CORONAVIRUS - COVID19

Information and support for Westcombe Park Residents

SAFE SHOPPING PRACTICES

We are hopeful that panic buying will reduce as shoppers see shelves being re-stocked. However all we need to buy is what we need. Take care to follow Government guidelines for Social Distancing when out and about.

This is a challenge when using small shops particularly Food Shops and Pharmacies and you may feel safer by queuing outside the shop and encouraging others to do likewise. This will ensure that shopping is safer for us all. If food shopping is your preferred way this encourages the spread of the virus we will never beat it.

Also please consider others and shop staff when handling goods. Handling is inevitable when shopping but please make sure you keep as many items on your basket and that your hands are clean. Please consider gloves. We hope this can be a feature for the future.

Always wash your hands on return and always after handling cash.

FANZON E EURO2020

Postponed to 11th June – 11th July 2021

S o… no FanZone this year and Planning Permission will need to be re-sought for the delayed event together with another Licensing Application.

The Licensing sub-committee had approved the premises application for this year’s event with a number of conditions. These include, sales of alcohol limited to noon to 9.30pm for up to 12 Match days and eight Community Days. In actuality site opening times are normally later than this on Match days except when pre-match entertainment is planned. However we all need to buy what we need. Take care to follow Government guidelines for Social Distancing when out and about.

This is a challenge when using small shops particularly Food Shops and Pharmacies and you may feel safer by queuing outside the shop and encouraging others to do likewise. This will ensure that shopping is safer for us all. If food shopping is your preferred way this encourages the spread of the virus we will never beat it.

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Always wash your hands on return and always after handling cash.

Please practice Social Distancing at all times

THE WESTCOMBE SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday May 15th at 7.30 pm
Vanbrugh Park
Your chance to hear what we have been doing and to elect a new committee.
Guest speaker: Lynne Dixon
Wine & Nibbles
Nominations for new members of the committee needed.
Members only – but new members can join on the night!

Please Check in the May Issue of the Westcombe News in Case this Meeting has been Cancelled.

CoronaVirus

Westcombe News
Free to 3800 homes, in libraries and some shops
April 2020 No. 2

‘You Never Know How Strong You Are Until Being Strong Is The Only Choice You Have’

We are living in worrying times. Most of us have never experienced anything of this extent before. Living in a beautiful part of London, as we do, the daily news reminds us of the impact the current pandemic is having on the world. But its effects and the actions that are being recommended to mitigate these could be severe for some people.

The Westcombe Society has always nurtured a strong sense of community and I feel sure that our members will be looking out for folk close by especially the elderly and vulnerable and will be responding to their needs whenever possible.

We rely on our members to support us in many ways. They are behind in our efforts to improve local travel facilities, to scrutinise planning and environmental matters and to pursue local issues with the relevant bodies including the Council. Our members help by becoming photographers, reporters and deliverers for the Westcombe News. They help at our social events and assist in raising funds for local charities.

So… when it came to volunteering to support those Westcombe Park residents in need during the ongoing pandemic we knew we could rely on them…. read on to see how.

Many of us will become more house-bound over the coming days and weeks. I know many of you will have friends and neighbours willing to help at this difficult time. But for those of you in Westcombe Park who do not, we now have a team of volunteers who are prepared to support those who are unable to leave their homes. We can offer to collect food, toiletries and medicines (the address and birth date is needed to do this collection). We can also be a friendly voice on the end of the phone.

Should you need help please email info@westcombesociety.org.uk or phone or text 07908 400555 between 9am and 9pm with the type of help you need to provide to them together with your address and a contact number. A volunteer will get in touch with you to take details and offer support.

In the event that we are overwhelmed with requests, help is also being offered by:
St Johns Church (020 8305 0520) or email care@stjohnsblackheath.org.uk
St Georges Church (020 3633 5494) or email tim@stgeorgeswestcombepark.org.uk

Other options:
We are aware that the on-line services offered by many Grocery Stores are under considerable pressure, with long timescales for delivery, but we hope this will improve.

