



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service



Lockdown Newsletter Number 7 December 2020

Probably not many of us are sorry to see the back of 2020. It was certainly a year like no other, wasn't it? Even the war years (for those of us who can remember them), with their deprivations and worries, didn't prevent us from being with our family and friends, hugging each other, and experiencing the warmth and strength which companionship can bring. Loneliness and isolation, it seems, have become two of the most widespread and difficult-to-deal-with effects of the Covid pandemic, and sadly, it looks as if we are still at least months away from the ending of the restrictions which have kept us apart. Let's hope that the roll-out of the vaccination program will speed things up so we can adjust to whatever the 'new normal' may be.

As many of you will know, we had planned to begin our nurse appointments on January 5th but going into Tier 4 put paid to that! Rest assured that just as soon as government guidelines permit, we will get Upbeat up and running again. We are all looking forward to it!

I want to say how much I appreciate the many messages saying how much members have enjoyed these newsletters. It's good to know that they have fulfilled their objective of keeping people in touch and, here and there, raising a smile. You may remember that these have been funded largely by a grant made possible by Upbeat supporter and councillor, David Nettleton, to whom we are very grateful. However, that money has now been used up and so, to trim our costs, we are going to trial emailing the newsletters to all who have email addresses. If you don't have email, we will send you a paper copy by post as we have been doing since June's issue. Doing things this way will save a lot on postage and will also mean that we do not need to have as many copies printed which, of course, will economise further. The emailed files will be in PDF format so you will be able to print a copy quite easily if you wish. If you particularly want a paper copy, you can request one by calling Valerie or me on 01284 747238.

Best wishes to you all,

David

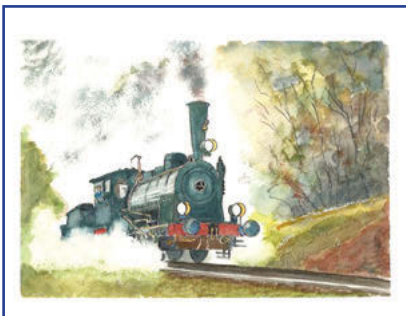
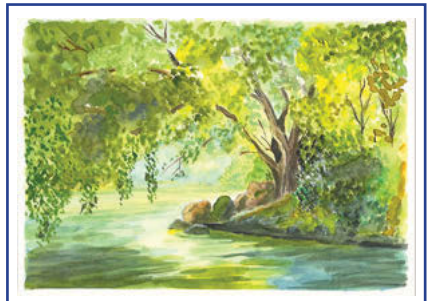
You can teach an old dog new tricks



Trevor Beckwith discovers a hidden talent

As Covid-19 struck, it all got a bit scary, particularly for us oldies who don't like too much disruption to routine. When we eventually got to lockdown, things really changed, with very little outdoor activity allowed. As a Suffolk county councillor and district councillor, my workload actually increased and has remained above normal ever since, possibly because it's even harder to get things done, with many staff deployed on virus-related duties.

Despite the extra work, there seemed to be a little more time for whatever recreation was allowed so I decided to do a bit of Googling re. watercolour painting. I always enjoyed drawing despite doing very little and managed even less painting, with the last effort being about forty-five years ago. My Googling discovered a lot of useful info on the equipment needed and how to use it. I hadn't realised there were so many ways to waste paper other than when reading council agendas. Eventually, I settled on an online supplier and set about ordering, sticking to my principle that buying the cheapest is usually false economy. A couple of hundred pounds later, I had artist-quality paint and brushes on order, along with a decent quality watercolour paper.



Back to Google to decide on what and how to paint. There's an amazing amount of choice with many and varied tutorials that, thanks to technology, are available at home whenever you choose. Maybe thanks to an aircraft engineering background, I've always been somewhat meticulous with detail and couldn't imagine I'd be someone who could cover the paper with water, then add paint with a big brush and let it do its own thing. I've since discovered that's how

most watercolour artists paint sea and sky so have surprisingly joined their ranks, completing around thirty masterpieces (!!!) including several with sea.



There has been steady improvement over the months, but the main achievement is respite from Covid and councils. Regarding the results, my family are very encouraging but it's likely they are being charitable. If I hadn't stopped all those years ago, might I have achieved a decent standard? I suppose so but, of course, we will never know. I suppose it does prove you can teach an old dog new tricks even if somewhat limited!



