

SPOTLIGHT EAST

Newsletter for Members of The East of England Area of NAFAS

Welcome to the Summer 2020 Edition of Spotlight East – published later than is usual, but still in time for “High Summer”, and with a new editor at the helm, taking a long time to learn how to format a newsletter! What a time to take over as editor, just as Lockdown came into force and all the Events, Open Meetings, Celebrations & Shows that filled our flower arranging diaries were at a stroke CANCELLED. Undaunted, the editorial team has set out to discover what has been going on in the East of England during these blank weeks and has been delighted to discover that our members have been busy, creative, resourceful and amazing. The content of this edition may be different to usual, but it is still all about the fun and the friendship, with perhaps not quite as many flowers as usual.... We start with reports of the World Show (WAFA) India 2020 held in Jaipur.

Jenni Baker writes about her Floral and Cultural Adventure India 2020

We waited for the coach to take us to Heathrow Airport on a very cold, dull February day. The journey was uneventful, and we arrived at the expected time, ready to book in. We were met by Michael Bowyer and Tom Hodge, and bags were duly deposited. The box had to be handed to a very special person, to make sure that it also got onto the plane. We then sat and waited until our flight was displayed.

In the weeks leading up to the trip we had been given the appropriate immunisations and bought numerous packets of hand wipes and hand gel as instructed. Also, as I had decided to compete, I had to organise my design and flowers. The design had been sitting in my dining room for some weeks, regularly having a tweak here and there. The deadline for ordering flowers arrived, so I had to make a decision on what I needed, and order them, at great expense, from a florist in India. Eventually the box was packed, this contained all my mechanics, scissors etc., it could only be a certain size, to fit in with the allowance Virgin had given us.

The flight was uneventful, but long. Most people slept but I never do, so I made full use of the wines and spirits on offer! On arrival at Delhi airport we were split into two groups, blue and green, and these were the groups we stayed with for the whole trip. We were bussed to our hotel, where we were greeted with a drink, and a caste spot (one of many) before a buffet lunch and a quick change in the hotel. One thing we didn't do very much on this trip was sit and do nothing. So, before dinner we were taken off to the Garden of Five Senses.

Bed was very welcome, as we had to be ready to leave the next day at 8.15 for a wonderful tour of Old and New Delhi. This included a chaotic ride on a tuc-tuc through the narrow, bustling lanes and ending at the peaceful Raj Ghat where Mahatma Gandhi was cremated, we also visited the Mughal Garden and the very peaceful Sunder Nursery.

Day two was a 144- mile drive to Agra, followed by the amazing Taj Mahal at sunset, never to be

forgotten, then a further drive and an exciting train ride. (no, we did not have to ride on the roof, but almost) More sightseeing and then off to Ranthambore, where we stayed in the most amazing hotel, and went on two jungle safaris. In the afternoon we had a wonderful sighting of a tiger, snoozing by the river, he then got up and walked across the river to join his friend.

Excitement over, we then had to travel to Jaipur, and yes, it was really here. Time to think flowers. Plant material had to be collected, and position found in the correct hall. Oh, dear, the flowers were huge, there was no way my original idea would work. Time to think about it overnight. Staging day arrived very quickly, and at 5.30 we were ready to leave. A complicated structure, which seemed to take ages. It is funny, you are aware of other people around you, but you are just in your own little world! A few problems, I asked for a table, and was given a stool, so spent the time kneeling on the ground. We were offered tea, but had to go out of the hall to drink it. The stewards were very thorough and walked around taking notes all the time. By 12.00 I had not really finished, but that was time up, so had to finish. A bit disappointed, but I had done my best. I didn't go to the preview evening. Next morning before we went off to the show Michael Bowyer suggested I put my name down to go to the presentation, but I said there was no point! After persuasion, I put my name down, wondering why he was so adamant.

We arrived at the show, such colour, and a wonderful atmosphere. Dave suggested we go to my hall first, which we did. Oh, what a surprise, I had been awarded a third prize, and Dave said that it was better than all my practices at home! I went to the award ceremony, and I can only describe it as a cross between the Oscars, and the Eurovision Song Contest. It was in a huge hall, with very many dignitaries. The decoration on stage was amazing, and we were called up in reverse order to receive our awards. This was followed by an afternoon tea (included curries of course) and a display of dancing.



