

The Flame



DEAR FIREBIRDS,



Lockdown started on 23rd March, and all our lives changed drastically. Apart from baking, gardening (including composting), knitting, needle work, bike riding, yoga and hair cutting - amongst other activities - a lot of our spare time was spent trying to get delivery slots for groceries. Thankfully, it is now easier to book food deliveries and if you are lucky, you will actually get what you ordered. I am not complaining, I quite like surprises.

As we had to cancel many of our trips and dinners, the Firebirds have built up quite a social life on the web. Many of you have been enjoying the Firebirds' WhatsApp group, set up by Vicky. Peter is providing and organizing a weekly quiz on the Firebirds' website and we are all becoming very efficient in zooming, again thanks to Peter, who has been facilitating Zoom tea parties and Firebirds Committee meetings.

Thank you to all who responded to Vicky's and my pleas for contributions. We couldn't stay away from corona virus related topics, because of the many changes in our daily routines, but your varied articles and lovely photos provide compelling and informative reading.

Now the government is easing lockdown, we have to face a new reality. As our vicar put it, let's pray to God to help us bounce forward.

Stay safe and God bless.

Erika Gloyn (Masons)

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Visit our website on www.firebirds.london

The views and opinions expressed by the authors and those providing comments are theirs alone and do not reflect the views and opinions of the Editor or the Firebirds Committee.

FORTHCOMING FIREBIRDS EVENTS CIRCUMSTANCES ALLOWING

SEPTEMBER 2020

City Farm Visit

2020 PRE-CHRISTMAS

Champagne Tea

SPRING 2021

Weekend in Brighton with dinner at the Royal Pavillion

PHOENIX EVENTS CIRCUMSTANCES ALLOWING

13th OCTOBER 2020

AGM and Dinner at Bakers' Hall (?)

12th NOVEMBER 2020

Gang of Four Lunch
More Details to follow.

LATE SPRING 2021

Visit to HMS Warrior

EARLY SUMMER 2021

Visit to Michael and Hilary Goodridge's garden

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2022

Phoenix Masters visit to Northern Ireland. Including Firebirds Consorts. More details to follow in due course.

THE FRAMEWORK KNITTERS' KNITTING PROJECT

by Vicky Nugée (Weavers)

What is it about knitting that some people find so attractive? It might be the restfulness of it, the steady click of the needles while the mind wanders away down unplanned paths; perhaps childhood memories of our mother or grandmother knitting away, a solid, calm presence representing love and comfort. It might be the economy of hand-made garments: I can knit an Icelandic jersey for a quarter the price of one in a shop, since I don't get paid an hourly rate. Or the ability to make exactly what you want in just the right colour, and tailor it to fit. For me, I just love the magic of turning yarn into a garment, and at the end of it think: I made that!



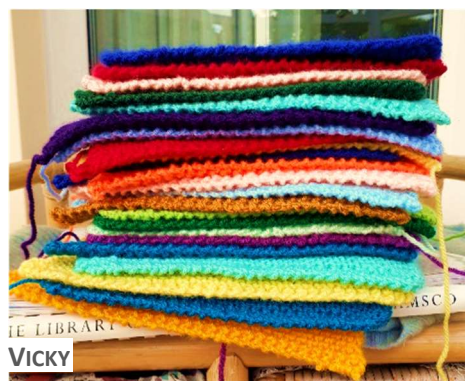
For thousands of years, people have been reliant on wool to clothe every part of the body. Coated with lanolin, the fibres are waterproof and absorb odour. Wool draws moisture away from the skin, keeping us warm and dry. For millennia, the hair from sheep, goats and llamas has been spun on spindles or a spinning wheel, or matted to form felt. Once twisted into yarn, it can be knitted or woven into cloth. It can then be draped across the floors, walls and windows of our homes. Wool cocoons our families in its warmth.

A woollen thread runs back through British history. Long before the Romans came, Stone Age Britons used the fleece and hide of sheep for clothes and bedding; spindle whorls have been found the length of the country from Jersey to Shetland. Yorkshire wool towns grew fat on the wealth that comes from wool; the stone churches of the Cotswolds raised their spires to the heavens in gratitude for wool's abundance. It was thanks to the wealth of wool that Britain took a significant place in European history; without wool Britain would not be itself. Wool, and working wool, runs in our bones.

Knitting, for me, is a particular delight at the moment; it was my mother who taught me to knit, back when my children were small. She was a tremendous knitter, specialising in fancy lacy patterns, very delicate, very pretty. I remember some of my childhood cardigans and dresses which she made for me, and still have the baby blankets that she made for her grandchildren. So I think of her as I work my way along the rows, and I feel part of a great continuity as I carry on where she left off.

My principal lockdown knitting project is large, complicated and fiddly, and it is something of a relief to me to work on something different, to pick up very normal needles at the end of the day and do some straightforward knitting. It's rather like stepping out of the briars and brambles into the sunny uplands!

