

Creative Reflections; Life During Covid

A Collection of Poems, Short Stories
and Reflections from



Maggie's Poetry Moments

A Beth Johnson Foundation
Healthy Generations Project
Social Support Group production!

Digitally connecting older people across
Stoke-on-Trent, North Staffordshire and
the Moorlands during the pandemic

Contents

2	Acknowledgments	20	What was I saying? by Amanda
3	Introduction	21	Loyal Handbag by Maggie
4	Carry on Zooming! by Dorothy		Pets by Jon
5	2020 Through the News by Ruby	22	Pippin by Dorothy
8	How do I love her? by Marjorie	24	A Walk on the wild side by Steve
9	The Enterprise by David L	26	Getting Through Lockdown by Amina
10	Making Lemonade by Ruby	27	What Easter means to Me by Dorothy
12	What does Lockdown mean to me? by Dorothy	28	Autumn by Ruby
14	The Potteries by David W	30	Pathway to Winter by Amanda
16	Zoom Interrupts by Maggie	31	Christmas by Dorothy
	Ups and downs by Jon	32	Healthy Generations by Sue
17	Healthy Generations by Dorothy	34	Goodbye Dear Friend by Ruby
18	Hip (h)Op by Steve	36	Two Metres Apart by Marjorie
	Watering Can by Jane	37	Stay at home, Save lives by Sue
19	Senior Moments by Dorothy	38	Beth Johnson Foundation vs the Royal Thief by Ruby

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We would also like to say a big thank you to our Tech Buddy Volunteers, Jon and Maggie who have supported the Healthy Generations Team and participants during our virtual social support groups.

Healthy Generations

Supporting older people through the pandemic;
Physically distanced, Socially connected

The Healthy Generations project is a three-year project, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. We are currently in our final year of the programme of delivery which has involved piloting and facilitating health and wellbeing sessions throughout Stoke-on-Trent, North Staffordshire and Staffordshire Moorlands, with the use of digital technology.

Maggie's Poetry Moments

During the pandemic, the Beth Johnson Foundation has continued to adapt and deliver their services; we at Healthy Generations have embraced the virtual world. From April 2020 onwards, the Healthy Generations team began to engage through the use of digital technology and video conferencing. With support from our Tech Buddy volunteers, participants have been able to use their technology to join 'Zoom' sessions. Volunteers have put their skills to good use, assisting the less confident members to join in and enabling them to feel more connected to the community and less isolated during the lockdown restrictions; the strapline for the Zoom sessions soon became **'physically distanced, socially connected'**. As a result of increased confidence in using Zoom, participants are also using this video chat app to connect with their family.

The first Healthy Generations Zoom Social Support Group sessions led to participants sharing recipes, thoughts, poems and dilemmas - all of which were brought together in production of the **'Covid-19 Survival Cookbook and Other Stories'**. As we came to terms with the realisation that physical group meetings were not going to recommence and further Lockdowns and Tier Systems would remain in place throughout the year, we embraced the fact that we would remain working digitally. Participants and volunteers were eager to try more, keen to use digital technology to learn new skills, and share with group members. And so our Poetry group **'Maggie's Poetry Moments'** was formed. The host shared the principles of poetic writing and encouraged all to put pen to paper and write verse or short stories. Themes were set each week and this enabled the group to share personal memories from younger years, fears around ongoing developments with the Covid situation, light-hearted encounters and much more.

We want to share these with you, we do hope you enjoy our poetry and maybe we can encourage you too, to put pen to paper.

Best wishes

The Healthy Generations Team - Jane, Amanda & Clare

Carry on Zooming!

By Dorothy Lightfoot

2020 Whatever happened in that year!
Life as we've known it
began to disappear.
Because of the Covid bug,
We couldn't give our friends a hug.

But zoom has given us piece of mind,
and helped us pass away the time.

We have written poetry and stories
and painted pictures in all their glory.
We have learnt how to find information,
and how to do meditation.
We have taken part in quizzes and games.
and looked at pictures of celebrities, guessing their names.

Now last week, we were saddened to hear.
Of the passing of Sir Captain Tom, who the nation held dear.
This old soldier, raised millions of pounds for the NHS,
by walking 100 lengths of his garden and doing his best.
But this Covid bug has no heart,
and took this dear old man and tore our world apart.
But this kind old soul gave everyone hope.
Tomorrow will be a good day! is what he did quote

Hopefully now that the vaccine is here.
We soon will be able to go out without fear.
Then meet our family in the same room,
But until then we will carry on with Zoom.



2020 Through the News

By Ruby Greene

You would think that at 73, life would have few surprises for me
But newscasts have made this year ultra-interesting
And even at the end what will happen next keeps me still guessing

When the year began we were all in a fix
With confusion surrounding BREXIT
The prime minister said we must leave by January's end
The EU was not a nice place to be and they were really not our friends

By the time February came, things were certainly not the same
A new Corona virus was lurking about
It would certainly take a few people out
In March we were all in lock down
Newscasters told us the disease was devastating.
It came from a family of viruses all shaped like a crown

As if this was not enough to keep us riveted to our screens
A Royal bombshell was dropped that bowled us clean
Prince Harry moved his family from Britain; they made quite a fuss
They said they did not want to be Royal and even more they no longer loved us
Some said it was because of Archie, we don't really know the score
But in social and printed media these Royals caused quite a furore

Every Thursday we were told to come out of our houses at 8
To clap for our heroes in the NHS and essential services
who bravely the virus did face
The spring/summer weather was fine
We all enjoyed the sunshine
And our gardens became a haven of rest
While the news media in our leaders kept our interest

Continued...