N&R News (0208 858 5163) in Old Dover Road will take telephone orders in the morning for later delivery. pravin Supermarket (0208 858 2623) at the top of Westcombe Hill will also take telephone orders in the morning for later delivery. Sparks Butchers (020 8355 8597) and Apple and Orange (07946475462) will take telephone orders for collection.

Please bear in mind that stocks may be low from time to time and choice limited.

Another option is Milk and More your local Milkman http://www.milkandmore.co.uk
They also have a wide range of items for home delivery but at the moment are not accepting new customers.

Note: Most of our volunteers are members of the Westcombe Society and can only be reached by emailing us or using the number above. We are not knocking on doors or leafletting but we are reaching out to the whole of the Westcombe Park Community.

Do heed Government Health advice and take care.

Thank you.
Marilyn (Little)
Chair, Westcombe Society

Volunteers

If you have an interest in helping us in any of the above ways or in becoming a member do get in touch with us at info@westcombesociety.org.uk

Nominations for new members of the Council needed.

Members only – but new members can join on the night!

Please Check in the May Issue of the Westcombe News in Case this Meeting has been Cancelled.

Conratulations to Scott O’Connor, Terry Pullen, Paul George and the rest of the team of our local friend Charnie who have won the Greenwich Business Award for Health and Wellbeing; their work for the young people (and others) of Greenwich is amazing.

Vera O’Brien

Some residents may not be aware of the special life member of the Westcombe Society, passed away after a short illness, just after March’s WN came out. Despite her age Vera lived a very independent and active life and was very much part of the St George’s community. She will be much missed.

The funeral will be held on the 2nd April (at St George’s) and afterwards at the Nevyrbridge Club on Charlton Road. The WN offers deepest condolences to her family.

(Obituary: on Community page)

After the horse has bolted…. it’s not much good locking the stable door. In a powerful letter to Lloyd Gossman, Chairman of the Trustees of the Royal Parks, a local resident argued strongly against the Fanzone proposals. Unfortunately, this letter was sent after detailed consultations with local groups who had taken place – and after planning permission was granted.

Campainers point out that this undermines the importance of making one’s voice heard in a timely way if one wants to influence events.

Let them eat chocolate

The Belgian outgoing chair of the Council has come in for a similar annual award.

The council has increased the Council Tax by 3.99%.

Council Tax

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The 75th anniversary of the UNO is marked by presenting a special award to those members of the security council whose speeches were shortest: South Africa, the US, China, France and Estonia. The reward: large bags of Belgian chocolates. The Westcombe Society is thinking of initiating a similar annual award.

Greenwich Council’s Civic Awards

This annual event took place on 10th March. Among those on the receiving end was Neville Grant, who received a “Lifetime Achievement Award.”

Civic Council

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Curfew

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THE WESTCOMBE SOCIETY AGM 2020

7.30pm on Friday 18th May 2020
in the Wiltstocnecraft Room,
Blackheath High School for Girls
Order of Business
1. Welcome and apologies for absence
2. Approval of, or matters arising from, Minutes of 2019 AGM
3. Reports from the Chair,
   • Events Sub-Committee,
   • Environment Sub-Committee,
   • Membership Secretary,
   • Editor of the Westcombe News
4. Treasurer’s Report and presentation of audited statement of accounts the year ending 31/03/2020
5. Election of Officers
6. Charity of the year 2020-21
7. A.O.B.
8. Guest speaker: Lynne Dixon
Subject: John Julius Angerstein and Woodlands. We will learn more about this fascinating person, his family and his links with Westcombe Park.

NOTICE FROM ST GEORGE’S CHURCH

In light of the Government guidance and non-essential contact during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have issued advice that public worship is suspended until further notice.

Therefore there will be NO church serv-
ices at St George’s contact until further notice. All other group activities which take place at the church are suspended as well.

Please check the St George’s website for updates and resources to encourage you in this time of challenge. We will also be posting times when the church will be open for private prayer. If you have need of pastoral help or need any further information, please contact Rev Tim Yeager, Team Vicar.