So it was with much interest that I learned of the initiative, promoted by Liz Green, Past Master of the Framework Knitters, to knit squares for blankets for the homeless in the Company's historical base area of the East Midlands, and in London. I asked Liz about the charities which had been chosen to benefit from the fruits of our needles, and this is what she says:



'Action Homeless Leicester'

The Framework Knitters have been based in Leicestershire and many Liverymen historically hailed from the Midlands and Leicester in particular as that was the centre of the textile/hosiery trade. The FWK currently run 26 Cottage Homes in Oadby, just outside Leicester for retired textile employees. In the Lord Mayor's Show in 2016 our float included 'sock bunting' with socks made in Derbyshire by

one of our Past Masters and his brother (also a Liveryman), which we donated to Action Homeless Leicester together with a cheque.

Meadows Hope Nottingham

There are also a number of Liverymen living in the Nottingham area. This initiative is connected to the Methodist presence in the centre of the city. The church is involved in local youth and community work and supporting individuals struggling with homelessness and addiction issues. The Ruddington Framework Knitters Museum <https://www.frameworkknittersmuseum.org.uk> (we don't play an active part as a Company, but a few of our Liverymen do) is just outside Nottingham and they have very generously offered to sew all the squares together.

Glass Door London

Amanda Keaveny (Sheriff's Consort) volunteers for Glass Door, cooking for them twice a week. They partner with churches to offer accommodation during winter months and meals are offered throughout the year. We recently presented 200 pairs of socks to them for their clients and, as we were fellow Sheriffs and Consorts together, it was decided that Glass Door should be our London charity for this initiative.



I'm delighted at the response from various Firebirds who have stepped up and generously committed their materials, time and effort to helping to make this a success. I'm very impressed to learn of knitters who are re-teaching themselves having last put down their needles years ago, and even sending off for new needles in order to rise to the challenge.'

This is **Sheila Higgs'** (Launderers) growing pile of knit squares which, she says, is keeping her awake during binge watching *Luther* on catchup TV!



Annie Attlee (Innholders) has almost made a blanket by herself! She is guarding them carefully or they will be seconded for bedspreads and blankets for the dolls' house when the grandchildren are allowed to visit.

I was particularly amused by Peter Green's yarn: 'Our daughter and boyfriend are co-locating with us, having moved out of their flat in London on the Sunday before Lockdown Monday. On their daily exercise walk recently, Dom (6ft 2 inches rugby playing cross-channel swimmer) turned to Steph and uttered what has become my favourite quote of the current crisis ... "can we go to bed early tonight so I can carry on with my knitting". Gallantly, and armed with nothing more than YouTube instructions and an Amazon Prime order of wool and knitting needles, Dom has now completed three squares (OK, two squares and an initial irregular object) to support the Framework Knitters blanket challenge. A bigger challenge now awaits – he is offering to teach Liz, Past Master Framework Knitter, how to knit her contribution. Please don't ask about past consort!'



Valerie Macpherson (Dyers) has been enjoying making good use of the sunshine, and has grown a fine crop of *lana quadratus variegata*.

Sadly, not all good intentions have been rewarded with success. **Carmen Pearson** (Marketors) made huge efforts to get to grips with this 'diagonal knitting' and boldly sent off for

suitable yarn, but by the time it arrived she was suffering a flare-up of osteo arthritis and completely unable to knit. However, in true Firebird spirit, she says she has not given up on the squares.

These are **Rose Mahoney's** (Plaisterers) colourful squares. She says: *You may notice a large ball of pink wool in the middle which you might think would be wasted on the squares. I bought three similar balls just before lockdown to knit a jumper for my eight year old granddaughter, Claudia, but when I showed it to her on Zoom she said*

"Oh I have sooo grown out of pink Grandma!"

However, when I showed her the squares she commented that she would love a blanket made like that and asked if I would make her one for Christmas. I think I will have square eyes by the time I have finished.....



I can certainly relate to that last comment, Rose! As Valerie Macpherson said, it's rather addictive. As we near the end of one square we find we're already thinking about what colour the next one will be. And perhaps, in knitting up a half ball of yarn, we think about the person it was originally bought for, grandchild, husband, daughter; and recall the love that went into that garment. Let us hope that some of the warmth from that love goes into these squares and can be enjoyed by the homeless recipients of the blankets that they will make.

NOT EVERYONE CAN KNIT

by Sarah Mosse (Broderers)

My contribution to all of this is sadly not knitting. I have the equivalent of two left feet as far as knitting goes. But what I can do is make things on a sewing machine; so I have been making sets of scrubs for the NHS.

The picture shows my latest three sets. Each one has its own wash bag to go with it, made from an old double sheet I had. The scrubs have been made out of poly cotton in the three colours, and although the red is pretty it is horrible to sew with, no idea why, so I will be sticking to green and blue from now on. I am also making masks out of the leftovers for the local vulnerable people in our village, so nothing is wasted.

