

CLUB INTERNATIONAL



CLUB TRIP to PUY DU FOU

8-10 August 2020

When COVID-19 hit, we feared the worst but the park reopened in time for 5 masked Club members, armed with hydrogel, to climb aboard the Combedouzou coach to visit the world famous Puy du Fou in the Vendée. For two days and nights, we were amazed and riveted by the most stunning performances imaginable. In a word --- UNFORGETTABLE!

During the day, there were chariot races; a Viking long ship siege; scenes from the 100 Years War; musketeers on horseback and flamenco dancers in water. We felt the wind from the wings of hundreds of raptors flying overhead and saw scenes from the Vendée's bloody history.

Saturday night had us glued to our seats by the world's largest stage, the LA CINÉSCÉNIE. Here 2,500 actors (mostly volunteers) + hundreds of animals, told the history of the Maupillier family and people of the Vendée. There were incredible fireworks, beautifully choreographed waterworks; and outstanding technical lighting and set designs. Absolutely spectacular.

Monday morning took us to La Rochelle where we celebrated a member's birthday in style with lots and lots of mules before heading back to Montaigu.

STOP PRESS - IT'S GOOD NEWS!

The Club walks - short and all day - will start again in September. So dust off those boots and watch out for emails telling you where and when to meet.

HAPPY HIKING



CONTENTS

Page 1

- Puy du Fou trip

Page 2

- A Love Story
- The Great Escape
- Dance-fit Queen

Page 3

- The Show must go on
- The Constant Gardener

Page 4

- Mask Crusader
- Woodwork - How I Survived Confinement -

Page 5

- Accident Report
- Patchwork Group

Page 6

- Committee
- Café Philo
- Bridge

LOVE in the time of COVID

When lockdown was imposed, for me, being alone, for what could be months on end, was something to dread. Then fate intervened. Having recently met a lovely American lady who lived in Paris, we took the rash/brave decision to enjoy/endure confinement together in my house in Edinburgh. This could have been an unmitigated disaster but happily it proved to be the opposite and, the good news? We're still together.



Singing, now an important part of my life, began as therapy two years ago, after my wife died. Following some lessons, I gained enough confidence to sing with friends, a guitarist and a pianist, and we formed a group called The Swells. Our first ever show was performed last year at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival where, to our surprise, we played to a sell-out audience. Before the lockdown in March, rehearsals had started for this year's festival and though it was subsequently cancelled, the Festival promoters asked us and other artists to record a shortened version of the show which we did in Edinburgh, leaving 2 metres between us, of course.

Malcolm Windsor

THE GREAT ESCAPE

David and Rosemary Howat

From our kitchen window in April, we witnessed a mid air mugging by a small bird of prey which then hightailed it away dropping its victim to the ground. Said victim lay quietly, apparently winded but apart from that, it seemed relatively OK in spite of losing a few feathers. There it remained for about half an hour. Meanwhile we asked a twitcher friend for advice on helping the bird and whether he could identify it from the photo. He consulted his more experienced twitcher brother who confirmed it was a cuckoo, a relatively rare female rufous variant. While David and I were still discussing moving our only visitor for weeks to safety, she flew away as if nothing had happened. An unexpectedly happy ending and the most exciting thing to happen during lockdown!



DANCEFIT QUEEN

by Betty Lilly

Hats off to Linda and Graham Preston for producing several gentle DanceFit videos that they posted on You Tube. Seeing comments and articles about "The Confinement and 4 kilo Weight Gain" Linda was anxious that her students would/might fall into this category so Linda, aided by "DJ" Graham, quickly sprang into action, creating 20 minute DanceFit workouts, in French, designed for us to follow at home alone. After their initial success and spurred on by Club members, they rolled out several more routines. Merci beaucoup for all your help and joy!

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

It was a tremendous blow to the Troupe des Acteurs when our many plans for the year were mothballed. Not knowing how long lockdown might last, as President of the Troupe, I thought it would be good to keep in touch with members by sending a weekly email.

The weeks passed, I had more time to devote to the Troupe, and we got creative with Zoom. This gave us social distancing par excellence and unlimited meeting time so we were able to run 10 quiz nights, 1 joke telling evening and 10 play script read-throughs which allowed many troupe members the opportunity to sample plays for future performances.

