

Hi Everyone,

In this letter: **How Things are Going: Helping to Cope with isolation: Connecting with Nature: "Telephone Friends"**

"It's been a funny old month". Family and friends, neighbours and acquaintances, visitors and strangers, have all been keeping their distance - Nothing personal, I am assured! Queuing has become a standard feature at the Co-op and other shops. We are learning to live without going out of the village. Our daily exercise has become a highlight. Our usual round of group activities within the Project has been severely curtailed to be replaced by "working from home". Decorating and sorting out have become the current "must dos". It seems that we have adapted to the "new normal" reasonably well. And when I look around the High Street and exchange distanced greetings and enquiries about how everyone is getting on, it seems that is true for most of us. We get roughly the same message from our telephone calls and e-mails. In fact, for many of us, personally, there are aspects of this lifestyle that we should/would/could like to retain long term once things are under control e.g. shopping locally, less traffic, daily exercise, working from home, more time with the kids, volunteering*, community spirit*, connection with the countryside, less meetings, more doing, and so on. On the other hand, I really miss being close with our family, Matt, Donna, Bee, and Layla. I miss the fun and laughter of our Project activities and support groups, calling in at the Woolpack on a Saturday lunchtime, and going out to the shops and coming back an hour later not, because I had to queue, but because I stopped to chat and joke with so many others. But that's the price for keeping safe and staying well.

Whilst we have been fortunate in Debenham so far with regard to the limited number of households isolating due to a member developing symptoms, we must guard against any overconfidence. Our son and his family are now thankfully well out of quarantine though it is taking a while for Matt to recover enough to return to the front-line (Thank you for so many kind wishes.), but as time goes by more people are learning of family, friends or colleagues who have been directly or indirectly touched by the virus. So please stick to the guidelines even though it might seem that the risks of relaxing them are minimal.

As we enter our second month in "Lock Down" the stresses and concerns associated with isolation and the restrictions of social distancing will surely increase, and there is no real prospect of reduction in the restrictions, particularly for the elderly and the vulnerable, any time soon. I worry especially for family carers living with dementia for whom visits, together with the person they care for, to familiar places in the county and enjoying simple lunches and teas in cafes has been a very valuable coping strategy.

So I would like to encourage everyone who may be finding being isolated difficult to try to make the opportunity in their daily routine for "me time". Half an hour or so set aside solely for sitting quietly and relaxing by just letting the mind wander or, perhaps, by using one of the techniques in our "[Relaxing the Debenham Way](#)" short course. I also recommend anyone who finds it difficult to exercise outdoors to think about participating in some simple indoor exercises such as are available on our "[Exercising the Debenham Way](#)" video. Another very important prescription for surviving "Lock Down" for us older persons is laughter. I find that whenever, by accident, I come across an episode of those classics "Dad's Army", "Allo Allo", "The Last of the Summer Wine", and "Are you being Served?" I can't resist giggling and usually laughing out loud. Everyone has their favourites - and you can search them out on Freeview and on the internet - Look out for the "Yesterday", and "Gold" channels.

I was listening this morning to an interview on the wireless (that shows my age!!) this morning about the great psychological and emotional benefits that come from being out and about in the Spring countryside and listening to the sounds of nature. So following our Debenham Lake slideshow and The Birdsong Opera, you might like to chill out by clicking on Mike Challis's website <https://soundcloud.com/mikechallis> and selecting "Derrybrook Soundwalk" on the Popular Tracks page. There are many more lovely recordings available for free on his website - Enjoy the peace and tranquillity.

Finally, I want to mention the "A Helping Hand in Debenham" volunteer scheme coordinated by Richard Blackwell with the great support of Ruth and Stephen (Websters) and Jane Baldwin. It has done an amazing job in shopping for those who are isolated, and has now launched a team of volunteers offering "A Listening Ear" for anyone who needs a friend at the end of the telephone to talk to. The number to call is 07752296136.

I have attached the latest update of our Coronavirus Local Information list and, for those who do not receive the Debenham Parish Magazine, I have attached our contribution to the May edition. You can access lots of other material by visiting the "[News and Project Progress](#)" page on our website.

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

With all best wishes,

Lynden