I really feel that the old war time spirit is alive and well, despite all the negativity from the media, especially the BBC who ought to know better. Peter gets quite vocal every time Laura what's her name speaks!! Anyway back to the sewing machine, two tops to be finished today.



IT IS NOT KNITTING, BUT ...

by Anne Loftis (Upholders)

I have been making tapestry cushion covers for 30+ years! It helps me relax as I don't need to think. Once they are finished I get a local lady to make the flat tapestry into a cushion. I really hope my lady continues this service later in the summer as I have nearly finished my latest one. It is a Klimt design as I have got tired of flowers.



THE DUCK CUSHION (SECOND ON THE LEFT) I DID IN MY 30s.



MY LATEST TAPESTRY



IN MY 20s I DID A FEW TAPESTRIES MAKING THEM UP INTO PICTURES... NEOLITHIC CAVE DRAWINGS AND TUTANKHAMUN



Screenshot of our
ZOOM TEA PARTY
 on Tuesday 26th May 2020



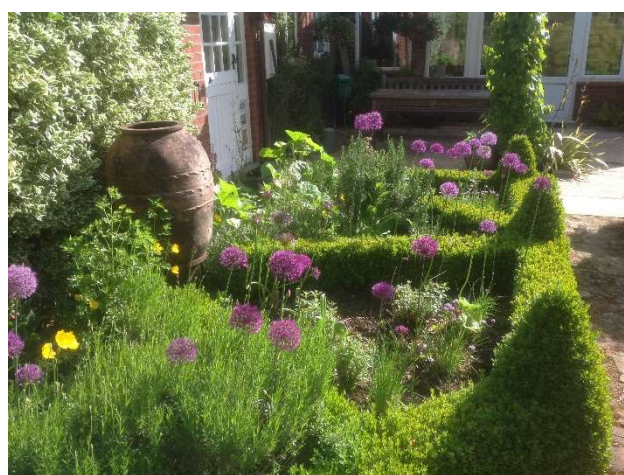
GARDEN VISIT

by Hilary and Mike Goodridge (Arbitrators)

Unfortunately, we have had to postpone the garden visit to Chinthurst Lodge that Phoenix organised for June 8th, due to the Corona virus. We aim to repeat the invitation for next year, probably on a similar date.

All very disappointing, especially as the garden is looking better than ever because of the amazing weather we have had. Also we have spent hours and hours in the garden during lock down. It has been our saving grace.

Some photos to hopefully whet your appetite.



SPRING 2020 – IT'S NOT ALL BAD

by Sarah Mosse (Broderers)

Spring this year has been completely different from any one that we have ever experienced. In the middle of March just as everything was about to burst into bloom and life was looking up after a long wet winter, we were told to stay inside our homes.

What to do? Housework, school work, spring cleaning really isn't much fun! Everyone's houses must now be sparkling and our gardens immaculate - boring! But what is happening around us while we are all locked down is nothing short of miraculous. The trees are green, the flowers are out, the birds are nesting and, despite us, life goes on. I live at the end of a long lane and I drove down it yesterday for the first time in 7 weeks (*beginning of May, Ed.*) I could not believe the change - gorgeous wild flowers on the verges, horse chestnut candles and all the May trees in flower. The cows are in the fields again and the lambs are dancing about in the sunshine.

We do live on a beautiful island and we should count our blessings despite this awful disease. It will get better I am sure, but until then keep safe everyone and keep smiling.

'HERE WE GO GATHERING NUTS IN MAY ...'

by Georgina Hall (Water Conservators)

Have you ever thought how odd this childhood song and game sounds? 'Nuts in May' - everyone knows in Britain nuts are an autumn fruit.

The woodland part of our garden is full of pignuts in full flower at the moment. Pignuts (*Conopodium majus* for the botantists) can only be found in spring and early summer when the leaves and flowers are above ground, growing in well-rotted leaf litter under the trees.

The plant sends up one leaf stem with fine feather-like small leaves and a small white umbel or cluster of white flowers at the end. If you follow the stalk into the ground you can gently dig out the 'nut', a small edible tuber, beloved by pigs and badgers. The 'nut' is the size and shape of a hazelnut. Once cleaned and peeled it can be eaten, though I confess we have never tried one. I have read that it tastes like a cross between a hazel nut and a chestnut.

Wikipedia's explanation of the rhyme is that it refers to the knots of may blossom on the hawthorn trees, nuts being a derivation of knots. Look at the pictures of this lovely little flower, and make your own mind up!

Warning - you can only dig up pignuts if you have the permission of the land owner.

Firebirds Consorts and Phoenix Masters are welcome to come and forage for pignuts anytime in spring 2021 in our tiny piece of woodland.



PANDEMIC – PART 2

by Dr Jane Orr (Glovers)

In the last issue of The Flame I wrote about the comparison between the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918/19 and the first couple of months of the current coronavirus pandemic. Today (27th May) I thought I would continue with these comparisons, but also tell you a bit about what I have been doing medically.