We then spent the rest of the day, and also the following day enjoying the show. Much examining of designs to work out the mechanics!

It was almost an anti-climax to have to dismantle, although there was drama when we were all locked in and not allowed out of the gates because there had been an incident. People appeared from nowhere, hoping to be given some of our beautiful flowers.



The Awards Ceremony

The holiday did not end there, the next day we were taken to the flower market where thousands of flowers are sold, or made into garlands. A wonderful experience, but rather overwhelming. We went on a sight-seeing tour of Jaipur, the Pink City.

We left Jaipur on an internal flight, this in itself was an experience, followed by a drive of 75 miles up to Shimla, a beautiful place with views of the Himalayas. We only stayed two nights then travelling to Chandigarh on the toy train, built by the British in 1904. In Chandigarh we visited the rock gardens as seen on Monty Dons Around the World in 80 Gardens. This was definitely something to remember.

The holiday was almost over, but first we visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the spiritual nerve centre of the Sikh faith. An amazing place, we had to remove our shoes (would we ever see them again?) and cover our heads. The holy book was got ready to be taken to its resting place, and then the heavens opened. Hailstones as big as marbles, and thunder and lightning. We had to get back to our coach, by pre-arranged tuk tuks. Our driver, unfortunately, did not know where he was going, so we were almost lost. As we arrived at the coach discussions were under way as to how they were going to find us!! The next morning, we went back to the Golden Temple where we were able to

able to visit the kitchen where volunteers feed 30,000 people each day free of charge. That evening we travelled to the Wagah Border to witness the border closing on the Indo Pakistan border. A fascinating ceremony, even though we had to watch it in pouring rain. That was it a further internal flight, and back to Delhi airport where we embarked on our Virgin flight and the wine and spirits came back in use! There is only one thing I can say – amazing.

Terri Potter, also writes about WAFA INDIA 2020: A MOST INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE

When it was announced that the **13th World flower Show 2020** hosts were to be India I saw the opportunity as one not to miss. Not everyone shared my enthusiasm – my husband being one of them; so, this was one trip that I had to go alone.

Well, not quite alone, I joined Michael Bowyer & Tom Hodge's 'Floral & Cultural Adventure' with ECT. Around 70 other floral enthusiasts from Britain & far flung places like Barbados joined us and the atmosphere was one of palpable excitement as we gradually met up with everyone at Heathrow, putting faces to names and catching up with friends not seen in ages: the thrill of the unknown , embarking on a tremendous adventure together.



The events of the world flower show were to be sandwiched between cultural trips around Delhi, Agra, Ranthambore and Jaipur (where the show was held) and post show we travelled north to Shimla, Chandigarh and Amritsar – with a few more places in between; visiting a total of five Indian states or territories– each with their own identities.

This was luxury travel – not at all like my previous visit to India over 30 years ago when the two of us embarked on an eight- day trek through the foothills of the Annapurna Mountains in Nepalese Himalayas. India was a three- or four-day add-on at the end and I remember it rather like a misty dream as we glimpsed the treasures of Agra & Delhi. Since then I've always wanted to return to take more time to take it all in & appreciate the wonders of this extraordinary & unique culture.

Michael & Tom had worked hard to put together a very comprehensive & varied programme of events, catering for the exhibitors & enthusiastic travellers alike. Not a minute was wasted; early morning starts (not always- but quite a few!) & the full tour itinerary made sure we would experience fully the diversity of this magical place. Long coach journeys, trains & planes took us to very different places. From Delhi's assault on the senses, the cities & monuments of Agra to the splendours of Jaipur's royal kingdoms and the thrill of watching tigers in the 'wild' at Ranthambore – and all this even before the World Show at Jaipur!

Of course, attending a World Flower Show just wasn't enough for me; and I was lucky to be given a place in one of the many imposed classes. Not my first choice (they never are – are they!) with the title 'Let's Spin;' and as a true competitor as I am, my creative mind automatically switched to research & development mode. Which is absolutely useless for an imposed class – in fact it's positively a hindrance. Imposed classes are very popular at World Shows as it saves the overseas competitor the extra time & effort organising the transport of plant material & mechanics to the venue. No thought is required as we are generally not given any details of the mechanics & materials supplied to us beforehand so it's just a case of turning up, open the box & 'thinking on your feet!'. Naturally, interpretation is an important criteria on the judges' critique so some thought is required.

