the full, triumphant flush of May, and now to the abundance of summer.

I am shielded hence the tentative forays into the outside which have telescoped time and left me sniffing suspiciously for the signs of autumn. Like many others, I made plans at the start of the lockdown, to sort papers, file things and tidy my knicker drawer, but little inroad has been made. As I gallop towards winter I feel 'time's winged chariot' in hot pursuit, but will it be powerful enough to make me sort out that drawer?

Moustache and

Monogamouse

Mike J



A way through the woods

Lynda O'K

During lockdown, many of us have been exploring on foot the wonderful countryside that we are fortunate enough to have on our doorsteps. If, like us, you have stumbled on trees, plants, birds etc which you have wondered about, and you haven't brought your Reader's Digest Field guide for British trees, plants and birds, there are now easier ways to find the answers. Most of us will have taken mobile phones with us on our walks, and these can provide information at our fingertips. All phones are different, but generally speaking there are Apps on each phone, some of which are free to use, but you will be told if there is a charge. As I trawled through mine (there are hundreds), I found the Woodland Trust Tree ID App, PlantNET for identifying plants, Shroomify, for all your mushroom needs. There's the BirdNET App for recording and identifying bird song, and even Apps for telling you which insect has just bitten you. You can find out where you are, handy if you are in the middle of a field, and how many steps you have taken. You can read reviews about how good or bad the Apps are so that you can select ones that suit you.



Hopefully phone Apps can enhance your daily walks, and as the professional bush craft instructor Paul Kirtley's blog points out, you might get to "know your ash from your elbow!"
<http://paulkirtley.co.uk/2013/how-to-identify-an-ash-tree/>

Photograph

Karen H

Here is the third photograph by Karen in a series showing water through the woods and a mass of lovely wild garlic on the right.