As I explained last time, the first six months of the Spanish Flu rather lulled people into a false sense of security as it was quite a mild disease, certainly nothing like Covid-19. The worst week, in July 1918, saw about 400 deaths per day, but there were only four weeks where the deaths were over 100 per day. The population of England and Wales then was about 40 million, compared to today's 60 million. So far this spring we have had 8 consecutive weeks where deaths have averaged over 100 per day, the worst week having a daily average of 1251 deaths. So things are definitely worse now than the 1918 first wave. What we are all praying for is an absence of a more virulent second wave. As I explained before, in 1918 this was due to a mutation which changed the character of the influenza virus completely, and it was devastating. For 14 weeks, from early October to mid-January, deaths were over 100 per day, for 7 of those weeks there were over 1000. During the worst week (the week of the Armistice) there were 2100 daily. Then, after 3 weeks of low death rates in January and February 1919 the third wave struck and there were another 10 weeks of deaths over 100 per day, but "only" one week where it went over 1000.

There is nothing to suggest that the coronavirus is capable of having such a deadly mutation, so although the numbers might go up again for a time as lockdown is eased, the case mortality should be no worse than we have seen already.

So what have I been doing? In March and April many retired doctors, including yours truly, were put back on the Medical Register and became ERPs, or Emergency Registered Practitioners. 2,000 former GPs have been allocated to 111's Covid Clinical Assessment Service and so far 1,200 have completed their training and are working. I have done six sessions so far, working from home and giving telephone advice to those who have rung 111 with symptoms suggestive of covid. At least that is the theory! One problem is that the numbers of patients are going down, but the number of available, trained doctors is going up, so all sorts of cases are coming through to us – in my last shift I dealt with a dental abscess and a urinary tract infection. If you are on a popular shift there may be 90 doctors fighting for about 50 patients. I have now learned that not many want to work on Friday and Saturday nights (I have no idea what they are doing then!) so that is when I am working. At least then I feel needed. I will probably soon drop down to one shift a week to allow the doctors fresh from training to have some practice. Then I will be able to step up if a second wave appears.

I am really enjoying speaking to patients again. The vast majority are phoning in the first few hours of their illness, wanting reassurance and a discussion of what to expect over the next few days. It is obviously important to tell them what changes should make them phone us again. Most seem to be reassured by talking to me. In summary, most people feel grim for 6 or 7 days, and then should start getting better. It has been described as an Advent Calendar disease, each morning you get a surprise of a new symptom – a cough, fever, diarrhoea, rash, painful teeth, back pain – it could be anything. With some people it goes on much longer, but you should seek help if it worsens after 7 days, if you become noticeably breathless or dizzy, or get new confusion. I often suggest that patients go down and upstairs daily while they are ill, and notice how many stairs they can manage without becoming breathless. This can be a way of measuring deterioration. If you are worried, do phone 111, there will be plenty of doctors at the end of the line ready to chat to you. If you have your NHS number to hand when you phone, it will make the process much quicker.

I do hope that none of you will need the service, but you should be reassured by the fact that it is there, and is actually quite efficient.

The following article about the experiences of Claire Chitty at ExCel has been submitted by Von Spofforth (Chartered Accountants). Claire has kindly agreed for this to be published in the Flame. It highlights the reality of Nightingale and Covid 19 and as Von says it is a frighteningly good read.

A 'NIGHTINGALE'

by Mrs Claire Chitty, City Consorts Hon. Secretary; Fellow Horner and Chartered Accountant Consort, liveried Needlemaker. Also a founder member of Guild, now Company, of Nurses.



I have been asked two questions more than any other in the last six weeks: 1. Why did you volunteer? and 2. What worries you? Oddly, both questions were very easy to answer.

My last remotely normal day was 24th March – the last day we were able to admit elective patients for their heart procedures. Whilst we didn't yet know what was to come, we knew things were about to change out of all recognition. I quickly approached the cardiac ward and asked to have a couple of supervised days so I could become reacquainted with ward skills. I realized I didn't even know where to find the sluice! I did a few ward shifts, kept my own service ticking over but was becoming increasingly unhappy at work, so the chance to volunteer was a 'no brainer'.

The second question was even easier. Prior to starting we had to undergo 'emotional PPE' sessions; the emotional preparation and support was exemplary. However, my answer was twofold, 'my bladder' and how would David cope (he can't cook). Wearing full PPE for a full 12 ½ hour shift, with 2 x 1 hour breaks, means it can be several hours before getting a release! I turned the kitchen into cookery school; David now has some very basic skills and he assured me he wouldn't starve!

Nothing really prepares you for the first shift, being flexible, adaptable and fit seemed to be most important. The ExCel Centre is 1km long; the changing rooms and main lockers are outside at one end, the canteen is at the other end and the ward entrance about 2/3 of the way along. A nearly 3km walk if you needed to go to your locker at lunchtime. Thankfully there were plenty of bathrooms! Everything was free; food, drinks, snacks, books, hand gel, haircuts and even Hunter welly boots. Haircuts and welly boots were first come first served and I was not quick enough. I've never seen so many Mars Easter Eggs and mango flavoured Coke (I'm told it is revolting)!