St George’s website: www.stgeorgewestcombe.org.uk
Rev. Tim Yeager: 020 3363 5494 or tim@stgeorgewestcombe.org.uk

VOLUNTARY WORK FROM HOME

Do you have a couple of hours free a week? You could be doing something from home, doing some desk research, making some calls, sending press releases or designing great leaflets. You could be joining sessions making art for an action, passing out flyers, being a smiley face at a community event, planting seedlings, putting posters up in your local shop.

Get in touch with Karen there’s lots to do and we will make it fun. Extinction Rebellion Greenwich Plummestead Common Road London, London SE10

W O O D L A N D S . W e w i l l l e a r n m o r e a b o u t t h i s

5. Election of Officers

in the Wollstonecraft Room, making art for an action, handing out something for the WN? Stories, poems, feature articles on people or of a place of local interest – even angry letters to the editor, all grist to our mill!
- Neville Grant

BE KIND, BE SENSIBLY, THINK OF OTHERS' NEEDS AS YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR OWN

Views expressed are not necessarily those of either the Westcombe Society, or the Westcombe News.

Vera Blanche O’Brien 1924-2020

U ntil February, Westcombe Park lost one of its most outstanding, unforgettable citizens, Vera O’Brien who died peacefully at Lewisham Hospital after a brief illness.

Born at the Hospital for Mothers and Babies in Woolwich in 1924, she grew up in the suburb of Bow, the daughter of Ethel and Albert Deville. In 1947 she married Roger O’Brien, who predeceased her in 2005.

She worked for 30 years as a secretary at Bredingtthorpe School in Peckham, retiring in 1984 after nearly 50 years, she served as a leader in the Girl Guides, running the 2nd Greenwich East Girl Guide troop, promoting 18 Queen’s guides. For years after that, she worked at St George’s Church on Sunday, just to say hello to their beloved “Mrs. O.”

Vera is also known for the huge amount of work she did raising money for Christian Aid. Even up to her 93rd year, she could be seen unloading trolleys of the hills of Westcombe Park, collecting donations.

She helped with children’s reading at Kimum, with Messy Church at St James and Church Christ, was a governor at Christ Church School, churchwarden at St George’s, fully immersed in Sunday school, choir, jumble sales, concerts, quizzes, handing out water bottles at the Marathon... and a regular deliverer of the Westcombe News. Rev. Tim Yeager calls Vera ‘the heart and soul of St George’s’, and will be dearly missed by all.

Two days after Vera died, her family received notice from the Royal Borough of Greenwich that she had been awarded a Civic Award for Lifetime Achievement. The award will presented posthumously to the family.

In view of the Covid-19 epidemic, and in order to protect all those who would want to attend, the family is organizing a Memorial service for Vera, to be held later in the year when the danger of the virus has abated. It will be at St George’s Church, followed by a wake at the Blackheath Newbridge Social Club. Further announcements will be made as soon as a date can be determined, and all will be welcome to attend. Donations in Vera’s honour may be made to Christian Aid. https://www.christianaid.org.uk

Vera is survived by three children, four grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Westcombe News April 2020

W E S T C O M B E  B E S T W E S T

All editorial correspondence to:
Anne Williams, Editor
anne@westcombe-society.org
All material to be sent to:
wnews@westcombe-society.org
Deadline for the April issue: 16th April 2020
Advertising closing date: 10th April

Environment editor: Maggie Gravelle
Sub-editor: Annie Grey
Editorial Team
Polly Morgan, Anastasia Panov

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Emily Norton - All queries and comments to: 020 8853 2756
environment@westcombe-society.org

DISTRIBUTION
Emily Norton and volunteers. More voluntary distributors needed, please phone 020 8853 2756

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Gavin Hose, 26 Webb Road, SE3 7PL
All enquiries please to:
Advertising@westcombe-society.org

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Chairman: Marilyn Little Tel: 020 8853 1312
The views expressed in the Westcombe News are not necessarily those of the Westcombe Society or of the Editor. We take all reasonable precautions to protect the interests of our readers by ensuring as far as possible the bona fides of our advertisers but cannot accept any responsibility for them. Any complaints should be addressed to the advertisers.
To access back numbers (in colour) go to: www.westcombe-society.org/west-
combe-news/ Westcombe Society’s Blog:
http://westcombe.blogspot.com
Front page quote by - Bob Marley

Please send this membership form to:
Christina Legg, 69 Mycenae Road,
London, SE3 7SE.

