



Edenbridge U3A July August 2020 Newsletter from your Chairman

Good morning all Edenbridge members. We are now in our fifth month of living with the effects of COVID-19. I still hope that I will wake up and realise that it has just been a horrible dream, but reality has kicked in and the truth is that our lives have probably changed forever. More about that later.

As a U3A member living on the outskirts of Oxted the large gas holder in the middle was always a key feature of the landscape of the town. Now a new structure is nearing completion and is beginning to dominate the skyline. The COVID pandemic did not stop the building company carrying on working on the *Courtyard Gardens* development that is going to be a mixture 1, 2- or 3-bedroom apartments ranging from £333,000 for a 1 bed up to £750,000 for a 3 bed. All the penthouse apartments are sold!!



So back to COVID. As you will be aware there is still a restriction on holding public meetings in an enclosed space – in other words we can't resume our monthly meetings. I don't know about you, but I really miss meeting you all every month and listening to an inspired talk from one of our guest speakers. At the moment I cannot see an early end to this restriction. Every night the news is giving us details of increases in COVID-19 cases on the continent. The shots of crowded beaches, bars and streets in this country does not inspire confidence – it seems that many of the general public don't really understand that the pandemic hasn't gone away – it is just waiting for opportunities to gain a stronghold in our population once more.

My first newsletter earlier this year mentioning COVID-19 was on the lines that it was a science fiction story that would quickly go away. Now we know that the nightmare has become a reality that has changed our lives in so many ways.

We are all trying to work out what the *new normal* is and, so far, I for one am still unsure what that it is or will be!

Before COVID-19 we witnessed people in the Far East wearing masks as a matter of course. Is this now to become our new **norm** that, if we travel anywhere, we will have to wear a mask to reduce the risk of picking up a virus or spreading it? COVID-19 has shown that it is possible to work from home – will we have a rush hour ever again? Without there being peak travel in the mornings and evenings, will there still be cheaper off-peak travel?

Shops are closing all over the country – is a large shopping centre a thing of the past to be replaced by internet purchases?

So many questions without obvious answers!

In our retirement many of us have enjoyed travelling to see other parts of the world. How will the cruise ship companies and the escorted tour holiday companies cope with the restrictions that COVID-19 is imposing on all travel? So for those of you who enjoy cruising what will be the '*new normal*' for going on a cruise? I will leave that to your imagination to come up with a new norm that will apply to this favoured holiday option for many.

If airlines are forced to introduce social distancing in the same way that restaurants and cafes have what will that do for the price of air fares?

Sorry if I appear to be downbeat on this issue but we are all in the category of being vulnerable by our age and therefore these issues to me are very real.

I feel I need to change the subject and think of the positive outcomes from this pandemic. How many of you have actually enjoyed the lockdown? By this I mean you have been able to/or have had the chance to tackle that list of jobs that you have put off previously because you have been so busy. Probably being retired we are more used to organising ourselves – this is witnessed by our willingness to run interest groups and be firm believers in lifelong learning – a key part of being a U3A member!

The weather has certainly helped, particularly if you love the outdoors and your garden. Personally, my garden and the chance to get out there since March, has kept me fairly sane. I cannot imagine what it would have been like to be in a flat with no access to an open space during lockdown.

But what a Spring and Summer we have had – super crops of fruit, flowers and vegetables. Mediterranean temperatures and long hours of sunshine. Countering that a bumper crop of aphids, green and blue bottles and wasps who have really benefited from the dry and warm conditions. On the positive side

my garden has been buzzing with large numbers of bumble and honeybees this year, so pollination has been really good.



*Bumble bee “digging deep”
into a French marigold flower*

The unusually hot weather has certainly had its benefits and for some plants the rain came at just the right time - have you been out to enjoy the superb blackberry crop this year? You will need a big basket! It could also be a good year for English wine and with four wine appreciation groups running I know there are a lot of wine drinkers in our U3A.



So, to summarise, for our U3A there is no immediate prospect of resuming our monthly meetings and those group meetings where we need to be in close contact. (*Zoom* online meetings are good for some groups but don't work for all.) We are all here just waiting for things to change so we can get together again – even if that means social distancing, masks and sanitising our meeting venue before and after every meeting. Enjoy this holiday period and I will get back to you as soon as I have some positive news.

So – stay safe, stay alert, respect social distancing and remember to have that facial mask handy in your bag or in your pocket

Best wishes

Mike Collins

Chairman

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