Boris contracted covid but he bravely survived
As did the heir to the throne and other leaders besides
Many politicians could not stand the strain
They found it difficult the rules to maintain
So some of them broke the rules it was a shame
They all had excuses for the media to clear their name

The first one to publicly face the fire
Was Dominic the prime minister's adviser
He was flippant and arrogant and tried to justify his way
These people had excuses galore they were bold as day
One had to take medication for his mother
While another tried to have a tryst with his lover
Another had to check her holiday home
What frivolous excuses they used because they did roam
They delighted the media who had a field day
Of making them look silly because of the hooky they played

Another unlikely media star we got
When 100 year -old Captain Tom out-shadowed that lot
He raised millions for the NHS and for this a knighthood he got

But just when things in the news threatened to be peaceful again
Prince Andrew got embroiled in a sex scandal; so they claimed
Although the media for this, him were not able to blame
The innuendos were so strong that his lovely daughter
had to have her wedding secretly
The prince could not appear in public
so the Royal bride we could not see on TV

Just when we thought that the Brexit issue had disappeared
Again in the media its troublesome head it reared
Negotiations were not going well no consensus they could reach ideal
Boris and his pals were threatening to leave with no deal and agreements to breach

Meanwhile the media told us the pandemic was killing millions
Vaccines they are still exploring, it is costing billions



But the person in 2020 who took up most media time by far
Was Donald Trump, now USA'S president and former reality TV star
He gave many press conferences, bizarre theories to expound
Where he got his misinformation from, still cannot be found
The media said that President Trump told the world; to cure the virus 'drink bleach'
I am not sure how this conclusion he had reached
The president said a pandemic was just fake news
He dismissed his scientists and advisers' views
His attitude gave him a kind of fame
He stopped funding the WHO and said the virus he could tame
He refused in public to wear a mask
And any of his followers who did so were taken to task
His contempt for the clinicians he did not hide,
And contradicted them as they stood by his side

So when he contracted the virus conveniently
This man was in and out of hospital and waving to all by day three
What news for the media this president provides
He survived impeachment, Covid, all in his superman stride

The year in the media seems to be ending the way it began
We are still in limbo with BREXIT we don't really know where we stand
Trump is still the centre of media controversy
This time its even more riveting than when the year started as we can all see
The president of the USA declares I won the elections; I don't care what votes say
So in the white house I fully intend to stay
He blames the media for his present plight
I am not giving up this post without a bitter fight
The pandemic is still raging, thousands are dying each day
A vaccine they tell us is on the way

We are now in our second lock down
And closely following the media daily
to learn what solutions are being found
How pervasive the media is in our lives
How much they influence the way we survive



How do I love her?

By Marjorie Green

I love the way she cuts the bread
when it's for me.

The way the slices ripple and curl
like young waves on the sea.

I love the way she spreads the stork
from left to right.

The way she scrapes it off again
and wipes the knife.

I love the way she stacks the rounds.
The way she slaps them to, the height,
the breadth, the passionate way
she calves them through.

Then how she wraps them up
as if I'm late
and throws them at my chest
as she slams the gate.

I love the way she pecks my cheek,
"see you at one."
Yet half-way down the street, I wave
and find she's gone.

I must admit this lunch-time though
I'm rather in despair;
she's given me ham instead of spam.
Is she having an affair?

The Enterprise

By *David Lightfoot*

We welcomed in the New Year, 2020 and greeted everyone wishing them a Happy New year.

In February I attended a business meeting at our Church for events to take place in 2020 (dv) God willing. A Fish and chip supper for March, also a 70 years party for a friend.

During early March we celebrated our Birthdays, Jordan's 21st, David's 71st, we enjoyed afternoon tea at Shrigley Hall near Macclesfield. We enjoyed a good family meal at The Bush Stockton brook.

But in mid-March the Covid 19 virus cloud covered all countries, we're in Lockdown because of the situation at present. This affected my Wife and I, we're both sad at the News of friends very ill, the NHS working marvellous every day. We watched the programme from the Prime Minister Boris Johnson, it was directed at everyone - follow the guide lines, wash hands, wearing your face mask.

Every meeting that was planned at our Church was cancelled due to the Covid 19. Because I'm Diabetes type 2 I had to be careful where I went. I was stressed out in the situation at present, felt worthless at times.

Early April came along and out of the blue we had phone call from Clare, so there's friends caring for everyone out there.

At the Beth Johnson Foundation in Stoke on Trent, the team had arranged a series of zoom meetings, twice weekly to chat along with other people who were in the situation at present. We thought it was good to have a link to attend the zoom meetings, so we joined the BJB Enterprise ship with everyone in our situation. We have had Music Zoom meetings where we name that tune, on Wednesday morning it's the Poetry group, we're enjoying also the Art session. From starting to draw the Newquay Harbour, I'm sketching the Winking Man Roaches Leek area.

There's fun and friendship from all on the Enterprise, I'm feeling great I can do many things now thanks to the Team at BJB.

When you're feeling down, don't sleep in your eiderdown, in the Lockdown,
But join everyone on the Enterprise ship at BJB!