Arriving at the venue bleary eyed and full of excitement and trepidation I soon discovered my allocated space, thankfully near an exit – convenient for water & loos (we'd sneakily checked out these the night before when I helped a friend in with her mechanics). We were to stage on a plinth – so nice & easy to work from /on and upon the plinth were a couple of mechanics – a metal stand and a black wooden contraption with cogged discs. (Of which we were later informed was a 'Charkra' – Indian Spinning wheel – my research had obviously not been deep enough) Not much else was visible apart from an enormous cardboard box and 2 buckets – one of foliage (Nalina, Areca Palm, Ribbon Grass, & Aralia) , and one of flowers (10 Leucospermum 'Tango', heads from 12 stems Tuberose, 10 Orchid James Red, 10 Celosia mixed, and a whole wrap of Gypsophila). Nothing could be touched until the start time of a very civilised 8am. We then had 4 hours in which to put together a design using any of the components – as many or as little as we wished. I had given myself a good talking to the night before and implored not to make things complicated and try to keep the design minimalistic but my curious nature got the better of me and on opening the box of materials it was like diving into Aladdin's cave – so much choice – what should I use???? I had also given myself a 'plan of action' – so much time allocated to scan the materials, another to quickly pull together a design, another to execute the design and a few minutes to review & tidy up at the end. Well, that went out of the window!

I quickly checked the schedule to make sure I knew the size of the area we were given (because there were no markings anywhere) & recorded the overall height as 160cm. I did think that was a little tall –but my brain went along with it & I thought: ‘how could I achieve the height with what I had to hand?’.

After 2hrs I was just about getting there with the basic structure of my design when a steward approached me to ask if I had read the schedule (alarms bells !!). Yes, of course I replied and confirmed the height with her. ‘No, ‘she said, ‘the measurement is from the floor: 160cm from the floor’keeping calm I thanked her for letting me know, downed tools and went for a coffee. Coffee recues everything doesn’t it.

I returned & removed the tall second placement from the back of the design, reshuffled a few other bits and added a bit of colour with the flowers reiterating the adage ‘it’s the taking part that counts.

The moral of this story is, of course, ‘when entering floral art shows, read the schedule, read it again and just to be sure, read it again – preferably not early in the morning just before the show when one is half asleep or under pressure’

I was absolutely thrilled to discover the next morning that I had been awarded a ‘Commended’ for my efforts.



In March we were saddened to learn of the death of Ann Knight. Sue Brinton, National President, writes in celebration of Ann's life & achievements:

Ann was the most warm-hearted caring person I have had the privilege to know for more than 30 years. A NAFAS member for just over 50 years, she was Life member of West Norfolk Flower Club, also a very active member of Kings Lynn Flower Club. A most generous person in her praise and encouragement to all who met her, she was always interested in and cared deeply for other folk, enquiring how so and so was, how were the children, she would remember every one by name and often remember what their line of work was, with never a thought for herself, only for others.

Ann and I worked together on many things floral for Club, Kings Lynn Group and the East of England Area of NAFAS. I well remember a time we travelled to Harrogate when along with Janet Brittain we exhibited at the Harrogate National Show on behalf of the Area, to get all the equipment to the venue we used the family VW Campervan, not the most comfortable means of transport but true to Ann she had brought along a wonderful picnic for the journey, such was her attention to detail to ensure the soul was nourished.

Whilst Ann was Area Chairman the Area organised a Flower Festival at Ely Cathedral this was a huge success with the bonus of HRH The Princess of Wales visiting and attending Evensong along with Area members, I remember Ann being most perturbed that Diana, Princess of Wales was not wearing tights! It was not the 'done thing'.

Ann was the perfect Lady, and hostess. Many an event was held in The Barn at Blackborough Manor Farm which was her home before retirement. Very proudly displayed there was the Barrel front bedecked with preserved flowers bearing the title "Quest for Plants" which was from the East of England exhibit at Chelsea in 1998 for which a Gold Medal was awarded together with a coveted Holford Medal for NAFAS.