The patient care was inspiring. You may have heard the jokes about being cared for by a gynaecologist, well that was not entirely untrue. Orthopaedic surgeons were on the proning team – patients spend 16 hours a day nursed on their front (proned) to allow their lungs to expand. This takes seven people, and a few big burly orthopaedic surgeons make the job much easier. The gynaecologists came in very useful to re-insert bladder catheters, Dentists for mouth care, Psychiatrists for supporting the staff and relatives etc. COVID-19 infection has been shown to increase the risk of blood clots, so all the patients were on blood thinners. Proning makes the face and lips swell so seeing people with horribly distorted faces bleeding from their mouths, gums and lips made me very thankful relatives were not allowed in.

I was only there a few days before the decision was made to close, I was desperately sad and happy all at the same time. We are now being prudent as we are not closed, just hibernating and we have 900 fully trained staff at the ready and the ExCel Centre for the next two years. I have been back for a feedback and support day, and whilst there are lots of lessons to learn about processes and administration, the care and support to patients, staff and relatives was amazing.

ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH LOCKDOWN

by Marion Whitehead (Blacksmiths)

If life had been normal, I would by now be a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Musicians - instead of which I am still only a Freeman. Having time on my hands has made me remember past musical experiences: how about 'Adventures with my Harpsichords'?

You need to know that concert venues will always provide pianists with a reasonable piano but harpsichords are all very individual so every harpsichordist takes his/her own instrument. My harpsichord is 8 feet long and weighs 150 lbs and my virginals is 5 ft long and weighs somewhat less. There have been some 'interesting' moments!

Sniffer dogs - We had 'prepared' my old Volvo Estate by removing seats etc. and Nigel and I, having heaved the harpsichord into it, set off for a concert at St James' Palace. We got through security and had help carrying 'the beast' up the grand staircase to its place on the landing when the sniffer dogs arrived, accompanied by chaps in full riot gear and guns to make sure I hadn't filled the harpsichord with explosive devices.



MARION'S HARPSICHORD – THE HARPSICHORD WAS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS IN EUROPEAN MUSIC FROM THE 16TH THROUGH TO THE FIRST HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

The other time I had an inspection was when I took the virginals, which looks quite like a large green coffin, to France for a concert and the Customs officials were quite sure it was full of drugs. Six months later I had a visit at home from a Customs man to check I still had the instrument and had not sold it abroad.

Difficult Venues - If you know St John's Smith Square, nicknamed 'Queen Anne's Footstool', you know it sits on a platform up 14 steep steps. We had some help getting the instrument up and into the Church but, by the time we had packed up at the end, we were alone. Backwards down the steps was a nightmare – Nigel had the heavy end and he's not been quite the same since.

There was also the time when we had put the virginals on top of our Citroen (much easier than removing all the seats) for the short trip to Sutton Valence for a lecture recital for NADFAS. Everything was fine until we found there was a bar above the entrance to the car park and we were higher by an inch or so. Luckily, Nigel remembered that you could lower the suspension on the Citroen and we just scraped under.

Tuning - Unlike pianos, harpsichords have to be tuned and re-tuned constantly: before leaving home, before the concert and during the interval. I would be listening for the tiniest 'beats' in the sound to make sure the wires were in tune and that was when the staff would decide to move all the metal chairs into place. These instruments are very sensitive to temperature and humidity so, when the air conditioning broke down in a venue, the pitch slipped audibly. It wouldn't have mattered so much if mine had been the only instrument but there was also an organ and that pitch didn't slip.



MARION'S VIRGINALS - THE VIRGINALS (OR VIRGINAL) IS A KEYBOARD INSTRUMENT OF THE HARPSICHORD FAMILY. IT WAS POPULAR IN EUROPE DURING THE LATE RENAISSANCE AND EARLY BAROQUE PERIODS.

Various - Even tuning keys are particular and I once had to dash across Kent with my key for a recitalist who had arrived with the wrong sort.

In the early days I borrowed a trolley from an undertaker friend; he said my harpsichord was "a 20-stoner".

The very devout organiser of a recital in a chapel in Montreuil-sur-Mer exclaimed "we shall have a farmyard!" on hearing I was playing 'La Poule' by Couperin.

Lastly, a piano story: on a tour in Brazil with the choir I sing with, we arrived at a charming but dusty 18th Century theatre in the middle of the jungle. We looked around but couldn't see a piano

anywhere until someone started searching and found, behind some curtains, a 9ft Concert Grand Steinway and, miraculously, it was in tune and a delight to play.

