



Anniversary conference



Tackling climate change



The placebo effect

Fast fashion

Raffles' Singapore start-up



## A huge thank you to members for all your submissions!

Please keep them coming — group news, travel news, personal journeys, short stories, poems. Submissions from all members are welcomed for our magazine, newsletter and website. For the **Spring edition**, please send your contributions to [office@nwr.org.uk](mailto:office@nwr.org.uk) by 31 January 2022 (copyright of material is transferred to NWR on submission unless otherwise requested).



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Judith Charlton  
Cover photos, clockwise from top left: Studio Duo, Markus Spiske, Jeyakumaran Mayooreesan, Ahmed Carter, Joshua Coleman

## Audio version

NWR Magazine is available to members in an audio format on our website.

## Not a member? NWR could be for you!

Have you moved to a new area? Have your children just left home? Have you experienced some other big life change? Come and meet other women to share and explore thoughts, ideas and experiences. Enjoy lively, stimulating conversation, broaden your horizons and make new friends. We offer a range of activities, from book clubs to walking groups. Join us!

Find out more at [www.nwr.org.uk](http://www.nwr.org.uk)

## Get in touch with NWR

Editor: Judith Charlton  
General enquiries: [office@nwr.org.uk](mailto:office@nwr.org.uk)  
Membership and press enquiries: [office@nwr.org.uk](mailto:office@nwr.org.uk)  
Website: <https://nwr.org.uk>  
Twitter: @nwrnk  
Facebook: [facebook.com/nwr.uk](https://facebook.com/nwr.uk)  
Telephone: 01603 406767  
Address: NWR, Unit 31, Park Farm Industrial Estate, Ermine Street, Buntingford, SG9 9AZ  
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## What's On?

Below is a selection of NWR's online schedule of talks. For more NWR events—national, regional and local—visit the events page of the NWR website at [www.nwr.org.uk/events/](http://www.nwr.org.uk/events/).

### The History of the Order of St John

4 November 7–8.30pm

John Williams, County President St John Ambulance for Buckinghamshire  
The St John Ambulance Association was established in 1877 in England by the Order of St John, with the aim of addressing the growing need for effective first aid training in an industrialised and urbanised society.

### Rembrandt's Blacks

9 November 1.30–3pm

Michael Ohajuru  
Rembrandt and his followers painted Black folk as noble human beings, but that was not to last as the so-called Dutch Golden Age of the seventeenth century, founded on the exploitation of its colonies in the Americas and East Indies, unfolded.

### Wine, Women and Song?

11 November 7–8.30pm

Dr Sophie Oosterwijk on Dutch Genre painting by Vermeer and his contemporaries.

### Ruislip NWR invite you to the Telephone Treasure Trail

Monday 15 November to Thursday 18 November 8-10pm

### Untold stories

18 November 7–8.30pm

NWR Autumn events series with our patron, Marion Molteno. Marion will be in conversation with Merilyn Brason, author of 'The Bamboo Bracelet: A True Story'.

### Misogynoir and the History of The Image of the African Woman in Western European Art

7 December 1.30–3pm

Michael Ohajuru

### Untold stories

9 December 7–8.30pm

NWR Autumn events series with our patron, Marion Molteno. Marion will be in conversation with Martha Leigh, author of 'Invisible Ink: A Family Memoir'.

### Home, sweet home

16 December 7–8.30pm

Dr Sophie Oosterwijk on the domestic interior in Dutch 17th-century painting.

## NWR NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2022

2–4 September 2022

Save the date for our next national conference, to be held at the University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne.

## Don't forget that you can still catch up on many of our past talks!

Visit our new website: [www.nwr.org.uk/schedule-of-talks/](http://www.nwr.org.uk/schedule-of-talks/)



Rembrandt's Vision with  
Dr Sophie Oosterwijk



Powerful Women of  
Manchester with Laura of  
Invisible Cities



All for the Love of Sugar  
with Sandy Leong



Actress, campaigner,  
writer, philosopher with  
Dr Sophie Ward



Reducing Inequalities  
with Dr Wanda Wyporska



Unconscious Bias with  
Leela Bassi



# All together now

NWR's anniversary conference was evidence of what we all know at heart, that there is nothing like coming together in person, writes chair of trustees **Josephine Burt**.

We did it! We held our 60th anniversary conference in Birmingham in September. There was much excitement at coming together and seeing friends face to face again. Many friendships across the UK are based on reunions at the conference and are nurtured during the year through involvement in our private Facebook discussion groups. Although only 150 members attended, the buzz of chatter and laughter reached our usual volume as everyone shared their Covid experiences and activities in returning to group meetings. At each conference we have about 10% of members who are first-time attendees, and we hope that the friendliness and stimulating atmosphere will encourage them to come again. At the other end of the spectrum are veterans of many conferences for whom conference weekend is a not to be missed event in their diary.