A few lines from Giles Washbourn to make you smile

What did the grape say when it got stepped on?
Nothing - but it let out a little whine.

What do you call a man with no arms and no legs, stuffed in your letterbox? Bill.

What do you call a super-articulate dinosaur? A Thesaurus.

Why aren't dogs good dancers? Because they have two left feet!

Somebody stole all my lamps... I couldn't be more de-lighted!

Why is the number six afraid of seven? Because seven ate nine.

What did one flag say to the other? Nothing, it just waved.

How was Rome split in two? With a pair of Caesars.

I bought a boat because it was for sail.

Being vegetarian was a huge missed-steak.

100 Club Winners 2020

November

1st Prize £100 No. 236 Mr.K Bannister
2nd Prize £27 No.103 Mrs Y Orbell

December

1st Prize £100 No. 180 Mrs. A Stevenson Smith
2nd Prize £27 No. 221 Mrs J Porter



Upbeat's Christmas Party

It had to be different this year so we partied via Zoom. The photo's aren't great as they were taken off the computer screen but maybe they bring back a few good memories. Thanks to Michelle for organising things.

Reflections on Times Past

by David Baldree

I enjoy the Upbeat coffee mornings on Zoom and recently the chit chat got onto rum. I recounted some frivolous stories about my experiences working in Jamaica on major construction projects for a few years in the early 1980s.



It is remarkable what we are able to do on Zoom and other platforms and I reflected on the communication limitations in my days of international travelling. I came across a company memo about a new machine that could send data down a telephone wire:

“Memo dated 21st July 1982 - Facsimile Telecopier

It is possible to send data (A4 size only) on the facsimile telecopier. This machine is situated in the switchboard room, for anyone wishing to send pages to any company with a compatible machine. To send: phone and ask the operator to connect to the machine. After a series of buzzes confirming that the machine is ready for use, the start button should be depressed”

Unfortunately, this was only available between head office, where I worked when not travelling, and the client's office in USA; we did not have a machine on site. Communication was by telex and DHL courier. The time difference was limiting on phoning for any technical help and of course there were no web browsers or You Tube for help, You were on your own! Contacting family was equally difficult, I wonder how young travellers would manage now without all the platforms available.

We had a big canvas communications bag so when returning to the office to sort out problems, which I did many times, I would take both company documents and personal letters to post. One time, at customs I was asked if I packed the bag and contents myself. Among the personal mail there was a jiffy bag which felt like it had loose powder in it! I feared the worst and almost expected not to see daylight again for a long while. As it turned out, a young engineer was sending Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee home to his mother!

Not learning from this experience, on the return trip I had an electrical multi-meter in my hand luggage. When this was detected at customs I was suddenly surrounded by several uniformed men and we all shuffled off like a pack of penguins!

I could go on forever so perhaps more next time.

FOUR DAYS IN HELL

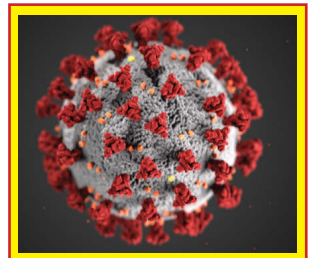
by John Dawkins

In September I was invited to take part in a Covid-19 survey organised by the Department for National Statistics. Selection was completely random, and it was possible for other members of the household to join. It seemed like a good idea, and so Anita and I both decided to take part.

After a few weeks we were contacted by telephone, and a pleasant middle-aged gentleman duly called several days later. He, standing outside, a good two metres away, took more of our details and instructed us on how to take our tests. We had previously watched a You Tube video, and so were fairly familiar with the process. It wasn't too unpleasant – we were told that “gagging is good” when doing the throat scrape. Indeed, the most awkward part was breaking the sampling stick in order to fit it into its tube.

The samples were then taken away; we were told that the results would take a few days and, in the unlikely event of our having tested positive, our GPs would also be notified. The second test should have been a week later, but turned out to be nearer three, and only after we had made contact ourselves to see if we had been forgotten. The caller this time was younger but equally pleasant and because there were fewer formalities the visit was briefer.