Making Lemonade

By Ruby Greene

Lemonade is a simple refreshing drink

It is made with a very acidic citrus fruit, and can be clear or pink

How you make it is unlikely to affect the taste

Simply add Water and sugar to suit your taste

To obtain a Caribbean flavour if you want it to taste swell

You can add a drop of Vanilla essence, and Angostura bitters as well

When life gives you lemons make lemonade the old saying goes

So we try to sweeten the bad things that happen in our lives: Why goodness knows

On most occasions you cannot change what hand in life you are given

But sweetening it up to make it a plus is a talent to which I have striven

In 2020 some large lemons in life I received

At times I really felt very peeved

But then I realized that many people have similar experiences

I stopped feeling sorry for myself and saw these as opportunities to which I was privileged

Early in the year a virus came in the shape of a crown

It threw the world into universal lock down

We were told of vulnerabilities

And this information made me to know I was in the front line saying 'YES PLEASE'

Because of this, people like me had to shield and not touch

Those near to me and ones I love so much

No hugging, no kissing, only social distancing

No holidays, no parties, no pubcrawls or social gatherings

But we could go out for walks and for shopping

The potential for making lemonade with this was hard to conceive

Especially when three of my friends passed away suddenly from the disease

But as I started walking around the estate in the evenings my mind to ease

Discovering new places and seeing things for the first time made me pleased

There were lovely blooming gardens, trees and woods which before this time I did miss
I would never had believed that simply walking could bring such bliss

Following the politicians with their shenanigans was amusing to observe
With U-turns, rule breaking and lying excuses; they certainly had some nerve
Major Tom was amazing, and a blood moon had us to the sky gazing
But of BREXIT.... very little we were hearing

Gloom and isolation were soon dispelled
Jane got me an Alexa whom anything I can tell
Clare and Karen introduced us to Zoom
And that is when my activities started to boom
Jon soon joined with music classes and Maggie with poetry
Clare with art classes my drawings were certainly a sight to see
Amanda joined the coordinating of groups
Our videos and drawings she puts on Facebook.

I also discovered Webinar
Started gardening courses and other classes I feel like a star
My garden bloomed this summer better than other years by far
My amateurish efforts make me feel satisfied
And being able to use technology so well gives me a feeling of pride
I can attend church services all over the world
The Caribbean, USA and England meeting friends near and far
Although my grandchildren seldom visit with me
Through face time and Alexa calls their happy faces I see

Now the year is almost done. It seems that this new way of life which we in 2020 begun
Will be the norm for us for some time to come
And when no-so-good things happen to me
I always have a good friend like Dorothy
She is always there for me when I need a friend
With Dave by her side a witty statement to lend
She helps me make my lemonade refreshing to taste
So I think I will keep making this drink In this time and place.

What does Lockdown mean to me?

By Dorothy Lightfoot

THE NEGATIVES

The Loneliness - not going places
The look of fear on people's faces.
They cross over the street,
so that our faces don't have to meet.
Makes me feel like a LEPER!

How people were so mean,
there was no toilet rolls to be seen.

Churches closed, love ones die.
No one could say goodbye.

Only exercise once a day,
Families called but couldn't stay.

Not being able to see our families is hard you know !
Their birthdays come and away they go.
And because of this bug,
we can't even give them a hug.

Hair growing long,
nails growing strong.
No hairdressers, no dentists, no doctors to meet.
Oh the state of hubby's poor feet.

Having to wear masks
like the government asks.

Cancelled holidays and trips,
not being able to go on ship.

THE POSITIVES

During lockdown there was lots to do,
Plenty of time but no places to go.
Lots of books to read piled by the chair.
Shamed to say, they are still there.

I have done lots of things that didn't know I could do,
like painting fences and trying recipes new.
Cutting hubby's hair, seeing to his feet.
Going on conferences calls and zooming people to meet.

Clapping for keyworkers with the neighbours together,
and the garden has never looked better.
Listening to stories of people who went that extra mile,
and the things they did made me smile.
Like Captain Tom walking aged one hundred years,
to raise millions of pounds had me in tears.

It is sad not to go to Church to sing and pray,
But I know that God is with me all the day.

The Potteries

By David Wozny

You don't have any influence on where you are born,
But if you happened to come from the Potteries you wouldn't be forlorn,
In receipt of an outsider's ignorant comment I'd reply "It's God's country",
The landscape isn't particularly inspiring, but most of the people are really lovely.
There's a term of endearment we use, irrespective of gender,
It always sounds nice - and comes across as tender,
Other regions have hen or pet or honey - even luv if you're in luck,
But nothing can trump DJ Mel Scholes on Signal Radio saying "up 'anley me duck".

When working down south and asked where I lived I'd say "I'm from Stoke",
Inquisitors would often snigger -as though I'd told them a joke,
If someone suggested I had a strange accent
I'd ask if they knew "Arthur tow crate",
I took joy in their unknown acknowledgement
that they didn't know "how to talk right".

I once ran the Potteries marathon - following exhaustion to walking I resorted,
The enthusiastic spectators were ace - it was several times voted best supported,
After twenty-three miles I had to stop briefly in Clayton - in Seabridge Lane,
I was given a mug of tea by some roadside strangers - it trumped getting Champagne.

I served an engineering apprenticeship with a rough tough group of blokes,
Aged just seventeen I was often their skivvy and the butt of their jokes,
Being sent to the stores for a left-handed screwdriver was a gentle pun,
But being chucked fully clothed into the Trent & Mersey canal wasn't much fun.

I played for Thistley Hough high school in their football team,
Admittedly I wasn't much good, but I could still daydream,
Eric Bristow and Phil Taylor were darting world champions, an oche they stood at,
But outsiders are probably more aware of Robbie Williams, the guy from Take That.

I'd thought Westlands was upmarket and Trentham was posh,
Whenever I went to Abbey Hulton or Bentilee I kept an eye on my dosh,
I have lived in Trent Vale - we preferred to call it Vegas,
Elton John alighted his helicopter at the Michelin grounds
he musn't have been precious.