Membership cards A membership card is only issued at the time you join the Westcombe Society, and should be retained.
Should you require a replacement card, please contact The Westcombe Society Secretaries in hostel.

Letters
Alex McWhirter
Just wanted to thank you for alerting readers to the planned refuse collection changes in the March issue.

Myself and family were completely unawares that changes were being proposed.

One wonders how many of the Borough’s residents are also unawares.

From Sue Gay
Humber Road

When I first came to Blackheath 50 years ago I joined the Westcombe Society for the baby club and chocs.

There was also a Hospital Visiting Group who took elderly people to go and see their friends and relatives in hospital.

I was wondering if we couldn’t organise a similar thing now to deliver shopping etc to people who may be isolated due to the coronavirus in the coming weeks. I know lots of us do go on line delivery but many people can’t or haven’t got a computer.

I’m sure we could get lots of volunteers (see front page - ed.)

From Mandy & Peter SE3
Dear Westcombe News
You may be interested to know as a footnote to the interesting article ‘Winter Gardens For Sale’ in the March issue of WN, in Col. J.T. North’s Cherry Hill House, Ethelham, had a son, a Arthur Jewell North who played rugby for Blackheath and is named on their World War 1 Memorial Board at the War Cemetery. Captain North of the 44th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers was fatally wounded Striking an action on a strong position and died the next September 27th 1919, just three days before his 35th birthday and a month after he had taken it over from his father. He was awarded the Military Cross, the citation for which appeared in The London Gazette 2nd January 1919. It states “Captain Arthur Jewell North, 44th Battalion attached to 12th/33th Battalion. For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. This officer led his company in the attack on enemy trench only forty yards across, capturing 70 prisoners and four machine guns. His leading contributed greatly to the successful issue.”

From Neville Grant, Stratford Rd
On our arrival at Guwathi nothing for sale. Not a single question even. Not a leaflet giving basic advice. I heard that a plane load of Indians from virus-struck Tafihra was unas-

WEBCOMBE SOCIETY/WESTCOTME NEWS

Published by the Westcombe Society
Chairman: Marilyn Little Tel: 020 8853 1312

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http://westcombe.blogspot.com
Front page quote by - Bob Marley

Please send this membership form to:
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London, SE3 7SE.

Name: __________________________
Address: ________________________
______________________________
______________________________
Tel:_____________________________
Email:__________________________

Please enclose payment as appropriate:
Family Membership £ 12 [ ]
Individual Membership £ 8 [ ]
Senior Citizens/unwaged £ 4 [ ]

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RECYCLING/DISPOSING OF PAINT

Westcombe News has recently featured several articles on Recycling and Waste disposal but so far we have not been able to advise on how to safely get rid of spare and old paint. Carol Duxel, Waste and Streets Advisor for the Council has sent us the following information:

Water based paints (emulsion) can be disposed of in cardboard or plastic boxes unless they have been opened. All cans/bottles need to be boxed up in cardboard or plastic before pick-up. All cans/bottles need to be boxed up in cardboard or plastic before pick-up. All cans/bottles need to be boxed up in cardboard or plastic before pick-up. All cans/bottles need to be boxed up in cardboard or plastic before pick-up.


don't be duped....

B ELOW is a list to help you tonoon and avoid these scams. Be on your guard, not your board - anywhere that reminds you, in these times of self-isolation and perhaps the boredom and loneliness that comes with it, not to be duped by a smooth talking operator!

