



Learn, Laugh,
Live

Pier Views—March 2025

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From the chair:

Is it that time already? We all hope spring is on its way, and with it lighter evenings, warmer days and the chance to get out and about. Early May will see 40 of us heading off to southern Ireland but other trips and visits are planned.

The BIG event will be the Bognor Regis Carnival on 24 May and we will be looking for volunteers to help staff the stand that we have booked to promote the u3a in general but BRu3a in particular. Although the day runs from early until late it would be good to have people who could cover the 12 to 6 slot. Offers of an hour or so will be greatly accepted and a rota drawn up to accommodate everybody's preferences, watch the bulletin for further details.

I would urge groups to seriously consider the question of succession for that dreadful day when the group leader says, after a decade or so in the 'job' I wish to step aside. We have lost groups in

the past as nobody was prepared to take on facilitating a monthly meeting, and we are in the position of potentially losing other groups unless members step forward.

Not only does it diminish BRuza but the group members end up losing something that up until now they enjoyed. The committee is there to help and support groups during such a period of transition but we need the members support as well.

Do you belong to a group? What is involved in its running? Do you know, do you help? What is your contribution beyond attending?

Remember the uza is there for everyone to take part in, it is NOT a service where you turn up and things are done to you or for you. So please think about your group and BRuza in general and ask yourself what more could I do?



WALKING WITH DOGS

Our 'Walking with Dogs' group had a slow start, but at our last meeting our 'pack' had grown to 6 dogs with their human companions. Despite the cool wind we all enjoyed a gentle stroll around Marine Gardens. With lots of sniffing and waggy tails the dogs soon made friends, while the humans enjoyed a nice chat over a hot drink at the Beach Cafe.

Valerie & Phillip Henke

The speaker at the January 2025 Bognor meeting was David James Parker and his talk was about the History of The Royal Observer Corps and his involvement as a volunteer.

The aim of the ROC was the Visual detection, Identification, tracking and reporting of aircraft over Great Britain.

David introduced himself, not only as having been a volunteer, but also as a part-time historian of the ROC. His interest began when he went to the Shoreham Air show.

Historically and before it became known as the ROC, such activity was controlled by the Metropolitan Police, known as the Metropolitan Monitoring Service and was active for the period of WW1 providing warnings to the public. This service proved fruitful during this period, with bombing in Dover in 1914 and in London in 1915. In 1918, the service was decommissioned and eventually became the basis for the formation of the ROC in 1925.

In 1925, a trial began, the areas chosen were Horsham and Maidstone, controlled by a combination of the RAF, the Army, Metropolitan Police and the GPO. In 1926, Special Constables recruited to man Monitoring Posts, initially in the South East, but eventually, across Great Britain. These recruits were part time and volunteers. They received no pay, no allowances and did not have a uniform. There was a badge they could wear, but it had to be purchased by the

recruit at their own expense. The initial trial was at a station in Mannings Heath, near Horsham.

In 1939, as part of the restructuring of The Air Defence of Great Britain, the responsibility passed to the Air Ministry, although the recruitment and personal matters were retained by the Chief Constables.

In 1938, with war imminent, the only equipment the volunteers had was a steel helmet and an armband. As a result of the potential threat, improvements were made, not only to the equipment, but also more substantial monitoring stations were constructed and in better placed positions for observations, replacing previous structures, such as garden sheds and in some cases, no structure at all, just a location. There were now two types of volunteers, Part Time were known as Grade B and Full time as Grade A and this was the case until 1939.

Anyone from the age of 16 could be recruited and until 1942, it was for men only, but after that women could be recruited.

The organisation was proving to be a success, particularly during the Battle of Britain, when German bombers began attacking radar stations and in 1941 it was given the title of the Royal Observer Corps by the then Monarch, King George VI and came under the umbrella of Fighter Command.

The result of this reorganisation saw old members rejoining and some recruits were still lying about their age.

In 1944 in preparation for D Day, specialist volunteers were recruited, to be stationed in boats, during the forthcoming battle, titled Overlord. Of the 1000 or so who applied, 690 were selected for this mission. During the battle, three observers were killed and several others injured, plus others who were mentioned in despatches.

Prior to WW2, volunteers were awarded the Special Constabulary Long Service medal. However, when Fighter Command took over, this was abolished. In 1950, the monarch created the Royal Observer Corps medal for 12 years of service.

The 1950's saw a change in the type of aircraft, faster and also rockets were now in use and with the improvements in monitoring equipment, details of bombs being dropped could be analysed much better.

In the 1960's the need to protect Great Britain from nuclear attacks became much more important. This meant that ROC volunteers were needed to report any activity of this type and so specialist ones were recruited and became an integral part of the armed forces.

The main body of the ROC was stood down in September 1991 and the specialist Nuclear Reporting Cells in 1995.