Ann was at this time Area Chairman and immensely proud of the team. She loved hosting events in the Barn, which was immaculately fitted out, as those who knew Ann would have expected, there were always flowers to welcome us, usually pink as this was her favourite colour.

Another great time together, I was Area Secretary when Ann became Area Chairman, she was so well organised and meticulous in her preparations for all she undertook. Meetings held under her chairmanship were a pleasure, she always ensured those present felt very much involved in the meeting and allowed ample time for discussion, whilst managing to keep a tight rein time.

So many of us have greatly valued her wise council over the years, she was truly an inspirational lady and I count myself blessed to have been her friend, I miss her so much.
Sue Brinton.

Ann & Sue in October 2015



Where have all the Flowers Gone.....

As “Lockdown” kicked in, it was almost impossible to obtain cut flowers as, in the early days, they were not regarded as essential items. Flower arrangers across the country turned to their gardens, the hedgerows & verges, improvising with what they could find in their shed/attics to produce simple, often minimalistic designs. The Friends of NAFAS (Facebook group – see below) set a series of challenges to keep our days busy & creative.

The “One flower, one leaf in isolation” challenge was very popular and produced many innovative designs.....



Another of the challenges was the “Rings of Hope” - a green wreath ring symbolising hope and renewal, with the addition of blue ribbons, the colour associated with the NHS, to show support for NHS staff and key workers. The original idea came from Katherine Kear, Chairman of Three Counties & South Wales Area of NAFAS; it was widely taken up across the country both by individual members and by clubs who circulated members with the details of the challenge, and shared photos via email. It turned out to be quite a challenge, as few people had thought to stock their workboxes with a copious supply of blue ribbon and accessories. But ever resourceful, items such as blue plastic bags, scarves, silk flowers, buttons, Christmas stars were ingeniously used to create the desired effect. Members of the Herts & Essex Boundary even managed to be featured in their local newspaper, the Bishops Stortford Independent, not only promoting the hopeful message, but publicising the club activities and ongoing support for members during the lockdown period.



As the weeks progressed it became clear that flowers play an important part in maintaining peoples' health and wellbeing (of course as Nafas members we were already well aware of this) Many local flower growers together with local florists stepped up delivery services to capitalise on the demand for fresh flowers. **Barbara Collins, Area Vice-Chairman, was delighted by her experience, as she explains below:**

“Thank You to Facebook”

I never thought you would hear me say that, but how times change. In April my Mum was to celebrate her 94th Birthday and she lives in Sussex, so no chance of meeting up because of the lockdown. I wanted to send a Bouquet as she has always loved flowers and been a member of NAFAS for many years.

I tried all the usual online sources but no luck. At the back of my mind I could remember a mention on the Flowers Arrangers page of Facebook, about an Alstroemeria grower in Chichester – Crossland Nursery. More investigation online revealed that he had teamed up with a friend who was sending his surplus Alstroemeria out by postal boxes. That is the problem with flowers; they were still growing but their normal outlets were not needing as many as in ‘normal’ times. I phoned his friend Dave who was only 2 miles from Mum and was told no problem just tell me what you require. Alstroemeria are her favourites with other flowers but nothing scented as she suffers with Hay Fever. That is fine said Dave I will deliver on her Birthday, so I paid and felt happy as at this distance what else do you send someone 94 years old.

As the week went on, I was keen to hear what arrived. On the day, I phoned to wish her a Happy Birthday and she had received many phone calls from family and friends. I will phone you again after lunch, as is our normal routine. A few minutes later I received a message from Dave to say he had delivered the Bouquet and she loved them. How many people would have bothered to have messaged me?

Indeed, when I phoned, she was thrilled with the flowers and the visit from a ‘nice’ young man! The bouquet was Alstroemeria, Lisianthus and Roses and all very fresh and locally grown, they were presented in paper as he is eco-friendly.

So “thank you” to Facebook and “Beachtown Blooms” for making my Mum’s Birthday. She has since declared that when life gets back to some normality and we are able to visit we will have a party every day for a week! Mum may be 94 but as our family always say, she knows how to party!

Barbara Collins

You may be interested to know that local flower growers across the country can be contacted through this website: <https://www.flowersfromthefarm.co.uk/> Some sell from their premises, or supply farm shops, many deliver.

