

Hi Everyone,

In this letter: **How Things are Going: “Hi! What a Lovely Morning”: An Award for Making a Difference: Sorry! No Hut this Year: R4D Radio: On-Line Mindfulness Course in September.**

For some time now, we have been asking for the local statistics on the incidence and impact of Covid 19 to be made public so that we can best judge how to resume our groups and activities and reassure those who wish to participate of their safety. At last the Government has released the figures on its website although at the moment their definition of the term local seems to cover only down to “the South East”! However, I recommend visiting the “Healthy Suffolk Website” just set up by Public Health Suffolk which provides data down to district and borough level. You may also like to visiting <https://www.inyourarea.co.uk/apps> and download their app for smart phones and tablets*

From what we hear on the phone and when we meet people in the High Street and on dog walks, the majority are coping reasonably well and cheerfully sticking to the guidelines. Nevertheless, I sense a certain “tiredness” and concern about “how much longer will this go on”. The relaxation of the guidelines has been welcomed but the potential of having another lock-down over the late autumn and through the winter is a common concern, especially for our elderly and vulnerable participants – which is most of us who are part of The Debenham Project.

But the good news is: There have been no new confirmed cases of Covid 19 in Mid Suffolk over the last 7 days and only 8 over the whole of Suffolk. There have been no new cases in care homes for the last 3 weeks or so. The total number of confirmed cases in Mid Suffolk since the beginning of the pandemic so far is 259. So the cumulative risk of someone in our area being diagnosed with the virus during the period has been about 1 in 300 (0.3% of the population of Mid Suffolk) and the average chance of being infected on any one day has been about 1 in 2,500. Now that the rate of new cases across Suffolk is in single figures the current risk level is much lower still.

This means that, for the moment, the risk of becoming infected locally is extremely low provided we follow the guidelines. The major worry lies in whether that risk can be kept low over the next few months. As we have seen this virus can breakout and spread very rapidly. So we need to be very vigilant and especially those of us who may be travelling to parts of the country where the infection rate is much greater.

A couple of years ago I was gently chastised for often beginning my articles each month in the Debenham Parish Magazine with references to the weather – this was, apparently, a journalistic no-no. Although, trying not “go on about it”, it is a piece of advice that I have tried to ignore. Why? Because I believe that our newsletters should be “conversational” and almost the first thing, after saying hello, that we talk about when meeting anyone by chance on a country walk or on the High Street is about the weather and how lovely the countryside is. Why? Because they have a big impact on how we feel, and when the sun is shining and the birds are singing we almost all say “what a lovely morning”. A positive feeling can make our problems so much easier to manage. I strongly believe that the NHS should consider socially prescribing connecting to nature and the countryside as a valid therapy for the stress and frustration that comes with caring for someone with dementia, with having become isolated, and with mental distress. This is why one of the key themes in our On-Line Resources is “The Sights, Sounds, and Songs of Nature”.

Over the past months since lock-down, communities across the UK have, unasked, simply got on and done what was needed to be done to support their friends, neighbours and residents who had suddenly become isolated because of their age, frailty, and vulnerability. I would say that this is the “nature” of any community such as Debenham. This week, Radio Suffolk called to say that The

Debenham Project had been nominated for recognition by its “making a difference during the Covid 19” crisis campaign. I was delighted to accept on behalf of everyone – volunteers, carers, cared-for, other participants, donors, etc. - who have helped to create and sustain the Project and to keep supporting those we care for by e-mail, phone calls, on-line support and newsletters. However, there are so many others in our community who put themselves out to help a neighbour, friend, and local resident. I would like to nominate them all for a “making a difference”, but, especially, Richard Blackwell for setting up the “Helping Hand in Debenham” and Jane Baldwin for the “Food Parcel” initiatives.

Although, as the local statistics suggest, the risks may be relatively low, unless we can have the confidence that they are truly negligible we cannot yet think about resuming any of our outings and regular groups and activities. It is particularly sad when this has meant cancelling those special events that are so looked forward to each summer. In July this month it was the Garden Party, but next month it would have been the outing to The Hut on the beach front at Felixstowe. This has become a traditional event organised by Joy Walton who coordinates our Lunch Clubs as well as running one of them each month. Each year Joy puts in a massive amount of work beginning with booking the Hut which because of the demand is a bit like trying to get tickets for an Ed Sheeran concert. Then she has to send out the invitations, organise the drivers and transports, organise the fish and chip lunches, update the risk analysis, book the Rickshaw Man, follow up with the guests and volunteer helpers, make sure everything has been sorted, and finally just worry that it all goes to plan on the day and the weather will be gorgeous! She doesn't really need to worry – it has, each time so far, been a truly lovely occasion, so very much appreciated by all her guests. But, sadly for everyone involved, this year it cannot go ahead, despite having done all the preparations. However, here is a date for your 2021 diaries – **Next Year's Outing to the Hut will be on August 22nd**. Oh! And by the way, Joy also organises regular litter picks – so much in tune with Radio Suffolk's “Don't be a Tosser” campaign - and probably, like so many others, she also helps in a number of other voluntary activities. On behalf of The Debenham Project and Debenham at large, thank you Joy for all you do.

There is a part of us that lives in the music that we danced and partied to in our youth. We can't forget it and always remember the chorus and often all the lyrics. At the very least we find ourselves humming along to the tune and even harmonising with the lead singer - And we are taken back to that time for a few moments remembering with pleasure the golden moments of the Forties, Fifties, Sixties, Seventies and Eighties. This is especially true for those who have dementia – their short-term memories may be poor but they can reminisce about the old times with the best of us. Go to [m4d Radio](#). A group of 5 themed radio stations available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, play music that evokes memories. Choose your era below, listen and enjoy...

The Gatehouse Charity is again running its online [mindfulness course](#) in September. One of participants in The Debenham Project took part in the first course and told me how much help it had given him. If you wish to find out more please click on the above link.

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

* Available for iPhone and Android devices