

ARCO (Association of Retired Council Officers) Newsletter

Autumn 2020

www.arco-kingston.org.uk email secretary@arco-kingston.org.uk



Dear Friends,

Firstly, I must express the hope that you have all continued to enjoy good health in these strange times.

ARCO had to cease operations on the day before our AGM last March. Nevertheless your Committee has met three times (by Zoom conference) to look for ways of re-starting some activities. However, every time we thought we could see a way through, the rules were changed! To compensate, we have extended all annual memberships by one year.

So the only activity we have been able to provide is a fortnightly Zoom conference open to all who can join in. There are two other ways we can help members to keep in touch. We can set up a Zoom meeting at any other time for your group's use. Or for those with traditional communication preferences, we can put you in touch with another member you may have met at one of our activities. Full details are elsewhere in this Newsletter. We would also welcome suggestions for any other activities that would be permissible under the restrictions.

Although we had to abandon the AGM, all the retiring committee members were offering themselves for re-election and there were no other nominations. So, for the time being, the Committee will continue in their present roles. There is one vacancy if anyone would like to join the Committee. For the record, you will find reports on our activities in 2019, together with the audited accounts, included with this mailing.

One event we are hoping to hold is a socially distanced lunch, as soon as the regulations permit. Again, we are in the hands of circumstances. At this stage we are just looking for expressions of interest. Please make your interest known if you want to take part.

I have just heard that there will be no wreath laying in Kingston on Remembrance Day, so the Association will be making a straightforward donation to the Royal British Legion this year.

In closing, may I send you every good wish for the future, in particular for Christmas and the New Year? I am looking forward to being able to meet you all again in the fulness of time.

Best Wishes

Chris

Chris Coke, Chairman

chairman@arco-kingston.org.uk

ARCO Secretary: Martin Longhurst, Mayfield, Hoe Lane, Abinger Hammer, DORKING, RH5 6RS

The Saga of the Chimney Cat *by Bob Weedon*

I just thought I'd like to share with you an incident which shows how surreal my life has become. On a Friday in May, I was woken at 6.00am approximately, by Val shouting "Charlie's gone up the chimney".

Before I continue, I feel I should give a little background information by way of explanation. Our cat, Bozzy (short for Boswald -don't ask!) has a couple of health issues and from time to time we have had to put him on a diet. He didn't like this, and used to supplement his menu by catching and eating mice. Later he just caught the mice and left them for dead on our lawn or path, so that if I went out stargazing at night, I had to be careful where I was walking. However, he has recently started catching mice and bringing them indoors, still alive, whether for his own future amusement or perhaps as a present for us I don't know. To stop this, we started locking the cat-flap at night so that he couldn't go out hunting. Now our next door neighbours have a young cat called Charlie who prefers our cat food to his owners' and keeps coming in our house and eating Bozzy's dinner, destroying two lockable cat-flaps in the process. We therefore bought a super duper cat-flap from New Zealand which is meant to be dog and fox proof, so it should handle a little cat easily. (Not so, as I found him in the house once before and assumed he had tail-gated Bozzy through the flap.) Anyway, on Thursday night I was out with my telescope and I saw Bozzy catch something, so I grabbed him and he dropped whatever it was. I then bundled him indoors and locked the flap and he went to bed in a VERY bad mood. So, we have a very cross pussy, a locked wild animal-proof cat flap and a hungry, mischievous cat next door. Now, back to the story.....

Val was woken by strange noises coming from the lounge and went to investigate. The room was fairly comprehensively trashed and as she watched, Bozzy chased Charlie round and round the room until he disappeared up the chimney. That's when she woke me up. The first thing I did was check that it wasn't April the first. Then, finally convinced that there was a cat up our chimney, I did a quick tour round the outside of the house, still in my pyjamas. I was hoping he had gone completely up and out of the chimney and was stuck on the roof. No such luck, so at about 6.10 am we phoned the neighbours to say "excuse me but your cat is stuck up our chimney" (I bet they weren't expecting that when they answered the phone). A few minutes later we had our neighbour flat on his back with his head up our chimney calling out "Charlie, come down at once you little *****." Well, that was never going to work, so off he went to get some cat treats to tempt him down. In the meantime, his wife was regaling us with tales of all the other things Charlie and their previous cats had gotten up to. So back comes our neighbour, with a handful of Dreamies and after what seemed like a lifetime Charlie came down far enough to be grabbed and extracted from the chimney. He went up it black and white but came down it black and sooty grey. Now our neighbours are a lovely couple who like a chat, but they don't quite get the hang of social distancing so at 6.30 on a Friday morning, there's me and Val constantly backing away to maintain our 2m space, and the neighbour constantly moving towards us, like in some elegant but complicated dance routine, all the while chatting about the cat and apologising for the mess and inconvenience. The most curious thing about the whole affair was that I subsequently examined the cat-flap and not only was it still intact, it was firmly locked so nothing could go through it, either way. So how did Charlie get in? And more importantly, how can we keep him out if he can go through locked doors? (Answers on a postcard, please.)

ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED COUNCIL OFFICERS - KINGSTON

COMMITTEE REPORT FOR 2019

- 1 **Membership** – In March 2020 total membership stood at 146, made up of 122 life members, 3 honorary members and 21 annual members, of whom 16 were fully paid up.
During 2019 we welcomed 4 new members: Derek Ebbitt, Denise Malin, Andrew Withers and Jim Childs. We were notified of 3 deaths: Mrs P O Niblett, Peter Josiah and Marion Fitness. Also 2 members resigned, and we removed 35 life members after they had failed to respond to 3 requests.
- 2 **Activities** – In 2019 there were 4 functions at the Guildhall, 4 informal gatherings at the Kings Tun, 2 outings plus the very enjoyable Christmas Lunch at The North Star. Four Newsletters were distributed, with 87 members receiving them by email. Your Committee met four times.
- 3 **Finances** – The audited accounts for 2019 show we made a small surplus of £11.37. Although outings were less successful, the loss was offset by other income.
- 4 **Outings** – Three trips were planned in 2019. The first was to RAF Hendon in north London. This proved very popular with 36 attending. Tea/coffee and biscuits were provided free on arrival and feedback suggested everyone found the day thoroughly enjoyable.
The second trip was to Fort Nelson, just outside Portsmouth. Unfortunately, this was seriously undersubscribed and had to be cancelled. It appears that two trips with military connections so close together was not a good idea. Please note - "lessons have been learned".
The final trip was to St. Mary's, Bramber in West Sussex. 22 attended and had a private guided tour of the house and gardens, which were closed to the public for the day. After the tour a full cream tea, including scones, cakes, clotted cream and home-made jam, was provided. Everyone agreed that St. Mary's was a wonderful place to visit and the day had been a huge success. You can see some pictures of the event in the Gallery section of our web site by clicking [here](#).
Due to Covid 19 it has been impossible to arrange any outings this year, and in view of the current upsurge in cases, none will now be arranged until 2021 at the earliest. Your safety is our main concern so, when we consider it safe to go on outings again, we will ballot the members to confirm that you will feel safe going out before we start any organising.
- 5 **Your officers for 2019 and 2020** –
Chairman – Chris Coke
Vice-Chairman – June Collins
Honorary Secretary – Martin Longhurst
Honorary Treasurer – Jenny Longhurst
Social Secretary – Bob Weedon
Delegate to RBK Pension Fund Panel – Chris Coke
Committee Members – Maureen Barker, Paul Fisher, Chris Nice and Shona Hastings (until she stood down on 13 January 2020).
Immediate Past Chairman – Mollie Scolding
Auditor – Bob Hart
- 6 **Thanks are due to** –
 - Val Weedon for organising the outings (Incidentally Val has a new email address val.spookymunch@gmail.com)
 - Shona Hastings for all her work on the Committee, marked by a presentation of a Wisley Voucher
 - The volunteers for preparing the food and drink and for washing up at our Guildhall functions
 - The Council's post room and print room for their continued excellent service on the newsletters
 - Bob Hart, for another year as our Auditor.

ARCO proudly presents ...

The Zoom Together

You've been to the Get Together ... now you can take part in a Zoom Together!

Zoom is an app which allows users to see, hear and speak with others anywhere else.

You need a smartphone or a suitable PC, equipped with a camera, microphone and speaker, connected to the Internet.

We have been holding a group Zoom Together on alternate Thursdays at 3 p.m. It's open to any member, just email secretary@arco-kingston.org.uk for the joining instructions. If you are a new user, guidance is available or a practice session can be arranged.

Alternatively, we can facilitate your own get together using our account. Just let Martin know.

Keep in touch traditionally ...

We can put you in touch with other members, subject to their agreement. If you would like to take part, ring Martin on 01306 730321 or write to him at Mayfield, Hoe Lane, Abinger Hammer, DORKING, RH5 6RS.

We will not disclose your contact details without your permission

An ARCO Lunch?

We are hoping we can arrange a socially distanced lunch, as and when the regulations permit. At the time of writing (17 October) such an activity has just been forbidden. However, hopefully the good times will return and when they do, we want to be able to move quickly.

So if you are interested, please contact Martin by emailing secretary@arco-kingston.org.uk, or ringing 01306 730321, or writing to him at Mayfield, Hoe Lane, Abinger Hammer, DORKING, RH5 6RS.

There is no obligation at this stage.

Is there anything else?

Please put on your thinking caps and let us know!

From the Woodland Trust

A trail map for the Langley Vale Month of Remembrance is now available for you [here](#).

From 4 to 30 November, explore the 2.5 mile self-guided trail, find out how the local community supported the war effort and leave a dedication on our beautiful willow wreath.