It was incredible that Natalie and the local organising committee, led by June Nash from Knowle Group and Lynn Welsher of Solihull Group, managed to retain most of the original speakers and wraparound events. For me, the highlight was presenting our new patron, Jasvinder Sanghera, and she received a very warm welcome. The keynote speakers, Valerie Singleton, Peter Liddle and Nick Barratt, were all excellent and Jasvinder kindly stepped in for A C Grayling, who was unable to attend at the last minute. The Friday night 1960s quiz set by Ruth Snaith of Newport, Shropshire Group and Maggie Rowlands from Sheffield/Fullwood Group was great fun as we tried to identify photographs of celebrities and dredge our memories of events from that era. And the after dinner speaker on Saturday, Lesley Smith, holder of an MPhil in Tudor Medicine, had us in stitches with her talk "Sex and the Tudors" complete with examples of contraceptives of the time!

I remember the start of the anniversary conference planning in 2018, when we had 25 members around the table and grand ideas for the biggest conference yet.



Inevitably the planning group diminished to single figures and as we know, fate intervened. Our anniversary conference was actually in our 61st year. What this Covid time has emphasised is the national aspect of NWR. Yes, local groups are the essential heart of the organisation but, we still offer friendship, entertaining and informative talks and discussions and fun through our national offer. And the growth area in membership is amongst independent members, as of September 2021 there were over 70.

Another initiative for this conference was the attendance of some members by Zoom. Up to 40 members participated online in the AGM and watched the keynote speakers. While we incorporate more digital facilities and content into our member benefits and our ways of working, we are conscious that not everyone likes or embraces computers, iPads and apps, (and this has led to the introduction of our new printed annual). As far as possible, we will continue to use traditional ways of communication for those members.

Now we must look forward into our seventh decade. We have an enlarged staff team, a new website and new initiatives that will continue to engage you. We hope for more members and groups and more diversity in our organisation so we can share the camaraderie of women and explore our commonalities. So put 2-4 September 2022 in your diary, especially if you live in the North and Scotland, and join us at our conference in Newcastle. I'll see you there!

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# Only connect

There is more to Facebook than you might think, as the members of our NWR discussion groups have discovered. Why not join them?

Many of us talk regularly on NWR's Facebook discussion groups, and even more like to read what's being said. We chat about everything from avocados to zircons, we discuss more serious topics and exchange thoughts. We tell each other about what sort of day we've had, exchange book ideas and recommendations, share programme planning ideas and so much more.

I was a relative latecomer to Facebook, having had the same reservations I hear from non-Facebook users, but eventually decided to open an account—and I'm so glad I did. Once you get the hang of it and realise that you're in charge, and that you can alter your settings to suit you and use it as much or as little as you wish, then it's useful, informative and fun—particularly our NWR groups.

Initially, I signed up to a few and just read without posting or commenting. Then I started dipping my toe in and now I'm a regular poster and contributor. Some members rarely if ever comment or post, but it's much more interesting and fun if more people join in, so we get a better variety of posts, opinions, ideas and thoughts.

The groups are a wonderful way to feel more engaged with NWR as a national

organisation and I genuinely feel as if I've made lots of friends, most of whom I've yet to meet in person. It's surprising how quickly you get to know each other. In fact, at a recent moderators' training meeting, although we had only met online, we really felt that we already knew each other, and so the ice had been broken and new friendships were forged.

## It is a very safe place to post and share ideas

Below is a list of the current groups, and you can join as many or as few as you wish—but why not join them all? The only requirement is that you are a member of NWR. On applying to join, you will be asked what group do you belong to—obviously independent members will put just that—and for the password. The password can be found in the latest NWR newsletter, which is on our website at [www.nwr.org.uk/network/newsletter/](http://www.nwr.org.uk/network/newsletter/). It's as simple as that! When opening your Facebook account, it's helpful if it is in the same name as on the NWR database. Joint names, or members using their partner's account are also tricky and time consuming for us admins,

so are best avoided. Our groups are for current NWR members only, so it is a very safe place to post and share ideas.

As with all Facebook groups, there are certain courtesies to be observed, and it is for this reason that a team of moderators vet all applications and monitor posts and comments for compliance with NWR's Social Media Policy. Happily, it is rare for anything to go wrong, but we are all willing volunteers and here to try and help if it does.