If you like fancy fine China - there's Doulton, Minton,
Spode and then Wedgwood,
You won't find them in actual use
as they are fragile and expensive - i.e. rather too good,
Almost everyone has an aunt / uncle / nan / grandad
who worked in a potbank or factory,
They'd've had a kitchen with contraband mugs
and plates - blithely considered as complementary.

Arnold Bennet wrote a novel about the Potteries five towns,
he clearly couldn't count or add,
He'd left out Fenton, which is my least favourite of the six -
but really not so bad,
Captain Edward Smith of the Titanic was born in Hanley
along with Leonardo di Caprio he went down with the ship,
Reginald Mitchell was an engineer from Butt Lane
who designed the Spitfire, the WW2 RAF hit.

In our Potteries dialect instead of saying won't - we'll often say wunner,
And rather than say don't - we may prefer to say dunner,
Husbands often don't refer directly to their wife - they may say "Mar lady",
To my ears it sounds ace - but some outsiders say it's just silly.
A friendly inquisition may be something like "Ah do, ow at, at owe rate?"
Its literal translation (for outsiders) is "Hello, how are you? Are you alright?"
"Cost kick a bo agen a wo an yed it till it bosts" is probably only a legend,
It's hard to imagine where it could ever have been used - it's unlikely to start a trend.

The successful billionaire Denise Coates at Bet365 - is a local lass,
She doesn't dodge taxes and is passionate about her charity foundation -
simply stated she's class,

We love our North Staffordshire oatcakes - the choice of fillings is immense,
Everyone has a passionate choice - for me bacon and cheese makes the most sense.

The landscape was once strewn with bottle ovens,
but now only a few remain to enjoy,
There's a lovely potteries museum at Gladstone
which I've visited as man and boy,
Starting at 'neck end' there's Longton, Fenton, Stoke, Hanley, Burslem and Tunstall,
Some may be nicer than others - regardless we should cherish them all.



Zoom Interrupts

By Maggie Bradley

Zoom zips the disparate ripped apart
Postponed projects paused progress to play
Painters paint Instagramming art
Performers play live for Pay-pal pay
Screenshare shares and videos go wrong
Greenscreen backgrounds show exotic scenes
Streaming singers synchronise in song
Immediate interaction intervenes
Society advances civilized
Participation revolutionised

↑ Ups and Downs ↓

By Jon Cacia

we all have our good times,
and the bad
we sometimes are happy
and sometimes are sad

but we have always got someone
that will be there to look after us
yes sure - we have our moments
when we feel down
but there is always someone there
to cheer you up.

look to the future with your head held high
and you will have
a life filled with love
and kindness.

Healthy Generations

By Dorothy Lightfoot

When lockdown came what were we to do?
We were left without a clue.
Then friends from Beth Johnson came to our rescue.

We went on Zoom and met with Friends.
Our poetry, artistic talents showed no end.
We went on Zoom to help with our wellbeing.
What would you like your goals to be, Jane asked at the beginning.
My answer came. I need to loose some weight.
If I carry on like this, I won't get out of the gate.
So Jane and Manda Encouraged me to get motivated.
They sent me diet sheets and online exercises ,in case I hesitated.

So the weeks went quickly by.
And I Very Hard Did try.
My extra weight began to go
A thinner me started to show.
But Now my clothes no longer fit.
A good excuse to buy a new kit.

But this all thanks to healthy Generations
Who now have gone up in my estimations!

Hip (h)Op

By Steve Bambury

Will I dance to Northern Soul again?
No but I will travel soon by Steam train
Will I be able to run my Ultra Distance?
No but I will be able to ballroom dance
Will I be able to walk the northern fells?
No but I will cruise the canals and Seychelles
Keep taking the pain killers for relief
Keep doing the physio for belief
Will the pain I feel ever go away?
Yes when the consultant says 'All is Okay'



Watering Can

By Jane Snape

I've lost my watering can
Oh where could it be?
I'm sure I had it yesterday
When my grandson was with me

We were Watering plants
Of many descriptions
Juicy tomatoes and potatoes Beans so tall
we went on tiptoes

But I've lost my watering can
Oh where could it be?
Ah yes - it's in the fish pond
Why wouldn't it be!



Senior Moments

By Dorothy Lightfoot

Senior moments seem to come thick and fast!
I hope when I have one it will be the last.
I am forever losing glasses and keys.
Where I find them, well you wouldn't believe.
I once looked for an hour for the keys to the car,
and when I found them, they hadn't gone far.
For there they were on the hook by the door.
I never thought to look there before.



One day my hubby was too late for the bus,
So I said, I would take him as he made such a fuss
I sat in the car and began to wait
Then decided to save time, I went out of the gate.
As I was driving down the road,
A mystery to me began to unfold.
For in the car there was only me.
The seat was empty where hubby should be!
So around the roundabout I did go,
to pick up hubby who was ever so slow,
I got back home and still had to wait.
Then took him to work, so he wouldn't be late.



One day I had done my weekly shop,
then packed the car and came to a stop.
Before I go home I must go to the hole in the wall,
to get some money as I recall.
Then after that I must get some petrol for the car,
or else I won't get very far.
So I went to get some cash.
Then to the petrol pumps I made a dash.
but there was something I forgot,
I had left the car in the parking lot!

What was I saying?

By Amanda

I remember the postcode
from my childhood home
But I can't for the life of me
find my phone!

I can tell you the lyrics
of hundreds of songs
They play on the radio
and I sing along...