Another, different caller arrived for test three, this on Thursday, November 19th. Again, things went smoothly – apart from the gagging – and we went back to our careful, virtually-isolated lives. On Monday, 23rd November the telephone rang at lunchtime and the caller – a fairly hesitant woman – told me that I had tested positive for Corona virus. She had no news about Anita. I was stunned – we were stunned. We had been living such careful, isolated lives, visiting no-one and having almost no callers. I – most at risk because of age and coronary heart disease - have not been in a shop since March, and have hardly left the house because two arthritic hips make walking difficult. Anita has been almost as inactive. Furthermore, we had no symptoms. When we have needed to visit the surgery for medications or blood tests I have usually stayed in the car while Anita dealt with the transactions.



The only recent visitors were the plumber a few days before, and the electrician a week before him. We quickly contacted them, so that they

could get tested. Then began the agonising soul-searching. We found the Test and Trace website(s) impersonal and largely unhelpful: we wanted to speak to someone. Our surgery was strangely detached: "Ring 119."

The next few days were a nightmare! We simply could not believe, firstly, that I had had a positive test and Anita hadn't, and, secondly, that it was possible for either of us, given the care that we had taken, to have registered positive anyway. Help and advice in the first twenty-four hours or so seemed unavailable. In desperation I sought out the email address of Professor Walker who is leading this survey. Astonishingly, she replied in person the next day with some helpful advice, although the quoted figure of ~0.005 as their estimated false-positive rate - i.e. not very likely - was hardly cheering. We were getting desperate, imagining symptoms where none existed; our appetite disappeared, and sleeping was nearly impossible. The only cheer came from a couple of young women from 119 who telephoned to gather information and offer some assistance: "I can do that for you..."

Then, on Thursday, November 26th at about 5.00 pm I went to check my emails and found an email from Test and Trace to let me know that there had been a laboratory error, and my test sample was not positive after all. I have never been so relieved – as you can imagine. Suddenly, my life which I'd imagined was speeding to its conclusion, had been given back to me.

A second test which we had arranged independently was abandoned, and we set to to give the good news to those few friends and family who were suffering with us. This was not an episode I want to repeat, ever.

A Message from Our Treasurer

Membership renewal

Thank you very much to all who have returned your membership renewal forms. If you have not yet done so, please return them as soon as possible. Currently more than 250 members have yet to return their forms.

Donations

On behalf of the Upbeat committee, I would like to thank you for all the generous donations we have received during 2020. It has been most heartening and has been a lifeline for Upbeat.

Can I just remind members that, for the reasons I gave in our last newsletter, if possible we would prefer any payments to be made by BACS. The bank details are:

CAF Bank Sort Code 40-52-40 Upbeat Account Number 00009019

Hello from Hilary

As we begin the new year we can reflect upon what a strange time we have all been having over the last few months. I wonder how the history books will record how we have all managed to live through a global pandemic. It has been a frightening time, when we perhaps faced the possibility of our own mortality. We have sadly lost a few people this year, mostly with things other than Covid, but the consequences of Covid go far and wide. With hospital appointments delayed, no real-time doctors' appointments available etc., there is a knock-on effect with other illnesses. We send our love and condolences to all who have lost loved ones or have been affected by Covid or other illnesses in 2020.

We have been busy trying to maintain some sort of contact within the group. Many of you will have been bombarded with emails from me informing you of exercise sessions, coffee mornings, nurse mornings etc. Then notification of closing and then opening up again with the lockdowns.

We had hoped that by the time you get this newsletter, we would have been able to re-start our nurse mornings but with the region being placed in Tier 4, we are all very restricted and the advice from our lead nurse, Kate Turner, is that for the safety of everyone, it is better to wait before starting again. Let's hope it won't be too long before we can resume.

Fundraising has come to a standstill, but we are very grateful to all those who have sent donations to us. It really means such a lot. Funding from the Coronavirus Community Support Fund, distributed by the National Lottery Community Fund, has helped us to pay for the Zoom Exercise classes and Nurses' mornings. Thanks to the Government for making this possible. This was a six-month funding scheme, which will be coming to an end shortly.

Please be mindful that the 100 Club is a good way of helping Upbeat funds, and note the "ways to pay" which Valerie wrote about in her enclosure to November's newsletter. We want to avoid bank charges as much as we can.

The executive committee continue to meet and discuss when we can start classes again. Perhaps with the news of the vaccine, it might be possible soon.

Until then I wish you a better new year. PLEASE be careful how many people you mix with. We know it can get lonely but staying healthy is the most important thing at this time. We want a full complement of members coming back to us when we meet again.

Best wishes to all,

Hilaryx