- Police scam - you may receive a call from someone claiming to be a police officer or detective who convinces you to withdraw funds and hand them over to an investigator. They may give you a fake crime number and investigation details. They also convince you not to trust bank staff. In some cases, people are asked to call 999 or 101 to verify the call is genuine but the scammers keep the line open, so you are actually talking to them.

- Amazon Prime scam - you may get a call from someone claiming to be from Amazon Prime saying you’ve been charged for a subscription service. They say that you have failed to cancel an account and ask you to authorise payment, but it can be cancelled if you press 1 and then give access to your bank account information to undo the hack. Amazon Prime would never ask you to do this.

- Scam star - someone may claim to be from your bank saying there’s a problem with your card. They ask for your account, card and PIN details. They may also advise transferring your money to a “safe” account to protect it. A bank would never ask you to do this.

- HMRC scam - you may receive a call from someone claiming to be from HMRC saying there is an issue with your tax refund or an unpaid tax bill. They leave a message asking you to call back. HMRC would never contact you in this way and will not ask for personal information or bank details.

- Compensation scam - you may receive a call to tell you that you are due compensation for a vehicle/work accident, and you are then asked to provide personal details and/or pay an administration fee.

- Computer repair scam - an old one, but still very popular. Someone calls claiming to be from a well-known IT firm such as Microsoft to tell you your computer has a virus. They will ask you to download anti-virus software which may cost but also turns out to be used to track your personal details. IT companies don’t contact customers this way.


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When asked what his secret was in transforming the ailing venue he said: “I used techniques used in the arts world to turn the venue around – simple things, like producing a ‘what’s on’ brochure of our events similar to an arts or theatre brochure.”

Mark’s background in the music business has created something wonderful at Mycenae House, in that the venue is now infused with very popular live music all week round and hosts many community choirs. He added humbly, “The music they can reinvest into the business. They are a registered charity with a very active Board.

Highlights of Mark’s tenure at the venue, include, when he realised they were ‘doing something different, but successful,’ than other community enterprises, when they hosted live music from famous guitarist Clive Carroll, which resulted in a ‘spectacular concert,’ that led Clive to recommend the venue to his musician friends.

Another highlight of Mark’s time at Mycenae House, has been the very successful community projects they have launched such as Mycenae Soup, based on ‘Detroit Soup,’ in the USA, which became a fundraising dinner raising vital funds for important local, grassroots causes.

Another community highlight has been the successful launch of their ‘Reach Out’ programme. After making a profit one year, Mark convinced the board to reinvest in the successful launch of their ‘Reach Out’ programme. After making a profit one year, Mark convinced the board to reinvest in the successful launch of their ‘Reach Out’ programme. After making a profit one year, Mark convinced the board to reinvest in the successful launch of their ‘Reach Out’ programme.

The project has now been established for over two years and is managed by Deborah Fitzpatrick, their Community Project Outreach Co-ordinator.

Another successful project is the wonderful art from local contributors that adorns the venue’s walls, crafts made by local sellers and local photographers showcasing their work.

Mark sums up what Mycenae House means to many people and said: “We strive to serve the community, to help and embrace people and to support their development”.

When asked how important community still is to Londoners and British people in this fast-paced, digitally isolated world, he responded: “Change is inevitable, but we have to respond to that change. The world has changed. We also host many more rooms for the counselling services than we used to which shows the effects of this new world. We need to change with the world and still be a space that brings people together, as people have told us how important that still is to them.”

Future exciting plans for Mycenae House, include expanding the enterprise, as well as funding a new outdoor, wooden ‘making space’ for arts and craft. And, to continue striving for excellence in all their activities.

Mark concluded: “There’s something unique about this area and the people that I have grown to love.”

In these tricky times, there is little doubt that under Mark’s vibrant guidance, Mycenae House will continue to flourish. He said: “With the coronavirus dominating world news at present, even if schools and workplaces shut, Mycenae House will be one of the last venues’ open, offering the community a cup of tea, shelter and support.”

http://www.mycenae.co.uk/ COVID-19 UPDATE

Mycenae House is open at present but running with a greatly reduced programme, due to the situation with the Coronavirus. Please check with each group leader before attending as the session might be cancelled.