But I go to a cupboard
and open the door
I've already forgotten
what I'm looking for!

Car keys, glasses,
my favourite book
Are not in their place
when I start to look

But, 'Senior Moments'?
Surely not!!

My mind's just too busy
that's why I forgot!



Loyal Handbag

By Maggie Bradley

My handbag is bruised, tattered, torn
Journeys and excursions took their toll
Corners threadbare, coarse and worn
And underneath my purse there is a hole

My handbag faithfully serves
Keys, tissues and payment card are stored
In reach. Purse at hand to pay
Mobile phone for texting when I'm bored

Loyal companion ever true
How I'll miss your zips and compact style
To John Lewis, to purchase new
Once replaced, I'll think that you are vile



Pets

By Jon Cacia

We go about our daily life
making sure that everything is done

We go out with our friends
and have some fun

But we never forget the pets
that we have at home

They will jump on the sofa
and rip up the foam

But we always make sure
that they are fed
and let them know
that they are always loved.

Pippin

By Dorothy Lightfoot

When coming out of the swimming baths one day, I met Ruby on the way.
She said "What have you been doing this week-end?"
"Looking for a dog to home!" I replied to my friend.
"Ha "said Ruby. "I may have the answer, to help you and save a disaster,
my friends son's dog, they cannot keep .Why don't you go round and take a peep?"
I went around I couldn't wait, a Staffie blue was at the gate.
She made such a fuss, she stole my heart, I knew then we could never part.

They'd had Pippin from a pup, and for eight years watched her grow up.
When their son William was very small, he climbed up and fell off the garden wall,
he rolled and rolled down a hill, Mum was out of the sight of Will,
but Pippin barks went on and on. Till mum ran out and found her son ,
he could have been hurt she did say but Pippin the hero saved the day.

Pippin was a member of their family, who stole their hearts and ate their tea.
but they had to move house , where they couldn't keep pets, not even a mouse.
So a new home for Pippin had to be found,
To search for new owners they looked all around.

So to us Pippin came to live, and oh the joy that she does give.
When Pippin arrived she was very fat. So we had to put an end to that.
We walked and walked and had some fun, sometimes we went for a run.
She suddenly would, make a dash to try and eat feathers, slugs and other trash.
She was very strong for me, I often fell upon my knee.

I took her to dog training school! She didn't like dogs as a rule.
We went for training one to one and learnt some lessons, the day was won.

She still tried to chase jumping frogs, and sadly she was attacked by dogs.
One dog out without a lead bit Pippin's tail, and we both hit the ground,
but the owner and dog didn't wait around.
So to the Vets we had to go, who even patched me up you know.
Over the four years that Pippin with us has been, lots of visits to the Vets we have seen.

Sadly last year Pippin was in pain, Her eye was removed, which was a shame
Now as her sight is not so clear, when we go out, to me she keeps near.
She doesn't see dogs or other creatures, and her sight loss has changed her features.

Pippin may not be able to see, but where we go is not up to me.
If she doesn't want to go my way, She will just sit down as if we have all day.
Having poor sight I suppose, She now has a sat nav for a nose.
She knows just where she wants to go, I just have to follow don't you know.

We can never thank enough, the family that had it so tough.
To give away their beloved Pippin, but I'm so glad and that's no kiddin'.

We don't know long
we have with our friend,
but we will love her
till the very end.



A Walk on the Wild Side

By Steve Bambury

I am 17, its 1964.

There's someone knocking at the door

It's my band in the Commer van

Geoff, Mike, Tony and Stan

Off we set on an Autumn day

Shrewsbury is the destination, the way

All excited, singing our songs

Biggest gig yet on our tongues

Young Farmers Club end of season event

From 9 to 1 they all will be present

First band on we arrive around six

Plenty of time to feel the hype, the fix

I am looking for the headlining Moody Blues

Oh how I wish I was in their shoes

Our band name with arrows on the walls

The dressing room at the side of the stalls

Yes dressing room, no changing in the lay -by

I feel like I king who thinks they can fly

I see the Moody Blues have the next block

I can hear the noise from the inside, their flock

I get some courage and knock on the door

Big guy arrives , people lying on the floor

"Hello, I am looking for Graeme Edge"

He's over there at the side of the fridge

“Dear Mr Edge can I have a go on your drum kit?”

“*&\$!#%*” came the answer, I feel such a twit.

I move to the stage still feeling a rage

The Moody Blue kit is still in the cage

Its 9pm the place for our band we walk

There’s a sparse crowd and plenty of talk

Before we know our slot finishes, exhausting

The crowd start to surge, noise is deafening

At the side of the stage as keen as the crowd

Its nearly 10, Young Farmers chanting aloud

On they come, as expected late

They kick off their set at such a rate

The gig is over its time to go

The kit in the van I feel a glow

Just past midnight, past Percy Throwers gaff

All singing and joking having a laugh

Splutter, cough, crack and stop

OMG is the engine going to drop?

Where are we, how to get home from here?

Push, push is the only way I fear

We get home the following day

Did we find somewhere to stay?

Where’s the next concert my family

Playing with the Kinks at The Place in Hanley

After that we have a tour of Sweden

My mum says NO, gives me no reason

Its back to school for you my son

Your role in the band is over and done

Getting through Lockdown!

By Amina Pangarkar

Lockdown is hard for everyone.

Being mostly homebound, at first lockdown did not appear to matter, as I was used to staying at home.

When lockdown happened the fact that you are forced to stay at home changed all that. I began wondering what I was going to do with my time and soon, all of sudden I began to feel lonely and sad.