CHILEAN NAVY DAY

by Erika Gloyn (Masons)

Being an avid follower of the Firebirds WhatsApp Group, I saw Carmen Pearson's recent entry about Chilean Navy Day. "What is Chilean Navy Day?" you may ask. To find out, I did some research on the internet.

The Day is celebrated in Chile on 21st May. It commemorates the battle of Iquique in 1879, see <https://chiletoday.cl/site/the-battle-of-iquique-what-does-chile-remember-on-navy-day/>.

Carmen, who is a member of the Anglo Chilean Society, has in the past been attending ceremonies at Westminster Abbey to celebrate Chilean Navy Day. Due to the restrictions because of Covid-19, the occasion this year was commemorated by Webinar.

In collaboration with the Embassy of Chile, Canning House, which works to build relationships and understanding between the UK, Latin America and Iberia, presented this event honouring Chilean Navy Day. The esteemed speakers discussed the history of the Chilean Navy and the significance of 21st May and reflected upon the centuries-long relationship shared by the British and Chilean naval forces.

The speakers were Lord Mountevans, Honorary President of Canning House, HE Ambassador David Gallagher, Ambassador of Chile to the UK, HE Ambassador Jamie Bowden, British Ambassador to Chile and Captain Daniel Muñoz, Defence Attaché, Embassy of Chile.

To view the Chilean Navy Day Webinar or find out more about Canning House, please go to <https://www.canninghouse.org/canning-insights/chilean-navy-day/locked-content-1> or <https://www.canninghouse.org/> respectively.

Carmen won't be the only one to hope that next year's commemoration of Chilean Navy Day takes place once again at Westminster Abbey.

On Friday 8th May 2020, we held a lovely social distancing garden party celebration of VE Day. Our apartments all have balconies which overlook our beautiful communal garden and many of these were decorated with flags and bunting. The party started at 14.30 with loud wartime music. People were joining in from their balconies, whilst others socially distanced in the garden with their own supplies of drink. At 14.45 all went quiet for Jim; as our Chairman, he gave a short speech commenting on how well our community spirit was enabling everyone to survive the current "lockdown" by sharing shopping duties etc.

He talked of the courage of all on the front line to achieve Victory in Europe, and of how that same spirit was alive and well in dealing with the coronavirus outbreak.

He made a special mention of the too often forgotten heroes of the Merchant Navy, who kept the supply lines open during WW2, whilst losing 30,248 lives.

Today the Merchant Navy are not losing lives keeping the supply lines open for the 90% of all our imports of food, oil and gas, without which we would go hungry and be without heat and light. They are, however, not mentioned as being in the front line. Nonetheless they are suffering mentally and physically by not being able to get home at the end of a contract because of the closed borders and cancelled flights around the world. They are having to carry on working 24/7 for many extra months with no end in sight, not knowing when they can see family again. They are also not being allowed ashore when in port and, of course, have no access to medical attention and ICUs.

As appropriate for the Past Master of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, a large Red Ensign was flown from our terrace to draw attention of all present to the Merchant Navy.

At 14.58 the last post was played and then at 15.00 the Toast "To those who gave so much. We thank you." was made and joined in by all, followed by the National Anthem.

Thereafter there was an hour or so of social distance chat and drinking accompanied by Vera Lynn, Glen Miller and others.

In all a good "Lockdown" Celebration of VE Day.



THINGS NOT TO TRY AT HOME

- Cutting up a Tyrwhitt shirt to make a face mask, realising the shirt was actually in the wash pile and using the sock face mask pattern would have been easier.
- Trying to convince the children you can find Netflix without any help.
- Mistakenly purchasing a pandemic film on Amazon Prime in the middle of the night on your iPhone then watching it!
- Trying to make sense of COVID numbers on the BBC News when you have four Maths A Levels and a PhD, but failing to make sense of any of it.
- Being banned from watching the BBC until five minutes can be managed without shouting at Stevie (the TV).
- Not relaxing the scrabble rules when the challenges of lockdown have certainly knocked 20 points off your IQ and you could do with the advantage.
- Attempting to cut the dog's hair, then trying to stem the tears as he realises his dignity is in jeopardy and walks away. Not deterred, trying to cut your own hair convinced that buying hairdressing scissors online will make a difference to your ability.
- Asking your Beloved to change the bed linen but giving him the single bed set by mistake then realising you've done it but telling him he is making a hash of it and pulling out the right size set when he's given up and left the room.
- Putting on the washing machine at the start of your Beloved's Zoom meeting, wandering past said meeting still in PJs, shouting 'supper in 5!' while that Zoom meeting is still on, (OK, you could have texted but it wouldn't have been as effective).
- Failing to be precise on the shopping list and trying to convince your Beloved that of course you will get through a dozen litres of long-life almond milk now it's bought....wondering if you could palm some of it off on the cat or feed the marrows with it.
- Starting lockdown by making a larder spreadsheet with expiry dates, forgetting you made it and confidently starting a chocolate cake before remembering you don't have ground almonds, they are flaked almonds in the larder!
- Relieving the wine fridge of a 'good' bottle to add to a stew, trying to cover this up by filling the half empty bottle with plonk, then remembering your Beloved is on a Wine Committee and the cover up is not going to fly.
- Making beautiful restaurant quality food the first week of lockdown, realising everyone is now expecting these standards to be maintained and you've just tied yourself to the kitchen sink for the next X weeks where X is a large number and even the government has no idea how big X is.
- Starting lockdown determined to learn yoga because yoga is good for you but realising that yoga is beyond you by about three years when your brain decided it was on a different mission.
- Finally remembering that above anything, all the dog needs are cuddles and a short walk, no haircuts or yoga, and that the Beloved is happy with two courses or even sandwiches, not always with a sung grace.