But their aim is to continue serving the community, while keeping everyone as safe as possible.
WHAT CAN WE DO, MUM?

In my family, my Babushka, (Granny in Russian), would explain to us that Easter is when the Spring is finally here and we have to welcome it and make ourselves ready for it.

After 40 days of mindfulness (I think this is the best word for fasting) our mind and body are ready for the new season. The next step, according to my Babushka, is to clean your house. The whole family, even the youngest people, would have a little bucket with water, a cloth and an area to clean.

After the cleaning, I will probably reward my crowd by allowing them to run around the garden and generally mess around.

DRESSING UP FOR TV NIGHTS

It’s fun and helps them enjoy less often the TV nights. For special nights, opera night/ballet/rock/concerts – we wear the best clothes possible. When we were all sitting down we would pour “champagne” into best glasses.

For the children, I’d use tokens for buying extra time watching something of their choice, or perhaps for studying, helping in the house and practicing different languages. They can safely experiment with them and find different ideas for using the natural ingredients and let them crush, squeeze and prize the colours from them.

PAINTING EGGS BABUSHKA STYLE

I would always be fascinated by the brilliant colours that my Babushka created from the natural world around us. Below are a few of my favourite memories, as well as a few suggestions I’ve discovered over the years, that I hope will inspire and amaze your children today as they did me.

My Babushka would always use natural dyes. The great thing about trying these natural products is that you can let your children safely experiment with different shades and intensity of colours out of them. Challenge your children to come up with different ideas for using the natural ingredients and let them crush, squeeze and prize the colours from their sources.

Yellow onion skins

I used the skins from two yellow onions in one cup of boiling water and two tablespoons of white vinegar. Leave the skins in as the egg soaks for about two hours. Of the natural dyes, this produced the best colour in the least time.

Blueberries

I used 1/4 cup of blueberries and mashed them up really well. Then added one cup of water and two tablespoons of white vinegar. The egg had to soak for four hours to get the colour on the photo. It will come out of the dye looking purple and will dry to blue.

Beetroot juice

I used beet juice from a can of beets, undiluted, with two tablespoons of white vinegar. It took 16 hours of soaking!

Coffee

I used one cup of leftover coffee with two tablespoons of white vinegar. You could probably get a deeper colour by adding some instant coffee to make a more concentrated mix. I let this soak about three hours.

Note: Ones that I read about that did not work at all - (defined as very little color absorption in 3 hours): spinach, grass, cherries, wine, carrots, lemon peel, grape juice, any sort of flower petal, chili powder, paprika and cocoa powder. Two that I have not tried, but which I think might work, based on the experiments I did: red onion leaves and turmeric.

PAINTING & DECORATING

Interior/Exterior Experience Reliable Clean Fully Guaranteed/Insured. References available. Free no obligation quote and advice given

JOHN at JAMES & LAMONT

Office 020 8462 4646 Mobile 07882 535695 jamian.john@btinternet.com

Blackheath Halls

The English Bridge Union are running games on Bridgebase Online that have been going well and appreciated by the players, so the EBU have arranged to hold them in the afternoons as well as the evenings, at 2.00pm and 3.30pm. Visit the EBU website for details.

PAINTING & DECORATING

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Office 020 8462 4646 Mobile 07882 535695 jamian.john@btinternet.com

Blackheath Halls

The English Bridge Union are running games on Bridgebase Online that have been going well and appreciated by the players, so the EBU have arranged to hold them in the afternoons as well as the evenings, at 2.00pm and 3.30pm. Visit the EBU website for details.

COMMUNITY

MYCENAE HOUSE EVENTS

ARTS

CHILDREN & FAMILY

THEATRE & FILM

TALKS

SPOKEN WORD

COMEDY

HORTICULTURE

THOMAS TALLIS

BLACKHEATH HALLS
DIARY OF A CRUISE

Going on a Cruise is not as popular a choice of holiday as they once were; but Neville and Jane Grant went on a fly-cruise for a month in February. So how did it go?