Then I received a letter asking me to join Beth Johnson via zoom.

Funny thing was My son had handed me his old computer 5 years ago. So I decided to put it to some use but I didn't know how to use app or download it on my computer. I realised that just staring at the laptop was not going to make it work but I was holding back because I was nervous to get started. Eventually, I got it started and thanks to Zoom I started to meet people.

My participation via zoom has helped to boost my self-confidence and raised my self-esteem. It has help me to build a sense of purpose and connected me with others. I am able to participate in activities I thought I couldn't or was no good at, such as drawing or writing poetry and embroidery. The wellbeing sessions helped me be more aware of benefits of walking, I have improved my diet and seen the benefits of online videos relating to relaxation and breathing.

As a group we have encouraged each other and thanks to help given by Jane, Clare, Amanda, Maggie, Jon and the rest of the team I really enjoy all sessions, it is really relaxing & fun!

What Easter Means to Me

By Dorothy Lightfoot

The Easter Bunny, chocolate eggs,
Children hunting racing round on little legs,
Oh where can those eggs be.
IS this what Easter means to me ?

New life appearing all around
Shoots and flowers growing on the ground.
Chicken hatching lambs bouncing as quick as be.
IS this what Easter means to me ?

Sunshine, new smells fill the air,
Days are longer, full of care,
Meeting families as happy as can be.
IS this what Easter means to me?

At Easter time Jesus died on the cross the world to save
Then on the third day He rose up from the Grave,
If in him we do believe
Salvation then we will receive
One day in Heaven with him to be.
NOW THIS IS WHAT EASTER MEANS TO ME !



Autumn - My least Favourite Season



By Ruby Greene

I do not like autumn much, It is a bit depressing as such
To add the grey and gloomy weather
About this season does not make me any feel better
The cold has arrived, and another six months of this I must survive
The days are drawing in , so no more sitting in the garden at night until ten
No more sun on my body, the woolies have to come out and are ready
Stylish slippers, sandals and strappy dresses are packed in a pile
It is time to give up my free and easy summer styles

The heating comes on and up goes the fuel bill
Although you switch suppliers ever year
It seems to make little difference and certainly gives you no thrills
These things bring no joy to me I must stress
If I am not mindful, it will make me depressed
So I look to the things which to me will give cheer
And look hopefully forward to spring in the upcoming year
The leaves change colour; how beautiful they look
Red, gold and greens; these beautiful blend of colours look like paintings in a book

But this beauty is fleeting and only for a short while
They soon get brown, dry and lifeless and ready for the compost pile
The beauty that a short time ago shone on a tree
Is now a nuisance underfoot and have to be swept away like a bad memory
And soon you stare and bare branches and dark grey autumn skies
And try to see something positive in this vista and not to focus on how
things around you in this season just die

But autumn cannot be prevented or stopped
So like life we have to make the most of what we have got
After all autumn is a season that only lasts a few months
So it is not worth getting myself in the dumps
I enjoy the cacophony of autumn colours and how in the wind their leaves soon fly
It's amazing this fleeting beauty and I ponder why
The fields of gold are a sight to behold
And berries of different colours make their appearance so bold
Autumn certainly brings out the philosopher in me
As I explore this season for the many beautiful things to see

To be practical I have to bring my plants in from the cold
They are all healthy from the summer sun and rain and look so good
My house is alive with lots of plants green
And it really presents a beautiful scene
By the time the summer comes around the next year
Lots of them are poorly and some have gone to plant heaven I fear
It certainly gives me something in the cold months to do
To nurture and care them until they can again get some dew

I prepare my sweets for the eager children at Halloween
When they knock on my door with faces keen
As their little eyes rivet on the sweets before they can exclaim 'Trick or Treat'
While their parents stand behind them anxiously shifting on their feet
Observing their innocence and how easy they are to please
Brings such joy and fills me with ease
This small act of making children happy on a cold, dark dreary night
Lightens my mood and fills me with delight

Then there are the festivals of lights starting early in November
Passing seamlessly along straight into December
These banish my gloom of autumn away
As I wait for the time to start happily preparing for Christmas day.

Pathway to Winter

By Amanda

The colours of Autumn
the changing from green
to red, brown and gold
What a sight to be seen!

Trees become naked,
their leaves on the ground,
Delighting the children
who kick them around.

The wind gets more biting;
days shorter, nights longer
and the urge to stay in
by the fire grows stronger
The temperature falling
as summer subsides,
Easing our path
to where winter resides