David finished his talk by saying that he was one of the lucky ones to have been awarded a ROC medal just before standown, and he showed this and other medals to the audience, saying that some of these medals are so rare, they are worth between £250 and £300 each. He also invited the audience to come up to the front after his talk to see ROC memorabilia.

There then followed a q &a session:

How did they know about the weather situation at HQ?

Each monitoring station reported hourly as to the weather situation and this allowed HQ to plot more accurately.

How many wartime posts are still active | ?

Very few.

Julie, on behalf of the audience thanked David for his informative talk.



Rummikub

Since we began on 16th January our group membership has continued to grow. At the time of writing we have 32 members, including 3 people who have decided to join BRu3a after only one session of Rummikub.

We are a mixed ability group and a number of members had never played the game before or had not played for some time. Phillip decided to set up one of the games tables just for them and, with his help and encouragement this has proved very successful. These members say this has helped build their confidence and increase their enjoyment of the game.

A week before we are due to meet I send out a reminder email to everyone with details of our next meeting. I also attach a copy of the rules to ensure that we are all 'singing from the same hymn sheet'. We play in a very relaxed, friendly atmosphere of 'low key' competitiveness. Of course, at the end of the day everyone likes to win!!

Valerie & Phillip Henke

Thursday 19th December, Bognor u3a held it's annual Christmas dinner.

Again meeting up at Restaurant 64 Chichester college for a relaxed social event where good company and good food were the order of the day. Although numbers were down somewhat to last year, the jovial conversation and laughter more than made up. A varied menu was offered, with starters including Prawn scotch eggs or Beetroot salad and mains of Baked Cod to traditional turkey roast with all the trimmings. The Pear and hazel nut tart dessert was a delight. All followed by coffee and macarons.





Supper club at the Elmer Hotel 26 diners





Seniors putting the world to rights



For many older people the world is a scary place right now, but for the members of Bognor Regis u3a's 'Current Affairs Group' it offers some exciting topics for debate. This newly formed discussion group use their years of life experience to take the 'sting' out of living in today's chaotic world.

It's not just the enormous issues, like the Ukraine War and Gaza, threatening world peace and stability that they focus on. The group also enthusiastically debates contentious subjects such as our disastrous national legacy left by the Covid lockdowns. These seniors acknowledge that the lives of some of their contemporaries were saved by the Covid vaccinations. However they are also eager to praise the younger members of Society for the heavy price paid in order to achieve that goal. They are grateful to those youngsters, many of whom are contemporaries of their children and grandchildren who still suffer the long term effects of enforced

isolation as well as the side effects of the vaccines on youthful immune systems. In spite of the constant thread of uncertainty running through their discussions the group is keen to take a balanced view of life. After all many of them have lived through the Cold War threat, Falklands War and economic crashes and survived to tell the tale.

Their message to each other and to the younger generation is one of quiet optimism. No matter how many evil protagonists there are in the world there is always a nugget of hope and humour to be found. The group often finds the absurdity of some world leader's actions mildly amusing. Curiosity about life and all it entails is the lifeblood of this group. Don't we all love putting the world to rights over a nice cuppa.

Our Christmas wreaths today at Flower Arranging
Thanks to Debbie they were all beautiful





Simple rose display from flower arranging group





Flower arranging this week was very unusual as we made plant holders from moss and peat and all tied together with string. The idea comes from Japan and is called Kokedama.





The members of Bognor3a and their guests were delighted to welcome as the speaker at the February monthly meeting, Diana Levantine, Chairman and Co-Founder of the Snowdrop Trust.

Diana commenced her talk, by introducing herself and her background in nursing and saying that the aims and objectives of the Trust are “Hospital care at home for children with life threatening and terminal illnesses.

In 1992 The Friends of Chichester Hospital were asked to provide such a service, but were unable to do so, as a result in 1993, Diana, Frank Snell and Kate Shaw set up the Snowdrop Trust. The Trust has eight Trustees, who have varying skills in both medical, financial and business environments, plus life skills.

The Trust also has eight Patrons, Bishop Richard Moth, Bishop Martin Warner, Dame Patricia Routledge, Tommy Boyd, Lord Herbert, Hugh Dennis, Mary Bowerman and Her Grace, The Duchess of Norfolk.

The first action of the ward sister, who originally saw that care should be in the home and particularly that terminally children should be at home, was to ask Snowdrop families, what is it they needed for their children at home, as after hospital care can be difficult. They said they needed financial help, respite for parents and most importantly, support

by qualified paediatric nurses and advice on how to care for a child at home.

In general, parents know when their child is not well, so the first port of call is invariably their GP. G.P.'s do not always immediately think of cancer or life threatening illnesses when seeing a sick child. If necessary, the G.P. will then refer the child to a paediatric consultant, at either Southampton Children's Hospital or St. Richards, Chichester or G.O.S.H. (Great Ormond Street Hospital). At present there are 64 Snowdrop Children, on the Snowdrop Pathway, living approximately in a 15-mile radius from Chichester.

So, what services does the Trust provide:

Children's Community Nurses – they visit the child at home, carry out vital nursing procedures, take bloods, change dressings etc and provide advice and help for the parents.

Health care assistants – They spend time with the children and any other children in the family, playing at their home, or taking them out to the park, which often allows the parents time for siblings or even precious time for themselves.

Snowdrop Counsellors – Their main aim is to provide emotional support to the families.

Financial assistance – This can be done in various ways, such as providing medical equipment at home or travel expenses.

Fordwater School Nurse – Fordwater is a school for children with special needs, with over two hundred children, at this time there are 24 snowdrop children attending. The Trust funds a paediatric nurse to be in attendance at the school, to ensure the children’s nursing needs are catered for.

The trust looks after children from 0 to 19 years and they come from the area between Emsworth to Rustington, including Bognor and along the coast, up to Pulborough and Billingshurst.

The Care at Home Team consists of exceptional nurses, outstanding counsellors and support nurses.

Many of the people who work at Snowdrop, see it as a way of life, not just a job.

Diana gave us a few examples of such people:

“Snowdrop” Phil, who by incidence, lives in Felpham is a wonderful counsellor, with many skills and 30 years’ experience, a football fan (Arsenal) and a good sense of humour. He can break down barriers which enables parents and children to talk. He also has excellent bereavement skills, when they are needed.

Chloe is a community nurse, with exceptional skills. She becomes a professional friend to the family and bring practical and supportive help.

Michelle, and oncology nurse, who again, brings professional guidance and help to the families.

Diana then informed the audience of many children with such illnesses, who have gone on to achieve much in their lives.

Millie, who had cancer and after her treatment finished, has become a fundraiser for Snowdrop.

Jenny, she had a heart op, but because he became too active in hospital, was sent home, where she could be monitored and 'restricted' by the nurses.

Louise, had Cystic fibrosis, and after a lung transplant, went on to take part in a marathon and spoke at a conference about Snowdrop. Sadly she died 9 years after her life saving operation at 29 years of age.

Tommy, had a brain tumour, and refused to let the nurses remove his nasal gastric tube in case he was sick. After a few sessions with the counsellor, he was encouraged to have it taken out.

Thomas, had treatment for liver cancer, but is now at home and attending school.

Beau, a premature baby, who they thought would never walk or talk. He has had a tracheotomy, which restricts the life of the whole family. She is now 3, walks and talks, and is

a typical self-willed toddler. He really is a miracle child.

She also gave an example of Snowdrop help, where a mum had to take her child to Southampton hospital every day for radiotherapy and be there by 7.30am, for 7 weeks, but had no transport. Snowdrop provide a hire car for the required period.

Snowdrop has one special benefactor, who owns many classic cars and annually, invites his friends, who owns similar cars, to bring them to Goodwood. The public, and many Snowdrop families, enjoy a fantastic day and it raises much needed funds for Snowdrop.

It has been identified that Fathers react differently to Mothers of Snowdrop children. Fathers usually take up running or cycling as a way of coping with a situation they cannot help.

It is important that siblings receive the attention they deserve, whilst their brother or sister is receiving treatment. An example was of the case of a family with six children. One was in hospital for treatment and the mother stays with this child, which can be many weeks or months away from home. Snowdrop helps in a small way to ensure that the siblings get their time. This may include such events as days out or travel vouchers to and for such places as Marwell Zoo Chessington or Cineworld. They also arrange visits to farms at lambing time, tea parties. Butlins allow Snowdrop to hold

A Christmas party in Bognor too.

Snowdrop also buy Supermarket vouchers, which they give to families struggling with the extra costs of caring for a very sick child.

After being in existence for 32 years, Snowdrop now has an office in Walberton, having started at Diana's home, then in Lavant.

How much does it all cost – £494,00.00, plus £38,000.00 for supermarket vouchers.

How do we raise funds – Events, Trust funds, Legacies, challenges in many clubs and venues. This ensures that we can keep going with this vital work.

To finish her talk, Diana said that at the tender age of 75 she did a skydive to raise funds!!!!

There followed a short Q&A session |:

How many children do you get involved with each week?

70 children on the Snowdrop Pathway at any one time.

Nurses visit as needed and they keep in constant touch with the parents too.

Who purchases the supermarket vouchers?

A member of our team purchases and sends them out weekly.

How do you deal with outcome, if it not also good news?

This is where the counsellors come into their own and all are exceptional in these circumstances. Personally, it is always very hard when a child dies.

Julie thanked Diana for her brilliant talk and informed the audience that there are donation boxes available for anyone who wishes to donate.

£337.00 was generously given by the members.