We flew to Colombo, in Sri Lanka, or an Air Lanka flight. The cabin crew all wore face masks because of the coronavirus.

We all felt like patients. It wasn’t clear whether they were protecting themselves from us – or protecting us from them. We were met on arrival by representatives of Fred Olsen Cruise Lines, and installed in our cabins in the good ship Boudicca. We were lucky enough to have two portholes.

We weren’t in Colombo for long – time for a quick city tour, and a cultural evening of Sindhubhade song, dance – and food – and then we were off.

We sailed up the west coast of India, first stop at Kochi in Kerala, India. India was taking no chances – we all had to complete health questionnaires, and had our temperatures taken – twice – before being allowed ashore.

Kochi is famous for its Chinese fishing nets and there are Chinese influences in its architecture. For an insight into the interior of Kerala we went on a river trip on one of hundreds of house boats, a slight detour, despite extreme hazardous boarding arrangements ...

Next stop, Goa, (a fine tour of Catholic churches and picturesque old Portuguese houses), and then Mumbai. There we met up with a family member who showed us around after a delicious lunch in the Sea View Room of the Taj Hotel, overlooking the famous Gateway to India. No visit to Mumbai would be complete without a look at the magnificent Gothic Revival architecture of The Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, formerly known as Victoria Terminus – the headquarters of the Central Railway and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We had planned to spend a night ashore with our relative, but couldn’t risk it, as we were lucky enough to have two portholes. We were met on arrival by representatives from us – or protecting us from them. We wore face masks because of the coronavirus. Had we been sailing in a cruise ship, just in case.

No health questionnaires or temperature checks on arrival: and seemingly no panic – until we finally read the newspapers which were full of information about the coronavirus. Had we been sailing in a fool’s paradise? Perhaps. But it was a memorable trip – an exercise really in sampling the different places we visited: for there was frustratingly little time to do more than sample these fascinating places. And the cruise? Not for everyone perhaps, but if you want to go on a cruise, we would highly recommend Fred Olsen Cruise Lines’ Neville Grant.

FEAT URES

CORONAVIRUS AND MENTAL HEALTH

I am the director of a counselling charity in Greenwich, which we have had to close this week, due to the coronavirus pandemic. It feels counter-intuitive that we are closing our doors at a time when our services are more needed than ever. These are extraordinarily strange times and, in addition to feeling unprepared for the practical repercussions of the Covid-19 virus, we have no previous experience of how this will impact on our mental health. All of us have suddenly had to re-adjust our expectations around our health, our freedom and our daily life, and drastic changes are being announced daily by the government.

It is hard to avoid coverage of the virus; it is brought into our lives and work places via the TV, news and social media.

Everybody is talking about it all of the time; it can seem very frightening and it is hard not to get caught up in difficult feelings of anxiety, helplessness, frustration and anger. The scenes in the supermarket; panic buying, empty aisles and queues, and out to the car park are a potent symbol of people’s fear; to someone who felt secure, stockpiling may seem like a way of taking back some control. How do we prevent these powerful emotions from becoming overwhelming, that they can prevent us from coping?

One thing that we can do to monitor how we are accessing information and ensure that we are getting it from accurate sources. If you are feeling paralysed by anxiety it can be helpful to ration exposure to the news and build in regular distractions such as music, reading, box-sets, Netflix, playing games or any absorbing activity that focuses the mind elsewhere for a while. If you are anxious it is also important to talk about it and not bottle it up. Sharing your concerns with another person may be beneficial for both of you, provided you also talk about other things as well. If you can identify specific worries (what if my 96-year-old mother gets the virus? how can I manage working from home while looking after the children?), how will you “cope” (live, survive without a guaranteed income?), you can then make decisions about things that are in your control, in relation to the specifics of what is actually happening, not on what might be going to happen - catastrophising will only help you to lose control.

Be aware of what helps you to relax – this could be something sensory.

Everybody responds differently but many people find playing certain music, scented candles, hot baths, yoga can be helpful. It is important to keep fit and try to get plenty of fresh air. Spring is almost here and assuming the park remains open, going for walks is one of my favourite ways of re-balancing my mood. Pet can also help sooth anxiety.

