

Hi Everyone,

In this letter: **How Things are Going: Overcoming Isolation: Connecting with Nature: The Garden Party will be back: Brenda and Charlie Celebrate.**

Here we are again! I hope you are all well. As usual we have been trying to keep in touch with everyone by phone and e-mail. By and large those we speak to are managing pretty well but not without some significant feelings of stress and weariness. The relaxation of the guidelines has been timely and much appreciated. Being able to actually, rather than virtually, visit other family members and friends makes such a difference even if we still have to follow the social distancing guidelines. Just a week ago Sue and I had our first social outings for 16 weeks! – An afternoon garden tea party for an old friend's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday, and a barbeque for Father's Day. If there is one thing that has been made obvious during the pandemic, it is that the vast majority of us want to be with people, and especially our families, friends and neighbours. We need to physically socialise, to chat, to share, to help, and to belong.

However, as we have seen, this has not been possible for many during the crisis – it has hit hard for so many, not only those caring for a loved one with dementia, but also those who may be elderly, frail, vulnerable, shielding, or self-isolating. The internet technology of Skype and Zoom enabling us to have video calls, virtual dinner parties, religious services, quizzes, and many other ways of being together has been a godsend – but not a substitute! Let us hope and pray that as the guidelines relax and that by all of us following the guidelines we may be able to enjoy a pint, get our hair cut and styled, go to church on a Sunday, meet up with friends, etc. without risking a surge in new cases of the virus.

So, within The Debenham Project we will do whatever we can to help anyone who feels isolated reconnect with the community around them – It may be by enabling them to easily use (without having to apply more than old fashioned common-sense) all the opportunities that being “on the internet” can offer – It may be by trying to allay any fears they might have of venturing out of the home - It may be by encouraging them to come out for a walk around the Debenham Lake or another lovely local venue – Or it may be by inviting them to join in with one of our get-togethers whenever that becomes possible.

Although, the rain was so welcome for our gardens and for the farmers, for me, sunshine really lifts my spirits and tells me that there is joy in just being in our local countryside, listening to the songs of nature, and being connected to nature in all its glory and simplicity. For me, it is while I am walking with our Labrador Nelly along the many footpaths around Debenham. I also love to; feel the wind and hear it rushing through the trees; and watch the endless power of the sea as it crashes onto the shore. If there is another thing we have learned during this pandemic, it is that experiencing and feeling part of the countryside has a huge positive impact on our physical and mental well-being – I know I feel so much better for it, and the stress just melts away.

So, we are making a special effort to try to make our countryside available on-line. Over the past weeks we have been offered lots of videos and wonderful photos that can't fail to leave you wishing you had actually been there, or perhaps thinking “I remember just such a lovely walk so many years ago”. In the next few weeks we will, in collaboration with Mike Challis, Arthur Jackson, and maybe some others, be launching “Sights, Sounds and Songs of Nature” which will offer a menu of enchanting videos and audio slide shows. To tempt you, here are just two of the contributions: [Mickfield Meadow](#) and [Kingfisher near the River Alde](#).

Last year at this time we were all greatly looking forward to The Debenham Project Garden Party at the coming weekend. Each year since the Project started this event has been so very generously

hosted by Lyn and Mike Rouse in their lovely garden behind the High Street. It was our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and yet again we had a wonderful afternoon – 150 of our “family” joining together to enjoy a truly lovely occasion with all that is so reminiscent of such events in days gone by – Fizz, Afternoon tea in the marquee, Entertainment and, best of all, the company of so many friends – A chance to say a big thank you to everyone who has made the Project what it is today. This year things are sadly so very different and we have had to cancel this year’s event. But fear not, Mike and Lyn are already planning next year’s Garden Party. So don’t give that chic summer dress and hat or that smart blazer to the charity shop – you will need them next July – Every year is a special year for The Debenham Project but I hope that 2021 is going to be a very special year.

Finally this is a very special day for a very special couple - Brenda and Charlie Mayhew. It is their platinum (70<sup>th</sup>) wedding anniversary today. Brenda and Charlie have been members of our Dove Cottage Fit Club since the very beginning 10 years ago. They are a joy to have as friends and we send them all our love and best wishes. Congratulations.

You can access all of our on-line help by visiting our new “[On-Line Resources](#)” page, where you can find the current version of our "Coronavirus - Local Information and Support" list, and our [News and Project Progress page](#).

I hope you find this letter useful and of some comfort at this difficult time.

With all best wishes,

Lynden