Christmas

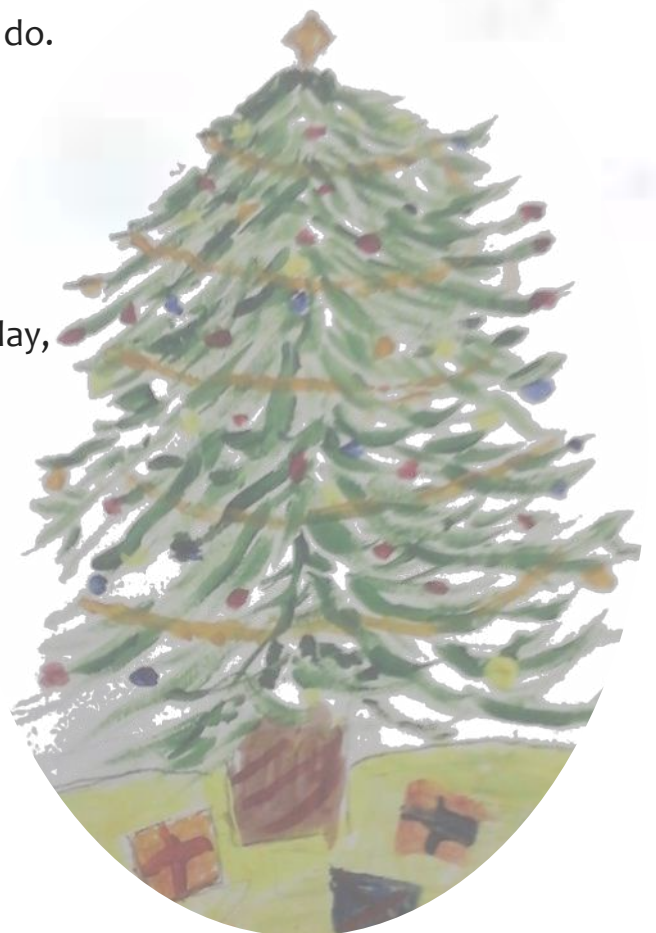
By Dorothy Lightfoot

Christmas comes but once a year,
A time that I hold so very dear.
A time to spend with family,
of opening presents with shouts of glee.
And baubles and lights on the Christmas tree.
Lots of memories of times gone by,
and the games and quizzes that we did try.

I think about that first Christmas plan,
when God sent his Son to save man.
When Jesus was born in a stable,
while shepherds visited when they were able.

But this year, there has come a bug,
which means our family, we cannot hug!
Although the government has said, what we can do.
That to other households we can go.
We must still keep apart,
even though it breaks you heart.
And you must be able,
not to face each other across the table.
No pass the parcel, and board games you can't play,
and you must go back home that day!
Don't forget on your Christmas list,
Hand gel and mask must not be missed.

I know this government is doing its best,
to save us from this virus pest.
But chance whatever they do say,
they can't take away
the real meaning of Christmas Day.



Healthy Generations

By Sue Stevenson

Strange times we are living in
You can say that again.
Stay at home, social distance
Rule of six or, fingers crossed, maybe 10.

Our lives put on hold
A burdening sense of isolation
The search for help and support
Found in Beth Johnson, Healthy Generations.

Shared projects and interests
Support our health and well being.
Focus on our body and mind
New ideas for doing and seeing.

Learning in lockdown
Very different to learning in school
New ways to get together
Technology our new learning tool.

Meeting new people, making new friends
Yes, we really are all in one room.
But don't panic we're not breaking the rules,
Thanks to the amazing magic of Zoom.

So many groups to be involved in
No more the feeling of isolation
How proud we all are
Being part of our own internet sensation!

A special time to look forward to
To meet up with new found friends.
Learning and talking with others
At that special time, being apart ends.

Beth Johnson, Healthy Generations
You've made a huge difference to me.
Meeting so many lovely people
Whilst improving my wellbeing, my art and poetry.

Goodbye dear friend

By Ruby Greene

When the nights are dark
And I can feel sadness in my heart
I look up to the sky
To see whether any stars I can spy
I am looking for a new star which should be shining bright
My very good friend Gloria has departed this life.

Gloria, I met in the swinging sixties, here in England
We met by chance at a hospital and discovered we both came from the same land
We became firm friends, we had so much in common
Same sense of humour, same values and both foreigners in busy London

We partied together and went on holidays too
We shopped together and shared a home or two
Both met our husbands around the same time
And soon got married and had babies, no more time to lime
We had to stop house sharing when babies came along
We ended up buying houses in different towns
But we kept close no matter what
Swapped children's clothes and met often for snacks and chats.

Then I moved away to Trinidad
When we parted company, we were both sad
But hey, our bond remained strong and tight
We were soon visiting each other using trans- Atlantic flights

During the time I was away, Gloria looked after my interests here
She even hosted my parents for a short holiday and bestowed on them loving care
Anything that she could do to, she was always happy to help
She was a person who gave generously never thinking first of herself
Throughout the passing years, joys and sorrows we always shared
There was never a doubt that for each other we deeply cared

On my return to England, we were living in different regions I fear
But still my friend remained to me dear
Sometimes, although not often, we met for a hug and a kiss
We spent long hours on the telephone catching up with what we missed

Two weeks before she sadly passed away,
We had our extended catch up in the morning one Saturday
When we were done, we were well pleased, and my spirit felt light
I laughed as we hung up, we had put the world to rights
Gloria seemed well, and apart from our usual aches and pains
We found no reason about life to complain
So imagine the shock when her son rang to tell me she succumbed to the COVID virus
With daily updates he promised to keep me posted ...
I never thought that this was the end of us.

Gloria was cruelly taken from the ones she loved; we were too shocked to cry
No gathering by her bedside, no farewell kisses, no saying goodbye
Just a body sealed in a coffin, which no one was to touch, that was the way
This is how my dear friend left this world, what can I say?
Ten people with masks and social distancing, no hugging no each other comforting
Said goodbye on a cold rainy day to a loved one, their grief withholding

Dear friend you were one of the kindest persons I knew
Your generosity and good deeds were not a few
I look to the skies now, these cold dark nights
And know that on this earth you are a star beaming your light
Goodbye my friend, I miss your smile, your wit and your fun
You have finished your journey and your work here on earth is done
When all these restrictions are over your life, we will celebrate in style
We will remember your lovely spirit, chat about you, and how much
You enriched our lives for a while.

REST IN PEACE GLORIA

Two Metres Apart

By Marjorie Green

The room was bright
for a crematorium
Bennie Anderson
played us in.
Fifteen chairs
We were lucky.