Stay in touch with others. We are all going to feel more isolated, and this can lead to loneliness. Without the regular day-to-day human contact of work and school, it is important to make use of phones, internet and social media to continue communicating with friends and family.

Let us all not lose sight of some of the positive things that are also happening at the moment. In the local area the crisis has generated many random acts of kindness; neighbours offering to help each other out and keeping an eye on the vulnerable and isolated. It may well be that we emerge from all of this in a few months’ time, with a stronger sense of community and connection. In the meantime, we need to support each other, re-assure each other, really appreciate the key workers who are in the front line, and learn to connect with each other in a different way.

Rosie Stadon (The Deborah Ubee Trust)
Climate change, habitat loss, pollution and disease are pushing some of our insect life close to extinction. But without these useful creatures, we would have no fruit or vegetables to eat, and plants would have no way to reproduce themselves. The natural cycle would be disrupted, with dangerous consequences. Whether you have a balcony, a small patio or a large garden, growing flowering plants is an effective way to help Britain’s bees, hoverflies, butterflies and other pollinating insects, plus the birds and bats that feed on them. Pollinating insects need food, water and shelter. They love flowers that are rich in nectar and pollen. Nectar contains sugar for energy, while pollen contains protein and oils – forming a balanced diet. Bumblebees, honey bees, and solitary bees are active throughout the year, so you’ll need flowering plants from spring to winter. Choose plants with pollinators in mind. Pollinators prefer to feed on plants in full sunshine. Plant in large blocks, grouping plants together rather than dotting them about your garden, to save the insects’ energy when foraging.

**Best small trees, shrubs and plants**

For spring and summer, willows (for pussy willows), asples and orchard fruit including crabapples, plum, pear and damson, and Hawthorn all promote great blossom growth. They can all be very decorative, too; though Hawthorn can be thorny. Useful shrubs include flowering currants, pyracanthus (also thorny), and rosemary. There are lots of perennial plants: pulmonaria, crocosmia (also thorny), and rosemary. There are shrubs include flowering currants, pyracanthus, snowdrops, hellebores, primroses and lots of perennial plants: pulmonaria, crocosmia (also thorny), and rosemary. There are

**SHRUBS**

To create bug habitat, you’ll need some trees, shrubs, perennials and plants with an unusual shape. Shrubs like abelia, rhododendron, and mahonia extend the feeding season for bees. Michaelmas daisies, sedums like Bowles Mauve, and single-flowering dahlias are all attractive choices. There are some winter flowering plants for insect support, including winter aconite and lesser celandine. And ivy, which flowers in the autumn, is a particular treat for insects.

**What else can we do?**

Cut the grass less often, so pollinators can find shelter and a place to feed. Create bug habitats with a small wood pile in a corner where insects can nest, and bee hotels. You’ll find lots of advice for these online, at the Wildlife Trusts website. Avoid treat ed wood, though, as it’s poisonous to insects, and don’t use pesticides or herbicides. You can grub greenfly off with gloved hands, or let blue tits and lady birds have a feast! Insects need water, ideally from rain, so providing a shallow dish with a few stones for insects to perch on, or adding perches in a pond using floating-leaved plants, wine corks, or rocks, is a help. And try to avoid pet-based compost, to save a precious and very endangered habitat.

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Placelia, which you can sow annually, and viper’s bugloss, which seed in one year to flower the next, are attractants. Bear in mind that very fancy flowers can produce less nectar and pollen. And find an area in your garden which can be left less tended: some weeds like dandelions, thistles, and even brambles are great insect feeders.

In autumn and winter, shrubs like abelia and mahonia extend the feeding season for bees. Michaelmas daisies, sedums like Autumn Joy, perennial wallflowers like Bowles Mauve, and single-flowering dahlias are all attractive choices. There are some winter flowering plants for insect support, including winter aconite and lesser celandine. And ivy, which flowers in the autumn, is a particular treat for insects.

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