Once restrictions were eased, but observing social distancing whenever we met, we held

an ABBA night under the stars, which was organised by Pamela and Gaynor, two talented and active members.

Our AGM and summer social will also be held outdoors. Of course there'll be some entertainment thrown in too - we're actors, after all!

Sadly it's unlikely we'll have access to Montaigu's Salle de Fête any time soon, so in the coming months, we'll probably be doing more Quiz nights, play readings and joke nights - courtesy of our new best friend, Zoom.

John Blaus



THE CONSTANT GARDENER

When Audrey, my friend of 45 years, wanted to spend 2 weeks with us, I was thrilled. We knew each other pretty well having travelled round Europe together while at college. Audrey duly arrived on the 4th March, planning to leave on the 18th. We'd already discussed the possibility of her getting stuck in rural France by the pandemic, and we both agreed that this was preferable to being in densely populated UK so, when lockdown started in France on 17th March and her flight on the 18th was cancelled, we weren't phased. Soon after, as lockdown in the UK loomed and flights ceased altogether, we just reckoned that we'd hunker down, ready to sit it out. Five months later, Audrey is still here!

At the outset, Audrey decided that to keep herself amused, she'd do some gardening. Little did we think that she'd spend days, weeks then months doing a magnificent job

of completely re-landscaping certain areas of the garden, including digging up and moving rocks that probably weighed as much as she does. She's tireless - not only did she garden, she helped move building materials and tools; chopped vegetables; washed up; changed beds; cleaned; painted; sorted our belongings and helped with preparations for a family visit. She's transformed the garden and our life. Everyone should have an Audrey and indeed several friends here in MdQ have asked when she'll be available!

We've had our highs and lows; times when we were exhausted and patience ran out but with friendship that's lasted this long, we've learned to overcome such moments and we now feel closer than ever.

We know Audrey has to go home some time but we're hoping she can perhaps stay a little longer - our bread oven still needs renovating.

Gwyn Maude

MASK CRUSADER

After spending several lazy weeks pottering in the garden + some stitching projects, basically really enjoying the peace and quiet of lockdown, I became bothered that I wasn't doing anything useful to fight the virus. So many people were giving so much while I was snug in my bubble.

At that time, finding masks was really difficult, so, after researching patterns and regulations, I found myself at my sewing machine making 50 for Trem-Plein to sell or give to local people. In the absence of any available elastic, they had to have ties, which took time to make but tidied up a quantity of my patchwork scraps and



Sue's
mission
control
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other spare cotton fabrics, and hundreds of metres of thread! And it wasn't putting me in any danger.

Then I discovered a team of ladies making masks by Bon Coeur for distribution around the area to raise money, so I added another 50 towards their total of several hundreds, which resulted in donations of well over €1000. Fabric was supplied to the team, and after much searching, Charles Miskin sourced some elastic, which made the job much simpler.

I did feel less useless after this task, and after making a few more for personal use, I never want to make another mask! I applaud those who work in factories doing the same job ad infinitum. Not for me!

Sue Gauntlett

WOODWORK - HOW I SURVIVED CONFINEMENT

During the 3rd week of March, I finally found a half empty plane from Gatwick to Toulouse which felt like being in the last helicopter leaving Saigon.

Anyway, my cat, B, was pleased to see me as he was running short of the food left for him in the barn, which is where, surprisingly, my woodworking career began. With minimal knowledge, I built a barrier to the open end of the barn to provide B with security when I was away. Using a jigsaw and plane for my first project, I re-clad rotten door sections and installed a chip activated cat-flap, so that only B could go in.

When confinement boredom hit, retail therapy helped and I bought a sliding mitre saw (this is a male thing). Now that I could cut (accurate) angles, I decided to make a bird table for the many birds nesting in my hedge. Basic trigonometry finally came into play when calculating dimensions of roof cover for the table and for making legs sufficiently long to give stability. I then drew the design, cut the wood and screwed it all together and miraculously it survived strong winds and now gets routine visits from blue tits, green finches and sparrows.



By now I was hooked and my next project was a cold-frame, which proved to be another triumph! So much so that a further one is in the pipeline and I'm well on the way to being self-sufficient, vegetable-wise. After that, who knows? A lean-to greenhouse?