HAIR-RAISING TRIVIA

by Peter Green (Framework Knitters)

Given the challenge of maintaining that perfect coiffure during lockdown, this edition of City Trivia turns to the taxing topic of hairstyles. My own receding locks have been perfectly styled by my daughter, armed with the neighbours' horse clippers and a pair of kitchen scissors. "What could possibly go wrong??"

From the earliest times, a fine head of hair has exemplified a vital spirit of life – longer and voluminous hair implied strength and so warriors allowed it to grow. If cut, they lost their vigour and invited defeat, as illustrated by the story of Samson in the Bible. Noble rank among the ancient Gauls was indicated by long hair, which Julius Caesar made them cut off as a sign of submission when he conquered them.

If King Harold's spies had been able to identify hairstyles, the outcome of the Battle of Hasting may have been very different. The spies spotted a very large group of "priests" seen nearby but no enemy soldiers. Those priests were, unfortunately, William the Conqueror's army, mistaken for holy men due to their clean-shaven appearance and pageboy haircuts. The Normans shaved off the hair on the back of their heads but kept a short back and sides look, giving them a monk-like appearance.



ANCIENT GAUL (AS PER
ALBERT UDERZO)

Toward the end of the 17th century, false hair became more popular than natural hair. Women's coiffures were becoming increasingly elaborate. False hair and padding were used to build them to great heights, and the coiffure was sometimes topped with fruit, flowers, even live birds in cages or models of ships in full sail. One widow, overcome with mourning, had her husband's tombstone erected in her hair.

The Duty on Hair Powder Act — a tax of one guinea a year — came into effect in 1795. The levy hastened the end of the fashion for powdering hair and wigs, which had been a way of showing off one's wealth.

The French Revolution at the end of the 18th century heralded a return to the classical Greek hairstyles, with hair dressed closer to the head, powder-free and fillets or bands of ribbon worn by women. Hairpins, clips, and tortoiseshell combs became popular hair ornaments.

German hairdresser Karl Ludwig Nessler introduced permed hair to the UK on October 8, 1906 when he displayed his 'permanent wave' machine at 245 Oxford Street, London.

In the 1950's the invention of rollers for waving made possible the very short, layered Italian cut. As young, active, informal women discarded hats, hairstyles became more important.

Did you know ...?

The average woman has 150 different hairstyles in her lifetime (*make that 151 with the current lockdown*).

The most expensive haircut was reputedly that of President Bill Clinton in 1993. Although he only paid the hairdresser \$200 to tend his locks, the haircut was completed with Air Force One parked at Los Angeles airport, leading to two runways being shut for an hour.

Both men and women in North Korea must choose their haircuts from lists of 18 approved styles for women or 10 for men. North Korea's "leader's haircut" - reportedly mandatory for students - is aesthetically similar to an earlier style known as the "Chinese smuggler haircut".

The women of the Red Yao tribe in Guangxi, China, only cut their hair once in their lives, usually right before they get married.

J.K. Rowling revealed that Harry Potter is wealthy because his ancestor, Fleamont Potter, developed a magical hair styling gel.

The selling of human hair extensions is a multi-billion dollar industry, resulting in many rich girls walking around wearing poor girls' hair.

Tonsurephobia is the fear of getting haircuts.

Which, using my amateur Greek translation, makes *Tonsuredenphobia* the fear of **not** being able to get a haircut. Or, being positive, *Tonsurephilia* will be that wonderful feeling on July 4th (no earlier), when the hair salons may be able once again to open their doors and tend to our shaggy locks.

SEARCH AND YE SHALL FIND

by Vicky Nugée (Weavers)



Flour has, I think, been problematic for many of us during lockdown. I've always made my own bread in a bread machine, so I felt quite indignant to see bread flour flying off the shelves as people bought it in a panic – quite unnecessarily, as there was never any shortage of bread in the supermarkets.

I learned that the real problem was not the amount of flour available, but the flour bags. Bakeries, who had deliveries in vast quantities were fine, but the 1.5kg bags were in seriously short supply. So I thought that it would be best to go to the source, and began looking up flour mills online. I tracked down Mungoswells in East Lothian, of all places, who were doing a roaring trade in 16kg sacks of flour.