And in the midst
my lovely Frank
in a coffin
dressed for spring.

The vicar
young
and full of faith
spoke of a life full
of music and cows,
of families,
his and mine
both hurting
both remembering
a different time
a different man.

Myself recalling
his hand
his words,
I can't go on.
The withdrawal,
that long sleep.

Thank you for the music
played us out.
No hugs, no
Thank you for coming.

Back at the farm
we ate alfresco
talked, laughed,
felt guilty.
His family and mine,
Two metres apart



Stay at home, Save lives

By Sue Stevenson

Follow the data, look at the numbers
Lockdown, immunity, quarantine.
Pandemic, unprecedented, test track and trace
A year the like there has never been.

Daily briefing, viral load, isolation
Social distance, sanitiser, face covering.
Protect the NHS, PPE, shielding
Ventilators, unrelenting grief, no recovery.

Family stories reveal the depths of despair
Carefully chosen words become your epitaph
Desperate messages, impassioned pleas
Stilled by your silent photograph.

Too late for so many who have passed
The anticipation of the roadmap to freedom.
Lessons that have been learnt, cases falling
Way out? The hope of global vaccination.

Behind every statistic a personal story
A life that has been unfairly cut short.
I didn't know you, never met you
But for now you are in my heart and my thoughts.

Time heals life goes on
Empty words that have little meaning.
So true, life will never be the same again
But today's pain is the start of tomorrow's healing.



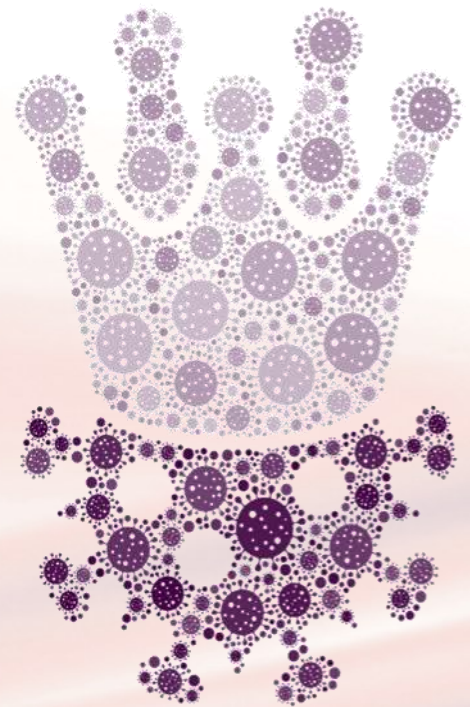
Beth Johnson Foundation vs The Royal Thief *by Ruby Greene*

It has been one year now since we have been living like this
Very similar to the famous 'annus horribilis'
It has been a year we will never forget I am sure
We have had to change our entire way of life and much more
It all happened because of a very clever thief
The things it has stolen are beyond belief

It has stolen so many freedoms which we took for granted
And many other things which to do we have wanted
It has stolen our ability to hug those we love the most
Weddings, parties and family gathering we cannot host
We cannot say goodbye to those who have passed away
Except in a muted, cold and distant way
Our dear friends we cannot meet for a chat
Have a cup of tea and a scone, this thief has also stolen that

But who/what is this thief I hear you say
Who from us has taken all of this away?
It is a virus called COVID shaped like a crown
It has a number 19 which tells us the year it began to take the world down
It has stolen some of our friends permanently
Their lovely faces we again will never see
There are rules and laws brought in to keep it under control
But even over medical vaccinations this virus tried to roll

It kept assuming various disguises, producing resistant strains in various countries
A vicious and resistant entity it is, it is everywhere, of it you have to be always aware
It takes you down suddenly you have to use all your natural resources
To fight this virus, it is worse than rebel armed forces
Because of this virus many of us must now walk alone
It has robbed us of visiting friends in their homes
We also cannot now travel very far, whether its by train, by bus or by car



Emboldened by it's success the thief tried to take our minds
That's when Beth Johnson's said Stop... or to you we will not be kind
They came in charging like the rescuing cavalry
To help us learn new skills and preserve our minds happily

What a rescue... this thief shaped like a crown
Thought that on the floor it had us all down
BJF said ... We will ensure that you do not feel lonely and isolated
They began to teach us to be more proficient in digital skills to keep us technologically updated
This enabled us every day to meet,
To chat with old friends and new people to greet

Once we mastered zoom, we were soon virtually lounging on the beach
Doing meditations, mindful exercises and even learning how more healthily to eat
We learned how to find and use new useful apps
How to devise strong passwords and to securely use social media like 'What's App'

We even had live cooking classes
And if we wanted, we could participate while we drink wine at home in long stem glasses
Parties we had on different occasions... what a rave
At Christmas and New year and on special birthdays
These daily activities helped to keep us afloat like a buoy
And contributed significantly to our every-day joy

We chatter and laugh while in art we do our drawings
Our poetry moments certainly discovered hidden talents
Music, trivia quizzes, and history lessons on Stoke, keep our brains buzzing
These exercises cleared the brains and keep them from fuzzing

No more watching the same programmes repeated on tv
For the hundredth time ... enough! no more we want to see
Adverts that are aimed at making older people spend their hard -earned money
To pay for your funeral in advance or to donate to numerous Charites
So thank you Beth Johnson Foundation, you have made this year bearable
By helping us older people to fill our lives, which could have been otherwise miserable
Zap!! Bang!!! and WOOSH!!! To that naughty Royal thief, you could not steal
Our ability to enjoy our golden years, Because Beth Johnson has made happy survival real

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@BethJohn64



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a future for all ages