Clive Chapman

PATCHWORK GROUP

Rosemary Keeley

We so miss our Friday afternoons at the Club - talking, having a cup of tea and a biscuit - oh, yes, and doing some sewing too. From the beginning of lockdown, I've sent weekly emails to all our members and it's lovely to get the replies and see what sort of week everyone's had. We also share photos of our sewing projects and the beautiful flowers in our gardens. Everyone has been so busy, weeding and changing things around.

Once the restrictions lifted, on two afternoons, the girls got together at a member's house for tea and a chat which cheered them up. But sadly, for some of us, it was not possible to go out.

ACCIDENT REPORT - a cautionary tale

(if you think you've had a bad time recently, read on)

In response to your request for additional information. I put 'Poor Planning' as the cause of my accident and I trust the following details will be sufficient.

On the day of the accident, I was alone on the roof of a new 6-storey building. When I completed my work, I found I had some bricks left over which, when weighed later, were found to weigh 108 kgs. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel by using a pulley attached to the side of the building at the sixth floor.

Securing the rope at ground level, I went up to the roof, swung the barrel out and loaded the bricks into it. Then I went down and untied the rope, holding it tightly to ensure a slow descent of the 108 kgs of bricks. You will note on the accident report form that my weight is 61 kgs.

Due to my surprise at being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say, I proceeded at a rapid rate up the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel, proceeding downward at an equally impressive speed. This explained the fractured skull, minor abrasions and the

broken collarbone, as listed in Section 3 of the accident report form.

Slowed only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were two knuckles deep in to the pulley.

Fortunately by then I had regained my presence of mind held the rope tightly, in spite of the excruciating pain I was now beginning to experience.

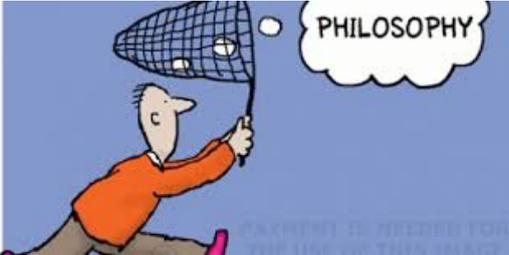
At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Now devoid of the weight of the bricks, the barrel weighed approximately 22 kgs.

I refer you again to my weight. As you might imagine, I began a rapid descent down the side of the building. In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel coming up. This accounts for the two fractured ankles, broken tooth and severe lacerations of my legs and lower body.

Then my luck began to change slightly. The encounter with the barrel seemed to slow me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell into the pile of bricks and fortunately only three vertebrae were cracked.

I am sorry to report, however, as I lay on the pile of bricks, in pain, unable to move and watching the empty barrel six storeys above me, I again lost my composure and presence of mind and let go of the rope....

Anon - adapted by Rosemary Howat



CAFE PHILO GOES ON LINE

In January we were suddenly confronted with an unknown phenomenon - a pandemic. But it was in China and China is a long way away. We were wrong. Some weeks later, Covid arrived in France.

Everything stopped. We couldn't move around freely. We couldn't see friends. The Club closed as did all the classes including, of course, Friday's Café Philo. I really missed it! We were a group of around 15 people of different nationalities and different characters. Our discussions were sometimes intense but always enthusiastic.

So we decided to meet on line. The first attempt failed but then with Coen's help, we succeeded. Coen and I each formed a small group and every Friday morning, we can be found in front of our screens for an online session of Café Philo. We see each other; we have discussions and for a short time, we are back among friends again. Though not so numerous now, the little groups that remain still enjoy getting together each week.

Karen Tenekes

BRIDGE ACROSS THE OCEONS

The game of bridge is a great way to deal with Covid. Joining my usual partner, I started to play on line with our local friends and quite quickly our network of players spread across Europe. And then the world.

We now play at 10am with Australia but also with Brazil (5 hours difference) and with the USA (8 hours difference).

Our Australian friends, also Club members, live in Tournon for part of the year but have been unable to return. So it's wonderful to see them sitting on their boat, with a laptop balanced on their knees while on the other side of the world. Technology is indeed amazing!

Karen Tenekes



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