Their website made interesting reading; being short-staffed from people isolating, as well as having to adjust their working practices to maintain social distancing, they were clearly rushed off their feet. Their website was only taking orders for 1 hour a day - in the evening at that – to give them a chance to keep on top of things. They apologised that their flour was being shipped in plain brown bags with sticky labels on, and they issued a plea for anyone who knew of a printer who might be able to print some flour bags for them!

Anyway, I placed my order and it arrived very promptly; a 16kg sack of flour is a thing to behold! Fortunately I had some huge Tupperware boxes available, so we were able to stash it all away.

The exciting thing is that my son Sam, who is temporarily living with us, decided to fill his spare hours with learning to make bread by hand. Always one to encourage efforts in the kitchen, I went online to find him a recipe book. And do you know what? They'd mostly sold out too! I did manage to find a Paul Hollywood book eventually; I quite like PH because he was a baker first and a television personality afterwards, and I think it shows. Sam has taken to it like a duck to water and we've been having splendid focaccia, cheese and bacon rolls, bloomers and good things. Sam finds it a great way to work out the stress of the day, but I think that I'll be sticking to my trusty bread machine.

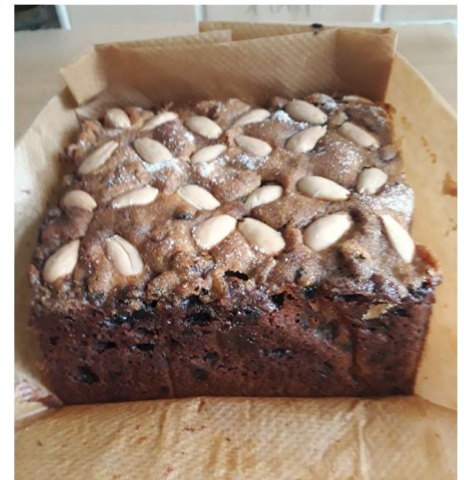
VICKY'S OLD-FASHIONED BOILED FRUIT CAKE

We all know that the best fruit cake is juicy and packed with fruit. Rich and indulgent and a cinch to make, this one ticks all the boxes.

Tins: This mixture fills a 23cm (9") deep round tin, 20cm (8") deep square tin, 25cm x 15cm (10" x 6") deep bar tin or a 30cm x 13cm (12" x 5") deep bar tin.

My preference is for two 15cm x 13cm (6" x 5") deep tins, but you can certainly halve the recipe if you wish.

125g butter, chopped
220g brown sugar (any brown sugar, not demerara)
270ml water
1 tablespoon golden syrup
1 teaspoon mixed spice
750g raisins and sultanas, mixed
200g candied peel
400g glace cherries
2 large eggs
150g plain flour
150g self-raising flour
1-2 tablespoons caster sugar
50g blanched almonds



1. Place the butter, sugar, water, syrup and spice in a large pan and bring to the boil, stirring so that the sugar doesn't burn.
2. Add all the fruit. Bring back to the boil and simmer, uncovered, for 3 minutes. Then cover the pan and leave to stand until cold – preferably several hours, or overnight. This allows the fruit to plump up and become juicy.
3. Line the base and sides of the baking tin with a double layer of baking parchment, so that the paper stands a little above the sides of the tin. (You might find it useful to hold the paper in place with clothes pegs while you pour in the cake mixture)
4. Pre-heat the oven to 160C, 325F, gas #3. Add the eggs and flours to the fruit in the pan and stir until the flour is all combined, then spoon the mixture into the prepared tin.
5. Smooth the surface, then sprinkle generously all over with the caster sugar. This forms a lovely crunchy sugar coating. Gently press the almonds into the surface to form a pattern of your choosing.
6. I like to lay a folded newspaper on the oven shelf before putting in the tin, to prevent any chance of scorching. Put the tin in the middle of the oven and bake for about 2 hours. Check the cake after 1¾ hours; cover loosely with foil if it is showing signs of browning too much. Poke it with a skewer to test if it is done – it comes out clean when it is cooked. When cooked, cover the hot cake tightly with foil to keep all the moisture in, and cool it in the pan.

If you wrap the cake in baking or greaseproof paper and then seal it in a polythene bag, it keeps beautifully for months. You can even freeze it.

EL'S SINGAPORE GIN SLING

Before, after or with the cake?

- 50 ml Gin
- 15 ml Cherry Brandy
- 15 ml Benedictine Liqueur
- 15 ml freshly squeezed lemon juice
- Soda, to top up
- Twist of orange zest, to garnish (optional)

Combine the gin, cherry brandy, Benedictine and lemon juice with plenty of ice in a glass. Stir and top up with soda. Garnish with zest if you like.

What could be nicer on a warm summer's evening than sitting in the garden with a gin sling.



ERIKA'S TIPPLE

Ginger Cordial

It keeps the head clear for the weeding – or knitting - and has quite a kick; for a real treat use soda water.