Flower Arranging in spite of everything - Online demonstrations, tutorials and workshops – accessed through Facebook pages or on YouTube - are proving very popular with members who are missing their flower club activities. Sue Bunting, Feering Flower Club writes:

“I have been following Francine Thomas from New Zealand with her very humorous workshops; they have made me smile and giggle on many occasions. Together with her sidekick Fred the mechanic (Francine in a boiler suit) she has been a welcome distraction. The photo is my adaptation of one of her designs just using a pin holder.”



Brenda Graham, Sudbury Flower Club, was inspired by another of Francine’s videos to produce this foam free design using twigs as the mechanic to support the flowers.



Sometimes the materials required for Francine's workshop were quite extensive. Some people concentrated on making her mechanics, so that they would have interesting containers and supports for the future when flowers would be more plentiful.

By ordering materials online and extensive rummaging in her "craft boxes" Beverly Moore was able to complete this "inspired by Francine" collage design on canvas.



Other You Tube demonstrators you might enjoy are Jonathan Moseley, Hans Haverkamp, Wessex & Jersey Area of NAFAS, and of course subscribe to both the NAFAS You Tube channel, and The Friends of NAFAS channel.

Many members turned to other activities as outlets for their creativity whilst flowers and foliage were in short supply.....

Rachel Furze -New Creations & Norwich Flower Clubs writes:

“With the absence of floral workshops and competitions the creative process has to find its way out somehow.

I’ve had some fun and reasonable success with Gelli printing. It’s a very immediate process and full of unexpected outcomes. Printing on both sides opens up further possibilities for little books i.e. Lotus fold and Turkish map fold. A staggering amount of paper is required; however, nothing goes to waste, even the failures might be useful in a collage or embedded later in a painting.”



Vicki Hease, Stowmarket Flower Club, has also been busy.

Vicki writes about her work: The sketches are a challenge I took up after my grandson and I were zooming - a drawing a day in May He requested a 2 headed weir wolf from one of his toys, there is also a kingfisher, 75 VE day sketch, repeated on my bunting, rainbow and hearts kite, H for Harley, and a dragon, with more being drawn each day.

The watercolours include an Easter ring of flowers from my garden,(Pasque flower, Forget-me-nots, Primroses, Euphorbia and Muscari,) a 50th birthday card/painting for my friend’s daughter's 50th birthday, who lives in Kansas, USA; so a card was printed from the painting and emailed to her, the painting will be her gift when her mum can safely travel with it to Kansas.

My patchwork projects during lockdown include laundry bags for my doctor’s surgery, which very quickly became a coronavirus testing centre, masks for personal use, 3 quilts for a women’s’ aid refuge centre, 4 patchwork puppies in total, quilts for my daughter and me, garden chair cushion covers....and my son now requests a kaleidoscope Japanese star quilt. My poor sewing machine has never worked so constantly, but it keeps me busy during lockdown, and as most of my friends know, I cannot sit and do nothing.



Ruth Prior, Holbrook & District Flower Club, has continued with her flower paintings; many members will recall her selling them as greetings cards at Council and Open Meetings. Throughout lockdown she has aiming at completing a painting a day. She says: "I do paint a lot of irises but lately have done tulips and some landscapes."



Several members told us they were using the time in lockdown to sew "scrubs" for the NHS, while others mentioned returning to activities and crafts they hadn't done for a while. Jennie Carter, Framlingham Flower Club writes:

"I have also kept busy reading, doing a jigsaw and lots of needlework. The thing I am most proud of is an embroidered table cloth that I started in 1962, and now 58 years later it is finished. Though I'm not sure it will ever grace a table and my girls don't seem to think they would like it. At least I have fulfilled the promise to my Mother that if she bought it, I would finish it!"

The VE Day 75 Bank Holiday weekend provided flower arrangers with fun opportunities to be creative and improvise in true WW2 spirit

June Allum, Wickham Market, went to town with the decorations for her socially distanced afternoon tea in her front garden. The 40's are an era close to her heart as she used to perform in a musical group called the Jelly Rolls. June writes: "The most memorable time we did this act was in Hyde Park as part of the 50th anniversary of V.E day in front of the royals and about 100 thousand people. My favourite at the time was Cliff who was on the bill with us, as well Vera Lyn, Elaine Page, and many others. A day I will never forget, a long way from my little front garden with just the neighbourhood, at a distance of course."