There aren't many rules but a few guidelines are needed. For example, are you posting in the most appropriate group? Is your post best worded to get a response—have you asked a question or just made a statement? Are you being kind and courteous to other members—all opinions are valid, however much you may disagree with them.

If you have any queries, please feel free to contact any one of us via Messenger or email the national office team, who will forward your query.

Enough from me! Do log into Facebook now, or set up an account and start joining the groups—search by prefixing each group with NWR. We look forward to being overwhelmed with requests to join and to lots more of you taking part—it really is a case of the more, the merrier!

Written by Heather de Lacey on behalf of the team of volunteers who comprise the admins and moderators of all the NWR groups: Catharine Woodliffe, Heather de Lacey, Jill Lucas, Liz Carless, Liz Valette, Lynn Welsher and Ruth Snaith, overseen by Natalie Punter and Helen Page.



Photo by Fred Moon on Unsplash

**Discussion** Why not start off a discussion? It could be something topical or something dear to your heart.

**Chat** Just that—we chat about pretty well anything.

**Programme Planning** A very useful group for exchanging ideas—lots of sharing goes on here.

**How Was Your Day?** Was it good, was it not so good, did something funny or odd happen? We'd love to hear.

**Creates** Anything creative: writing, knitting, painting, pottery, photography etc. Photos always appreciated.

**Bookworms** Looking for inspiration for a new author to try? Would you like to tell us about a book you've just enjoyed, or not? This could be the group for you.

**Culture Vultures** Anything really, apart from books. It can range from opera, ballet or exhibitions, to your favourite soap.



Photo by Anna Kolosyuk on Unsplash

**NWR - Conference - 2022** Obviously the title changes every year. Find out where others are staying, who's going—anything conference related.

**Travel Bugs** Tell us about your holiday or ask for advice on where to go. Share tips about your travel experiences, particularly useful in these Covid times.



Image by Ian Kelsall from Pixabay

### Techie Help

Got a technical problem? There's usually someone who can help.

**Naturewatch** Share places to see flora and fauna, post your photographs of wildlife and flowers from your walks and gardens.

**Genealogy Research** Swap ideas and share your findings.

**Health and Wellbeing** Anything health related, but please remember, we're only sharing ideas and experiences, no-one is an expert!

**Strictly Come Dancing Fans** An annual highlight for many members! Indulge your passion.

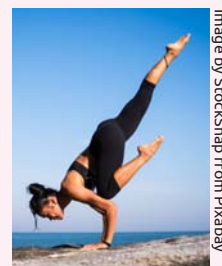


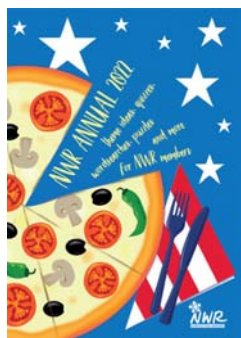
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# What's new?

Well, quite a lot, actually! New website, new logo, new themes for 2022, not to mention new staff (see below)

## 2022 themes and annual



Our new country is the USA, and our theme is "Our Evolving Relationship with Food". We have also produced a new NWR Annual, which contains lots of information on

these, as well as fun puzzles and news from our Diamond celebrations. All AOs, LOs and independent members will receive one, and extra copies can be ordered from: [www.eventstop.co.uk/event/4284/nwr\\_annual\\_2022#/](http://www.eventstop.co.uk/event/4284/nwr_annual_2022#/)

## A new website

By now you will most likely have visited our new website but, if not, the address remains the same: [www.nwr.org.uk/](http://www.nwr.org.uk/) You'll be able to see national and groups' news and events, members' submissions, schedule of talks recordings, and your

NWR newsletters and magazines. You will also be able to update your membership details.

## A new logo

Hopefully you are also becoming familiar with this too, not only from the website but also on our other communications. And you can use it for your own group

## Conference 2022

This will be in Newcastle, at the University of Northumbria, 2-4 September, so save the date and take the opportunity to visit this vibrant city in the company of lively minded women.

## Scrapbooks

Not so new, but a reminder that you still have until the end of the year to complete your page and send it in to join the wonderful examples we have already.



Image by Geoff Duke from Pixabay

# A warm welcome to Toni

Toni Steward, our new South West Region Membership Officer, introduces herself

"I've recently relocated back to the South West after living in Hertfordshire for a few years. I am a mum of five and was looking for a new direction in life—I want to be Toni again now that the children are all in school full time. I wanted to do something for me but at the same time I very much like to help people and I'm very sociable.

Then the job opportunity came up with NWR. I heard about it from Natalie, and knew a bit about the organisation due to our children going to school together.

I'm very excited about my new role and really looking forward to meeting new people and helping make a difference to women's lives, and helping them feel part of NWR.

After the national conference last week



I met some of my lovely Area Organisers from the South West as well as some lovely members, who all made me feel so welcome."



## GIVE THE GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP!

Do you know a woman who would enjoy being a part of NWR?

Then why not treat them to a gift membership, beautifully packaged with a gift card for your message, and a copy of the latest magazine?

Details at [www.eventstop.co.uk/event/3940/nwr\\_as\\_a\\_gift#/](http://www.eventstop.co.uk/event/3940/nwr_as_a_gift#/)

# I don't do anything special!

But the Mary Stott Award judges thought differently when they heard what Kilbarchan NWR had to say about their nominee, **Fiona Catterson**.

I was overwhelmed, touched and honoured when Kilbarchan NWR said they wanted to put me forward for the 2021 Mary Stott Award. My response was "Why me? I don't do anything special." They then said "Oh, yes you do!" and listed their reasons for my nomination.

Kilbarchan NWR has been a flourishing group for many years and has had many characters amongst its membership. I took over as LO in 2019. Good timing: just before a pandemic! As with everyone, this changed the way we held our meetings but instead of tailing off, ours ramped up! Our Whatsapp chat took off in a way we could not have anticipated, with our Sunday "conversation starters" proving a great hit. We decided to meet twice weekly via Zoom: both meetings having a topic. We started a quiz group with daily clues, and a book group. In addition to this, several members joined the national Facebook discussion groups

Fiona (right) receives the 2021 Mary Stott Award from NWR trustee Jennifer Johnson



and participated in the excellent series of talks, quizzes and other events run by the national NWR team.

I also had to adapt my community work during this time. I was one of the instigators of the constituted group: Friends of Stanely Park, which is the residential home that my mother lives in, along with 32 others. I was aware of the mental health issues that can arise when people move into care, and of the benefits being outdoors can bring. So, I put

together an application to the Big Lottery Fund and we were really pleased to receive the full amount we asked for: £10,000! This meant that we could link with our local country park for watersports, land based activities and ranger-led activities. The residents went out on the loch in speedboats and slower boats, and toured the park on tandem bikes, amongst other things. The buzz that this gave them was immense! Days later, maybe they couldn't remember why, but they knew

## Road closed

It is becoming increasingly obvious that climate change isn't just something that happens to other people, so why aren't we taking action, asks NWR patron **Marion Molteno**.

The road ahead is flooded. There are warning signs up: Road blocked. Find an alternative route... And yet we don't.

We'd be blind not to notice that the rate of climate disasters has been speeding up. Cyclones, sea level rising, arctic melting. But we keep on, apparently unable to change direction.

In writing my latest book, *Journeys Without A Map: A Writer's Life*, I have been reflecting on many things in my own story, and one of them is this. I have lived through decades of gradually mounting evidence of how the world's current way of life threatens the natural world that we depend on. Yet I have done

nothing beyond making a few personal adaptations. When my children were young I was too busy coping with work and family. Then when they grew up there were always so many other things demanding my attention. Perhaps just because the challenges are so great, most of us feel it's beyond our powers to affect the situation. But it's getting harder to just get on with normal life and not bother.

My older daughter and her family live in the West Yorkshire town of Hebden Bridge, which regularly suffers devastating floods. As the waters subside, the community rallies once again to help clear debris and restore

damaged premises. My grandchildren are among them.

Southern Africa — where many of my close relatives and friends live — suffers from prolonged droughts. Crops fail, millions face hunger. A few years ago Cape Town, a city of over 4m, and where I was at university, almost ran out of water.

In Europe, Australia and California, intense summer heat causes wildfires to blaze out of control. In Portugal people I know had to pack their three small children into a car, to drive out of the valley and escape the thickening smoke. Their home, a lovingly restored old farmhouse, was destroyed.

Whatever the world leaders meeting in Glasgow this month manage to sign up to, we know that with most politicians short-term thinking dominates. Unless there is widespread citizen pressure, they will avoid taking the unpopular actions needed to force a reduction in carbon



they felt uplifted and happy. The staff put up a display of photos in the communal hallway which the residents could gather round and talk about. It also gave visitors something to talk about with their relatives. We then thought "If that is what static photos do for mental health, what would moving photos do?" We invested in a TV and software which, as administrator, enables me to change content. This was sited in the hallway just next to the dining room so that residents could see photos when they went for meals. Then we discovered an app whereby relatives can send photos straight to this TV.

Friends of Stanely Park also started a closed Facebook page so, when relatives could not visit the home because of the pandemic, we could see on Facebook what residents were getting up to as well as sending photos to the screen so that they could see what we were getting up to!

The other aspect of my community work is with my church, Oakshaw Trinity. I lead the Eco Group, which is a sub-group of the Education, Mission and Eco Committee. Around three years ago, we signed up to the Eco-Congregation Scotland programme. This is a scheme which helps churches move to become an Eco Church, where all of the congregation, people and groups who use the buildings

are committed to doing what they can to help stop climate change. The programme goes through bronze, silver and gold status and you can start at any point. In July, we were awarded silver status.

I was very sure that I did not want our group to be all talk—the awards were not the important part for me. I also did not want the Eco Group to be a "tick box" committee; we had to make a positive impact on individuals and give them the knowledge and tools to make a difference.

### **Maybe they couldn't remember why, but they knew they felt uplifted and happy**

Eco-Congregation Scotland has three aspects to it: Global Living, Practical Living and Spiritual Living. These categories make it quite different to other programmes, as most focus just on practical living—what you can do day-to-day to make a difference, such as avoiding single-use plastics. Global living is something people tend to think about when there is a disaster somewhere in the world; but this programme helps focus on what we can do to prevent climate change disasters taking place, as well on

those who suffer most when disasters occur—generally women and children. Spiritual living is what a church can help with: for instance, holding services to inform people of what they can do. For many people, praying for the world and for those affected by climate change is the only thing they feel they can do—and that is absolutely fine! Everyone has a part to play. It is the collective responses that WILL make the difference.

One of Kilbarchan NWR's recent topics was eco living. This resulted in a great discussion and in many people changing their habits: from liquid shampoo to shampoo bar; from bottled sparkling water to soda stream to make their own; from cotton wool to washable baby muslin for removing make up; and so on. It was the sharing of what some members currently do that helped others see what they could do.

More and more we realised that Kilbarchan NWR is a unique group with unique members who support and care for each other, have diverse skill sets, engage in stimulating and thought provoking discussions both locally and nationally, and who are all very proud to be members of NWR.

See more about the Eco-Congregation Scotland programme: <https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/>

emissions. We cannot leave it to chance—we have the strongest possible motivation for pressing them to act, and if they make promises, to carry them out. How can we not care that the future of all those younger than us, including those we care most about, is under threat?

I am proud that my daughters take actions that I never got to. Star, when her children were very young, worked late at night to put herself through a Masters in environmental decision-making, and now

works as an environmental consultant. May works with local school children to give presentations on climate change.

My older grandchildren have followed Greta Thunberg's lead, and have the sense of strength that comes from being part of wider collective action. They knew when they staged a School Strike for Climate in their own small town that they were part of a movement taking place in towns and cities across the UK, and the world.

"I'd be in school if the world was cool," said their poster.

I'm delighted to see that Fiona Catterson, the winner of the 2021 Mary Stott award, has been recognised for her work on environmental issues and climate change. Each

Marion's grandchildren take part in a School Strike for Climate



Floods in West Yorkshire, Boxing Day 2015



individual like Fiona who commits to doing whatever they can is an inspiration. Working together as groups we would have more chance of having an impact. It would be wonderful to see NWR groups across the country finding ways to keep raising the issue.

You can order Marion's latest book, *Journeys Without A Map: A Writer's Life*, from any bookshop. Information about her other books is on her website, [www.marionmolteno.co.uk](http://www.marionmolteno.co.uk)



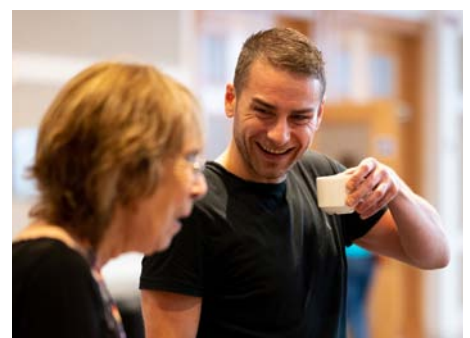
# Buzzing in Birmingham

You had to be there, but hopefully you can get a taste of our much delayed, but hugely successful, anniversary conference from these photos

All photos by Studio Duo  
www.studioduo.com



Delegates, trustees and staff enjoy meeting again after two years, and listening to new patron Jasvinder Sanghera (above) making the conference opening speech. The conference was opened by June Nash (top right) of the conference organising committee.





Right: Her presentation over, Valerie Singleton settles down to enjoy the conference.

Below: Fiona Catterson receives the 2021 Mary Stott Award from NWR trustee Jennifer Johnson.



Right and below right: Lesley Smith has the audience in stitches with her after-dinner talk, Sex and the Tudors



Above left, clockwise from top left: Peter Liddle MBE on discovering Richard III's body in a Leicester car park, Mary Bodfish on How We Used to Live, Ruth Lowe on Mary Quant, Roger Butler on canal history and Dr Nick Barratt on Who Do You Think You Are?

Below: Flowers for Sam Bushell to mark her 20 years with the NWR team



Left and far left: The people who made it all happen! From left: NWR staff Sharon Gibson, Natalie Punter, Helen Page, Toni Steward, Chris Allison, Sam Bushell, Cath Heslop, and organising committee Ruth Snaith, Maggie Rowlands, June Nash, Sue Mack, Lynn Welsher.



# All in the mind

**Pamela Pipkin** of Barnet NWR attended a lecture at the Royal Institution and found the subject, The Placebo Effect, fascinating. She shares her views on the topic with us.

**The Placebo Effect:** A beneficial effect produced by a placebo drug or treatment, which cannot be attributed to the properties of the placebo itself, and must therefore be due to the patient's belief in that treatment. *Oxford English Dictionary*

The speaker was Dr Jo Marchand, a scientist and scientific communicator based in London.

In the western world medicine has traditionally treated mind and body as two separate entities, although this has been changing over more recent times. In contrast, eastern world medicine involves holistic traditions which prioritise immaterial over material; people over conditions. Examples such as acupuncture, reiki and spiritual healing are ones we are all familiar with. The placebo effect can be seen as one of the bridges between the philosophies.

In the 1950s the introduction of randomised controlled drug trials attempted to determine which treatments worked by using a placebo—from the Latin “I will please”. That is, a product which does not contain the drug under investigation. Randomised patients were administered either the drug or the placebo without knowledge of which one they had been given. The results were carefully analysed using rigorous statistical techniques. This was an extremely valuable technique for many diseases and their treatments, such as infections and the use of antibiotics or high cholesterol and the use of statins, where placebo groups did not benefit from the “non-drug”. However, in chronic diseases such as diabetes, also for pain and depression, the results were not as clear cut. An example of this is the 1999 trial of a synthetic human secretin as a therapy for autism.<sup>1</sup> The children's symptoms were assessed and there was no difference between the test and placebo group, indicating that secretin did not work. However, all the children improved, some

very significantly, regardless of which group they were in. This is just one of countless studies with patients suffering from asthma to Parkinson's Disease that show the placebo effect.

Placebos might be seen as a magic pill with benefits, no side-effects and essentially zero cost. However, there has been one huge problem—it has always been assumed that you have to lie to, or at least withhold the truth from, patients for placebos to be effective, and the fundamental trust between doctors and patients would be jeopardised. This tenet was put to the test when studies were carried out<sup>2</sup> informing patients suffering with depression, migraine or irritable bowel syndrome exactly what they were taking. Placebos reduced symptoms by 30% compared to no treatment. This

suggests that honest placebos do work and many subsequent studies confirm these findings.

Having recognised the placebo effect is real and produced from the mind, the quest to harness the placebo effect in medicine was investigated more fully. The mind is involved every time we take a medication, so how can the placebo effect be boosted when active drugs are taken? Chronic pain relief is one area where doctors and drug companies concentrated their efforts. Doctors found that, if they prescribed drugs in person, the results were much more effective than if prescribed by a nurse or pharmacist, presumably because we believe the higher the qualifications the better the chance for a good outcome. Drug companies found that more expensive medications were more effective, probably because we instinctively believe that expensive is better. The presentation was also found to be very influential in triggering a larger placebo response in more people. Big pills tended to be more effective than small ones, for example. Two pills at once worked better than one. A pill with

## Pandemic positives

### Toronto trip

Sadly, I lost my husband last May and our son, who lives in Toronto, was unable to come home to see his father or be at his funeral. Just before he died, we were able to tell my husband that our son had proposed to his girlfriend and she had accepted. The wedding was first proposed for February, then March, and finally took place on 25 May this year.

This required much planning and form filling to enable me to spend the whole of May in Toronto. First, there was a three-day quarantine in an approved hotel, which was awful. Then 10 days in an Airbnb and finally the rest of the month with my son and his girlfriend. We had expected the lockdown in Canada to lift, but instead it was extended which left us unable to go shopping, to visit tourist attractions and restaurants or even visit people in their homes. Fortunately, the weather was kind to us and we spent a lot of time in parks and people's back gardens.

I am now feeling quite proud of myself, not only for having coped with bereavement in lockdown but also for having flown to Canada—my first flight in 20 years and also my first flight on my own. It just goes to show that, if you are determined, you can do it. I had such a



wonderful trip. We were only able to have 10 people at the wedding, which was outside in 30°, but it was watched on Zoom by friends and family around the world.



Shirley Hill,  
Medina NWR



a brand name stamped on it was more effective than one without. Coloured pills tended to work better than white ones, although which colour was best depended on the condition to be treated. Blue tended to help sleep, red was good for pain relief, green for anxiety. The type of intervention mattered too. The more dramatic the treatment, the bigger the placebo effect. In general, surgery was better than injections, which were better than capsules, which were better than pills. There were cultural differences too, emphasising that any effects depend not on the placebos themselves but on what they mean to us. For example, blue tablets for Italian men do not help sleeping difficulties but have the opposite effect—they find them arousing rather than relaxing. The Italian football strip is blue! Also, although injections make better placebos in the USA that is not necessarily true in Europe, where there is a strong cultural belief in the effectiveness of pills.

So, we know that the placebo effect exists, probably in all our minds, although some people access and use it more than others. So how did it come about?



Photo by Joshua Coleman on Unsplash

In order to investigate this, we need to look at the opposite phenomenon, the *nocebo*—Latin: “I will harm”—effect.

We have all heard of what we term mass hysteria amongst groups, mostly described in girls and women, although there is really no evidence it is gender specific. Those investigated by the World Health Organisation in Afghanistan were well documented. Since 2008 more than 1,600 girls from 22 schools across the country had fallen ill in similar circumstances. It

was thought to be a systematic campaign of poisoning by the Taliban to prevent girls from attending education. Afghan authorities had made arrests and suggested that it was either poisoning of a water supply or toxic gas. The media broadcast pictures of victims being carried on stretchers and hooked up to drips. The symptoms, sickness, dizziness and fainting, were short-lived and all the girls recovered. Blood and urine samples were collected and interviews conducted, and WHO concluded

## The flip side of the coin

As we all know, the start of 2020 plunged the world into a state of unexpected turmoil due to the Coronavirus pandemic. No one could have predicted that entire countries would shut down almost entirely, leaving only essential shops open—yes, I queued for my shopping—and only the necessary public services, such as hospitals, running.

Many people were furloughed from work for several months, or worked from home. There was the pleasure of no traffic on the roads, which led to a substantial drop in pollution levels and clearer, bluer skies, but no social life—just a beautiful silence. This was coupled with some lovely warm weather which allowed for plenty of gardening and pleasant, lengthy walks, often early in the morning when no one else was about—just you and an abundance of wildlife which became braver as the silence continued. Many a walk was accompanied by a number of squirrels or an occasional mouse or vole: go out later in the day and you would meet runners, cyclists and walkers. Everyone looked happier and they had time to smile and say hello.

I chose to call this piece the flip side of the coin as I have been living for much of the past eighteen months on the



other side of the NWR coin. With only a temperamental tablet to work with, Zoom was virtually impossible to activate, so I’ve lived in a state of semi-isolation for much of this time. But I certainly made use of the time when we were allowed a limited amount of freedom, visiting the Van Gogh Alive exhibition in Birmingham, plus some cinema trips and a family Christmas that had to be spent on video.

Looking back over this extraordinary period I can only be positive. I feel extremely privileged to have so far escaped Covid19 and, although I feel sad for those who have lost their lives to the virus, I know no one personally who has died. But what did it mean

to me? Well, I was fortunate to retire almost simultaneously with the virus striking, so I have had no financial worries. I’ve enjoyed the weather, walks and gardening—these were a sheer delight. An avid reader at the best of times, the lockdown encouraged even more bookworming: everything from sci-fi to biographies and even one or two on pandemics both real and imagined. World War Z was one of them. Opera was discovered as well as a number of TV series and films on DVD.

Like many others I suffered lost theatre bookings and cancelled holidays, some of which have been transferred to this year, so fingers crossed.

Now that fully vaccinated life is slowly returning to something that resembles normality, I find I’m enjoying a quieter social life as, so far, there are fewer people out and about, and it’s a fantastic time to visit the cinema. There are some excellent films at the moment, from the superbly acted *The Father* to the documentary style *Nomadland*, thrillers with a difference such as *A Quiet Place II* and *Old*, and the Latin American musical *In The Heights* with its immigrant message. So don’t be afraid to get out there and enjoy what life has to offer right now—you won’t regret it.

Susan Dean, Crewe & District NWR

there was no poisoning. The entire outbreak had been caused by a “mass psychogenic illness” — the nocebo effect.

The nocebo effect has been put forward as an explanation for the power of voodoo curses, of which there are countless examples. It was thought that victims must be gullible and impressionable, but that is far from the truth: anyone can be affected, although who or what makes you feel ill is highly dependent on your social and cultural background. For example, studies in the USA and UK have induced illness in volunteers after telling them, falsely, that they were exposed to powerful Wi-Fi radiation.

## The placebo effect taps into ancient, neural pathways evolved to help us deal with the world we live in

Although the nocebo effect may seem harmful maybe it makes good sense from an evolutionary point of view. Nicholas Humphrey, a theoretical psychologist from Cambridge University, has written extensively about this subject and argues that, if we see people getting sick around us, or have good reason to believe that we have been poisoned, then sickness and vomiting is a good idea. Headaches, dizziness and fainting may all be warning signals that we should leave a location and that we may need medical attention. It is a self-preservation mechanism.

This may also explain why we experience positive placebo effects. If threat and anxiety can induce symptoms of pain and sickness then it follows that feeling safe and secure or believing that we are about to feel better will have the reverse effect. We let our guard down and suppress negative symptoms such as pain and anxiety. The placebo effect taps into ancient, neural pathways evolved to help us deal with the world we live in.

If you found this interesting and would like to know more about the mind and its effect on illness I suggest Jo Marchand's book *Cure: A Journey into the Science of Mind over Body*, published in 2016.

1 Adrian Sandler, Olseen Huff Center for Child Development, North Carolina, USA. 1999

2 Ted Kaptchuk, Harvard University, USA. 2010

# Fast and furious

The fast fashion industry is a major contributor to climate change, pollution and human rights violations. It's time to fight back, writes **Cass Hebron** of Sustain your Style.

Year-round sales, constant spam emails about the new must-have items, and cheap clothes wearing out after only a few weeks. Sound familiar? Fast fashion has become a staple of the high street: cheap, mass-produced clothes designed to be thrown away.

But our cheap clothes have a much higher hidden cost. According to the UN<sup>1</sup>, 21bn tons of textiles end up in landfill every year. And despite the fact that in Europe we're all buying more clothes than ever before, the average consumer doesn't even wear 40% of the items in their wardrobe! Fast fashion giants are driving climate change, pollution and human rights violations in their effort to keep us shopping.

Here's why it's time to say NO to the fast fashion machine, and how you can take back control of your wardrobe to make shopping choices that are good for people and the planet.

## What's the problem with the fashion industry?

Fast fashion has a devastating impact on the planet. Demand for constant cheap clothes en masse sends brands in a race to the bottom to find the lowest cost methods of production. This means resorting to unsustainable and unethical production methods using toxic chemicals, driving carbon emissions and using underpaid or unpaid labour. Here's the true cost of that £5 T-shirt:

### Waste

According to a Barnardo's study<sup>2</sup>, in one year British people spend nearly £2.7bn on clothes they only wear once—and less than 1% of textiles are recycled<sup>3</sup>.

The result is an ever-growing mountain of clothes being sent to landfill, incinerated, or even shipped back to the countries that produced them. This is not only a huge waste of resources, it also

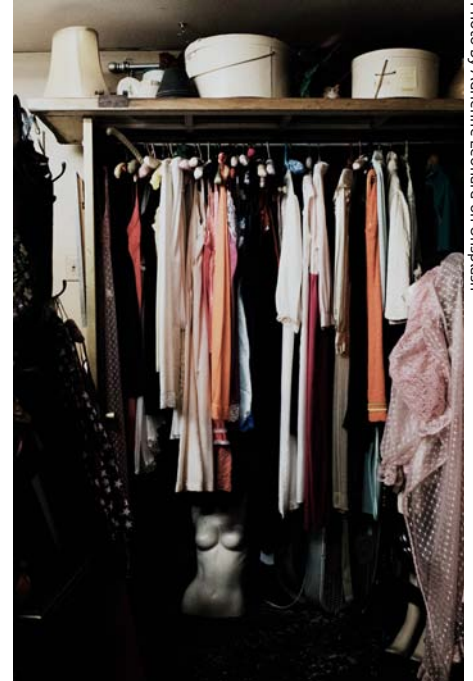


Photo by Adrienne Leonard on Unsplash

means those synthetic materials are being released back into the environment and contaminating the soil, water and air.

### Water usage

Producing one cotton T-shirt requires around 2,700 litres of water<sup>4</sup>. