



Learn, laugh, live

# Dorking & District U3A Newsletter June 2020

## Chairman's address

It is with a heavy heart I write this, possibly the last Chairman's Letter from me, as I will be stepping aside from the post of Chairman with immediate effect. This was not an easy decision for me to make but due to the death of my father (95) from this awful virus and other issues in my personal life I do not feel able to continue at this time.

As of now Tony Parker has stepped up to the plate and will act as Interim Chairman until such time as a permanent replacement can be found or I can return to the post. The role of webmaster will continue to be held by me.

On a lighter note, in August the lease on my car finishes so the task of finding a replacement has begun. As Caroline and I will be doing a lot more travelling a more practical car is needed. An alternative was a Volvo estate which we had a look at. On enquiry the salesman informed us that there is a 26 week build time as the cars are now made in China to which I asked: "Does it come with antivirus software?". Who knows?

Stay safe and well and I will see you when the monthly meetings restart (hopefully soon).

*Bob Brown*

## Connecting with People

Welcome to the 100th edition of the Newsletter. Although not in its usual format, I hope it provides a continued point of contact with the D&D U3A and news about the extraordinary work that is carrying on behind the scenes in the different groups.

The **Natural World** group also met this month to discuss the migration of American warblers across the Gulf of Mexico, some of the most beautiful birds in the Northern Hemisphere.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e20qNjdcSUK>

But as you can see from this beautiful photo of a sparrowhawk taken by Elizabeth Holmes, no need to go too far to spot spectacular wildlife!

Language groups continue to meet regularly via Zoom and at the end of May, we started up a new **Chinese Language and Culture** group. Currently we have four members all studying basic Chinese online with EdX. But we would welcome more members, as we explore the history, traditions and art of the country. Contact: Beryl Sinclair on 01306 711542.

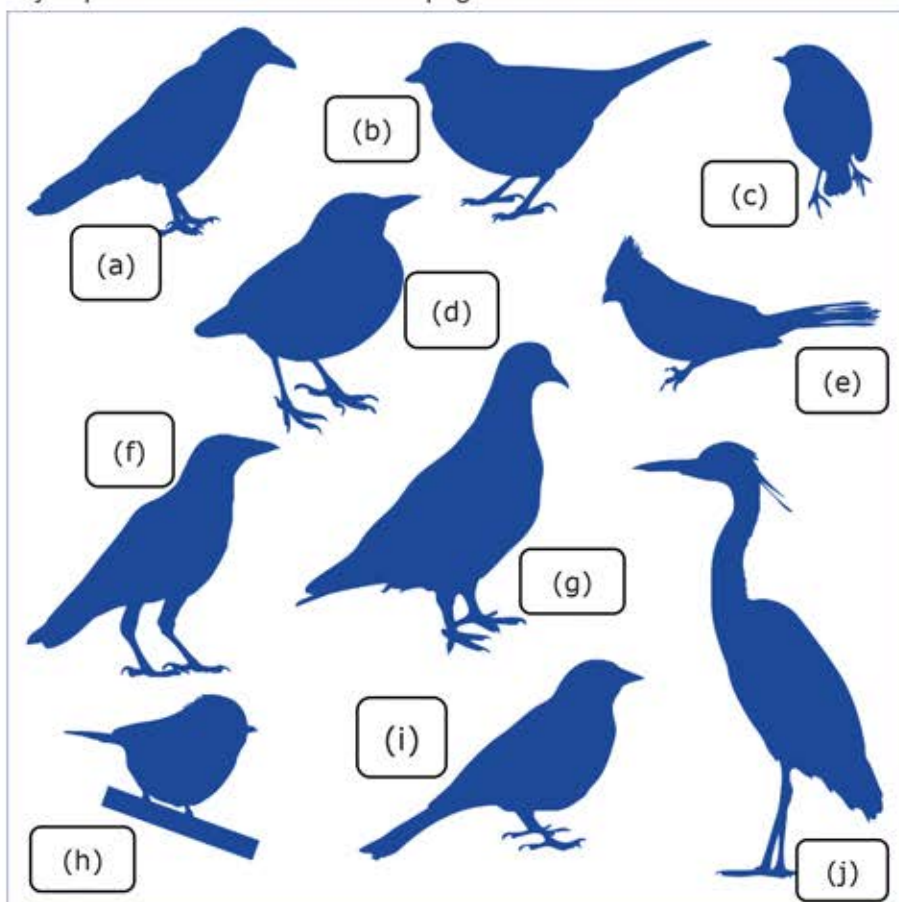




Deanne Rhodes updates us on the tremendous efforts of the quilting groups and other volunteers, who have now raised over £6,300 for BERT (Brockham Emergency Response Team).

"So far about 3,700 masks have been made. Shirley Fisher, who is not only our Treasurer at my WI, but also has a company called 'Made in Brockham', was the lady who instigated the whole idea of making face masks with various volunteers. At one stage she had over 30 volunteers but this has now reduced to 14 (including me) and they are distributed to the Strood Green shop, Betchworth Post Office, Chitty's the butchers in Brockham, Buckland Nursery and Rowlands Pharmacy in Brockham. Shirley was interviewed on Radio Surrey at the beginning of June, telling the audience about deciding to make face masks and found that there was a great deal of interest in this idea and things have simply moved from there. She supplies us with tape, elastic and material too if we don't have any we can use of our own."

**Natural World Quiz – bird silhouettes** : test your knowledge of our feathered friends. How many of the following birds can you put a name to? Answers on page 5 of the Newsletter.





## D&D Monthly Meeting – The Man who Sank Titanic

For many Zoom can be somewhat tricky but it is gratifying that on 10<sup>th</sup> June over 80 members were able to tune in to Sally Nilsson's talk about her ancestor Robert Hichens and his role in the Titanic disaster.

Sally is the great-grand daughter of Robert Hichens, the sailor tasked with steering RMS Titanic away from an iceberg and she spent many years researching her ancestor's life and the true role he played in Titanic's tragic journey in April 1912.

Born in Cornwall, Robert followed in his father's and grandfather's footsteps and worked as a fisherman in his early life but soon decided that a fisherman's life was not for him. In 1906, he joined the Royal Navy Reserves, rising to the grade of Able Seaman and came onto the Titanic as Quartermaster with 12 years of experience steering large vessels at sea.



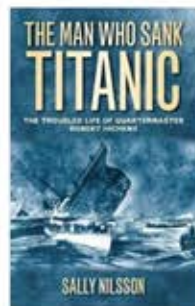
Titanic was to be the jewel in the White Star Line crown with hundreds of people engaged to kit it out with fine furnishings, crockery and linen among other things. But this was a ship dogged by bad luck from the moment it set sail, almost wrecking one of the ships that would accompany it out into the Channel.

Although weather conditions were set fair it was forecast that the situation would be dangerous and unpredictable off the edge of Greenland. Four days into the voyage, ice was spotted but with no one on deck and following orders from Captain Smith and 2nd Officer Charles Lightoller, Hichens steered the ship away too late from the iceberg that ultimately sunk it.

With five bulkheads flooded and weakened by a fire that had occurred prior to Titanic's sailing, the liner took under three hours to sink. Ship's owner Thomas Bruce Ismay is blamed for many errors that will have aggravated the tragedy but not least for reducing the number of lifeboats from 48 to 20 with a capacity of only 65 people each.

Hichens was put in charge of Lifeboat 6 and was vilified as a coward and a bully after the disaster due to his fierce argument with American socialite and philanthropist Margaret 'Mollie' Brown who threatened with having him thrown overboard. Yet third class passenger Bertha Mulvihill actually remembers Hichens giving her a life jacket and during the US inquiry into the disaster, he denied accounts by passengers and the crew in lifeboat 6, admitting that his primary concern was suction from the Titanic. As they were a mile away from the wreck, in complete darkness and without a compass, they had no way of returning to the stricken vessel.

Hichens was paid off by White Star Line to toe the company line during the inquiries and sent to South Africa for two years to hush up what had happened on the ship. He served with the Army Service Corps during WWI and by 1919 he was Third Officer on a small ship named Magpie. The Hichens family moved to Devon sometime in the 1920s where Robert purchased a motorboat from a man named Harry Henley and operated a boat charter. In 1933, Hichens was jailed for attempting to murder Henley, blaming him for ruining his life, and was released in 1937. Ultimately, his wife Florence and children left him and moved to Southampton, where Florence died of a brain tumour in 1941. Robert died in 1940 of heart failure on board another ship but it was not until 2012 that a memorial headstone was unveiled to commemorate his hitherto unmarked grave. Sally's popular book *The Man Who Sank Titanic* was published in 2011.



[The Man Who Sank Titanic talk](#)

### A date for your diary:

On 8<sup>th</sup> July we will be hosting another Monthly Meeting on *Time and Calendars* by Steven Tonkin and hope to see you there. And we welcome hearing from any member who would like to contribute to our Monthly Meetings schedule.

## Famous Ships

Y	N	G	T	F	E	R	U	O	V	A	E	D	N	E	T	F
M	O	S	D	R	C	O	O	N	C	E	L	G	A	E	B	O
X	I	J	V	O	N	G	O	L	D	E	N	H	I	N	D	R
L	T	A	U	I	A	E	H	L	U	A	S	M	H	B	A	B
Z	U	B	A	R	R	X	D	N	H	D	X	X	D	M	B	C
K	T	F	A	R	U	K	A	I	N	A	T	I	S	U	L	M
O	I	Z	D	A	D	S	Z	O	B	X	C	U	X	R	T	N
R	T	J	T	W	N	O	A	K	P	G	A	B	R	I	E	L
Q	S	C	N	W	E	V	S	N	C	G	Z	Z	S	M	B	X
S	N	W	Y	O	M	Q	Q	P	T	R	Y	L	X	X	K	Q
U	O	X	R	B	B	R	I	F	Y	A	A	T	C	K	B	X
P	C	R	O	N	N	L	R	P	O	L	M	M	N	G	B	Z
U	S	Q	T	I	O	Q	C	D	Y	A	A	A	S	U	M	D
H	E	K	C	A	R	Z	X	J	G	E	E	C	R	I	O	N
E	N	O	I	R	J	Y	C	F	J	F	R	M	K	I	B	B
V	U	G	V	S	D	G	P	O	P	I	L	L	O	L	A	Z
L	O	R	V	B	J	J	X	N	P	W	E	A	W	R	K	L

1. This ship was subject to the mutiny led by Fletcher Christian against the captain, William Bligh.

2. Ship made famous by Charles Darwin.

3. Best known for its global circumnavigation between 1577 and 1580, captained by Sir Francis Drake.

4. A ship that oceanography researcher Jacques-Yves Cousteau equipped as a mobile laboratory for field exploration.

5. The ship that Captain James Cook commanded on his voyage to Australia and New Zealand.

6. The flagship of Vasco da Gama's armada on his first voyage to India in 1497-1499.

7. Name of Greenpeace flagship which sank in 1985.

8. Also known as 'Old Ironsides', it is the oldest warship still in commission afloat. Widely cited as the most famous U.S. warship of all time.
9. Three-masted barquentine in which Sir Ernest Shackleton sailed for the Antarctic on the 1914-1917 Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition. She was crushed by pack ice and sank in the Weddell Sea off Antarctica.
10. One of the most famous WWII warships, named after a German chancellor, this ship was ordered to be sunk by Churchill.
11. Lord Nelson's flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar and the oldest warship still in commission.
12. Cunard ocean liner torpedoed by German U-boat in May 1915 during WWI.
13. Christopher Columbus sailed in her in 1492.
14. Ship made famous in Shirley Temple song in 1934 movie *Bright Eyes*.

<http://triviabug.com/list-quizzes/all-quizzes/>



## Learn the Ropes and Bottoms Up!

And keeping up a nautical theme, whilst watching episode of Countdown recently, the origins of the expression “bottoms up” was discussed.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as the British navy needed men, they would pay the young, aimless folk a shilling or two if they agreed to become sailors. By accepting the money, they showed that they were willing to serve the navy. However, not many young people were happy to join so recruiters would drop a shilling into the beer mugs of young tippy men. The unsuspecting drinkers would not realise they had accepted the coin until they had finished their beer. To put an end to this practice, pub owners who were losing clients, introduced clear glasses or tankards with clear ‘bottoms’ which allowed drinkers to see through the mug for a shilling and they even went to the length of reminding the drinkers to watch out for a potential bribe by calling out “bottoms up!”

Not surprisingly, the origin of the idiom “learn the ropes” is also nautical. New recruits had to learn how to tie knots and manipulate the ropes that controlled the sails to capture wind most effectively; this series of lessons was termed “learning the ropes.”



For an entertaining and informative read, I can certainly recommend the series of books by **Caroline Taggart** (*Kicking the Bucket at the Drop of a Hat*) which explore the meaning and origins of many popular expressions.

### Suggested Reading

Local author and historian Rupert Matthews is kindly making available to U3A members pdf versions of his books **The Lost Tomb of King Arthur** and **Lancelot – The Truth Behind the Legend**. Both books are eminently readable and beautifully illustrated. Rupert Matthews will be one of our Monthly Meeting speakers later this year. Please contact Beryl Sinclair for more information.

#### Lancelot – The Truth Behind the Legend

Sir Lancelot, charismatic and heroic knight of the Round Table, is arguably the finest and the worst of the Arthurian knights. Legendary champion of the Round Table, Lancelot is also the reason of its destruction. The author explores the background of this complex and flawed hero and the myths that surround him.

#### The Lost Tomb of King Arthur

In 1190 monks at Glastonbury Abbey claimed that they had found the tomb of King Arthur. The discovery was subsequently dismissed as a hoax put about by monks hungry for the money that would come from pilgrims. But was it a hoax? If Arthur was not buried in Glastonbury, where was he buried? In this book Rupert Matthews assesses how likely it was that Arthur would have been buried at Glastonbury, the motives of those involved in the discovery and takes a long, cold look at the evidence. The conclusions he comes to are quite startling.

### Answers to Quizzes

**Bird silhouettes:** (a) crow; (b) chaffinch; (c) robin; (d) thrush; (e) cockatoo; (f) raven; (g) pigeon / dove; (h) blue tit; (i) blackbird; (j) heron. (Editorial note: there is room for doubt!)

**Famous ships:** (1) Bounty; (2) Beagle; (3) Golden Hind; (4) Calypso; (5) Endeavour; (6) Gabriel; (7) Rainbow Warrior; (8) Constitution; (9) Endurance; (10) Bismarck; (11) Victory; (12) Lusitania; (13) Santa Maria; (14) Lollipop.

## Little joys of Lockdown ... and online shopping!

I suppose it begins on a Monday morning really. After breakfast, you survey the few remaining items in the fridge, then check the vegetable locker. Then you sit down with a blank sheet of paper and draw up a menu for the week, well for the week's dinners really. Easiest to start at the end as the last meal is always 'leftovers!' For inspiration you have the pile of menus from the last few weeks. What to avoid, what to repeat, but not too often. No worries about when to eat out but occasionally there might be a takeaway. Not this week though.



Then you translate the menu into a shopping list, adding in some little treats if you can think of them in time, and trying not to forget 'basics.' Dishwasher powder? Toilet cleaner? Paper (there's a huge choice now?) Or cereal bars for outings?

Phone calls to friends and family follow. Who needs what added to my order? Now it's off to do battle with the website, amending the dummy order you placed three weeks ago. Did I really order Champagne? What if I 'forget' to delete it? At last you

get to 'Checkout', braving the 'Forgotten Favourites' along the way. Then you wait.

Wednesday morning is like Christmas. First there is expectation. You check your email, trying not to be too hopeful. What is unavailable? What has somebody thought a suitable substitute? Then, between the appointed hours, you keep a quiet lookout for the sleigh, waiting for the jingle of sleigh-bells at the door. At last, you hear it, or maybe only footsteps in the porch, but you rush to open the door and there's Santa with an array of bags of goodies, and a beaming smile. You have no mince-pies or glass of sherry to offer, but he beams with delight at the crispy note you hold out. Now it's into the kitchen to root through the bags of presents, trips to the freezer, the now bulging fridge and the Vegetable locker. And then rush back to the computer to book another dummy order for three weeks' time. Perhaps I'll skip the Champagne this time, but I've just noticed I forgot to order coffee....



*Geoff Saunders*

**In these uncertain times  
we know you might feel unsure...  
But flowers still grow, birds still sing  
and waves still sweep the shore.  
And with the rising  
and setting of the sun,  
Nature reminds us all  
that brighter days will come.**

*(Copyright National Trust)*



***Setting sun over the Pyrenees  
(copyright Beryl Sinclair)***