June (centre) performing with The Jelly Rolls – no date!

Meanwhile, Stella Thornley, Ipswich & Holbrook Flower Clubs, and her family celebrated with homemade cakes in their Ipswich gardenand Sylvie Cooper, Feering Flower Club, dug deep into her craft box to improvise a festive red, white & blue door wreath



Anne Bell writes about her Flower Life in Lockdown

My last workshop before full lockdown was for a group of church ladies. They had asked me to teach them a Dutch Parallel (one of my most favourite styles), and very suitable for a church, they always look stunning on a window sill.

Leading up to the Saturday, when this was to take place, was the time that we were already getting feedback about us mixing and social distancing. Events and meetings were beginning to be cancelled, but we had not had the full instructions to close down.

It was decided
allowed an

kitchen. Got to tidy so many cupboards and had a grand throwing out session. Needless to say, my workroom is now full of things to go to the charity shop.

It was a real
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twist.

The second week, blessed with such good weather I started to really enjoy my garden. Although I only have a small garden at the back with many pots, I was able to enjoy all my beautiful spring flowers including all my fabulous tulips. I spent hours rearranging the pots to give a different picture. At the front of the house I have a long strip of garden which, already had the odd shrub when we bought the house. This I have nurtured for the last six years including two phormium plants, which have really needed a trim for some time, this was an excellent opportunity to do so. This produced a huge pile phormium leaves, I'm cutting these thinking, if only I had a demonstration. I felt very reluctant to put them in the rubbish bag.

Little did ar

Then I had the brainwave, for the next few days I sat at my front door and started to plait the leaves making them into flowers, with the idea they could dry off to be used in designs later on,

Using a simple, light-hearted questionnaire, the resourceful editorial team have been busy over the last few weeks finding out what life has been like under lockdown for members of the East of England. Here is a selection of comments – abridged due to lack of space (and possibly editorial discretion.)

Q. Have you followed the trend and tidied your shed/garage/workspace? Carol Giffen replied:

“When lockdown started, we had just gutted our kitchen, still not finished because we haven't been able to buy tiles, wallpaper etc. so the garage is full of the old kitchen which is meant to be turned into a bit of a workplace for my flowers. Can't get anywhere with that until next week when someone is coming to put up the old kitchen cupboards on the walls, so the garage is an absolute tip!! I have plans though!

Q. What about your lockdown dress code; have you found your clothes have shrunk, Carol?

I still wear what I would normally wear except that I lost 3 1/2 stone last year and a lot of my clothes are too big. I was hoping to buy new clothes this Spring but with lockdown haven't been able to until this last week.

Q. With the benefit of hindsight, what do you wish you had stocked up on for the lockdown?

Anne Bridge, Costessey Flower Club replied:

“I have been pleasantly distracted from the toil of the situation by the superb, interesting, creative and imaginative posts/videos/tweet etc that have been appearing on social media. It has to be 'energy' (*that I should have stocked up on*) to have a go at all these things, not just view in awe! Having taken delivery of my therapy boxes, my flowers in the house have not been missed and I have used my floral 'Guppy' so many times since 'lockdown'. I am just so glad I had some to show my disabled class over 18 months ago, in stock still. In hindsight I wished that I had cleaned up my design studio (shed) and memorised where everything is! I would have been able to have had a go at so many things on offer if I could have just found the right sundries as I am sure that they are there.....somewhere!

Q Describe your lockdown dress code:

A. Well I have two, for Zoom and going FB live it was/is full works, hair in rollers ALL night (so long now and cannot do anything with it), full makeup and worry about dress image waist up! I definitely don't know how the newsreaders of old managed their clothes budget or kept their cool on hot days! For all other days it clean and comfort as my day includes looking after the tomatoes (greenhouse duties), watering as well as John's and my own care. So not 'proper' under your description as I have been known (but not seen, I hope) going up the garden in grannie nightie to water at 5am!
(the research definition of “proper clothes” - anything with a zip or buttons qualifies as proper; elastic & velcro don't count)

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How have clubs kept in touch with their Members? Several clubs reported on this. Sylvie Cooper, Feering Flower Club writes:

In regards of connecting with Club members during the Lockdown, we do have a Facebook page but very few members use Facebook or any tech really. Most of our followers are outside of the Club; I have been trying to keep it active with designs I have created, photos of my garden and funny ditties about my family in lockdown - I have asked others to post photos, but with very little response, I said to Sue Bunting, Club Chairman, the other day I feel like I am talking to myself at times.

