

## 2020

In addition to our normal monthly topics, in January members of the Creative Writing group were each invited to submit a 100-word view of last year – with the caveat that the following words could NOT be included: Covid-10; Coronavirus; Isolation: Sheltering. You may find it interesting at the contrast shown in some of the views:

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It began badly and got worse. A panicked return from holiday to a disunited kingdom. Chaos, indecision, First Ministers flexing puny muscles. Soaring graphs. The emergence of heroes; clapping on Thursdays. A false dawn: the weak-minded and weak-willed succumbing to temptation. Continuing lies, show-boating, incompetence permeating The White House. Frankish anglophobia; a Brexit deal staggering, stuttering, stalling. A second wave; a hidden vector? Children? Cuckoos in the nest? U-turns, lockdowns; businesses staggering, failing, disappearing. Others emerging; what would we have done without the Internet? And then in the dying days of the year, light. Sensible Americans toppling Trump; Teutonic common-sense ensuring a deal; the brilliance of scientists producing vaccines. Hail 2021!

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When I was young I never thought that I would get to the year 2020. Indeed I found it hard to image life after 2000. My Mum was born in 1920 – a whole century ago. What changes that century has seen. Life moves so fast now. Will we all be wiser after 2020? Will we value nature more? Will we value family and friendships more? I think not. If we are able to move on it will probably still be the same. People forget so quickly and easily if it suits them. At least we can know that 2020 no longer exists.

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January – Returning Buckinghamshire, M40 breakdown at 11am, rescue by RAC, tow-truck, home 11.30pm. Ugh!

February – Back to Bucks - unexpected funeral. Tragic.

March – Speculation about lockdown. Another funeral. Sad.

April – Everything cancelled including Easter. Astonished.

May – ditto including VE commemorations. Disheartened.

June – ditto including birthday trip to River Dance. Regretful.

July – managed long overdue dog inoculations. Hopeful.

August – long waited visits from close family. Great.

September – struggling with BT over line failure. Frustrating.

October – achieved overdue MoT. Boring.

November – Wales closed for fortnight. Depressing.

December – promised five day Christmas break - cancelled with closure of virtually whole country. Elation followed by dejection.

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A wonderful year for sunshine. Months of warm weather, able to sit in the garden with a series of good books and an occasional ice cream! No meetings to prepare for and rush out to. Plenty of time to oneself. Long phone calls to family and friends and the odd Zoom meeting. Lots of petrol in the car without having to keep refuelling. Regular visits to the lake, supposedly for 1 hrs exercise which for me meant sitting in the car and having an enjoyable chat with friends who happened to be passing on their walks. That's all the good bits!!!

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A perfect evening – “You don't have to do that now, let's go. The day had been warm and sunny, not a breeze, the perfect blue sky. The evening followed suit, nothing around us moved. The lane was inviting and just a step away. We followed the path around the corner and we were away.

The houses either side of us were an interesting mix. Some brick, one or two decorated with render and some wooden. The latter melted into the landscape and thus did not attract attention. Most gardens offered a peek of manicured lawns, neat pathways and borders of shrubs and colour and all this suspended in a comfortable, warm quietness. We strolled on exchanging low mutters of conversation not wishing to disturb this idyll.

Down the hill and up again. To the left and high on the rise the skeleton of a partially built property. We paused to admire it's elevation, the modern design marking it as very much individual. Did we like it? The jury was out.

The stroll home offered a very different view, as is often the case. The best was yet to come! We rounded the bottom of the hill and there it stood - a field completely golden with buttercups. The sun gilded their petals making the scene breathtaking. We stood gazing, still not a sound. Nature at it's most amazingly beautiful!

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#### Beginning

I actually quite enjoyed the first lockdown, empty streets, lovely sunny days in the kitchen, no sense of obligation. It was fine.

#### Middle

Then the weather changed and the novelty wore off a bit, but I still felt incredibly lucky compared to most people. Okay, I was missing family and friends, but I was safe and comfortable.

#### End

And now it's 2021, Brexit has happened, the particle of doom is still happening and there is no viable health service to call on if we get diagnosed with anything nasty, or have a stroke, or a heart attack, or fall on the ice.

New beginning?