I am in the progress of putting together a 'keep in touch' letter and will mail out to members, also reminding them of Facebook, our website, our Club email and of course the Committee's phone numbers on their membership card if they just want a chat.

Our secretary has emailed (again very few are on email) and phoned others in regards of cancelled meetings etc. We are a small membership (37) and of an older ilk, so quite when we will get back in business again I'm not sure - even if we get government/ NAFAS go ahead, many will be wary.

The situation is different in the larger clubs who email regular newsletter with details of club competitions, (arranging and photographic) have active Facebook pages, club websites and Whatsapp groups where members can share activities - discuss on line demonstrations or show off their own latest creations.

Beverly Moore, Herts & Essex Boundary Flower Club, recognises the importance of maintaining members enthusiasm for flower arranging, and the need to interest potential future members. In a recent article in the Bishops Stortford Flyer she writes:

“In order for everyone to get their “flower fix” over the coming weeks we have added additional pages to our website which includes links for on-line flower arranging demonstrations and lessons. The site is available for all to enjoy and also includes archive coverage of news/events and photographs from the past few years.”



Great Baddow Flower Club have been organising virtual competitions to keep in touch with members and encourage them to keep developing their arranging skills. Heather was the well-deserved winner of the VE Day competition. It's entitled “Sarnia Cherie” -the anthem sung in Guernsey on Liberation Day May 9th, 1945. The colours of the Guernsey flag are depicted in the yellow and red of the material used in the design

We asked our respondents about the floral future, after lockdown.

All agreed that making good use of social media & “virtual” technology would be the way forward. Now is the time to set up a secure, encrypted Whatsapp group for your floral friends; to take part in Zoom meetings, to join a Facebook Group. (Ask a “techie” friend to help you!) There are several secure, private FB groups you may be interested to join – members are vetted, a strict code of behaviour is enforced (i.e. being respectful to each other) These include Friends of NAFAS, Flower Arrangers, Flower Arrangers and Their Gardens, Church Flower Arrangers Forum.

Next Time – we hope to hear reports from clubs as they start to plan their first meetings – real or virtual (the challenges, the successes/disappointments) We also hope to have a report of the continuing progress of the Education Course. And we will show more photographs of your inspiring designs – please keep sending them in.

EAST OF ENGLAND AREA SUMMER BULLETIN

Firstly, I hope this finds all of you safe and well. We are living in strange times at present, still in social isolation due to Covid19. Everything that we look forward to during a year has been cancelled or postponed.

However, Social Media has been keeping us happy with workshops and videos so that we can have our “Flowery Fix” daily. All our gardens will be pristine and full of foliage and flowers for home arranging with rings for the NHS decorating our doors. I have taken the opportunity to have a good Spring Clean and clear out cupboards and drawers. I am also sure I am not the only one to have done so.

Two bright spots on the horizon are that the Hyde Hall Summer Show will now take place from Wednesday 2nd to Sunday 6th of September. The National Flower Show will take place at Hylands House on Friday 11th September. I hope, at that time, many of us will be able to visit and support them. As I write this, the virtual Chelsea Flower Show is due to appear on television, so that will be some compensation for not having a live Chelsea.

I cannot, yet, put a date to any time that we may be able to resume the Area activities. We have not been able to hold an Area Day or Council Meeting since last October. It has already been a long time between meetings and there will be much to catch up on when they can resume. This will not be until it is completely safe to do so.

Each Club and Group will make their own decisions on when they will resume their meetings. They will also make sure that all their members are kept up to date. Many of you would have been celebrating special anniversaries this year that have had to be postponed. They again will be something to look forward to when they are able to take place.

While the sun is shining, flowers are blooming and the birds are singing, it is good to be able to look ahead to better times again. I will be back in September with the Autumn Bulletin

Until then, stay safe and well.
With love and best wishes to you all.

Lesley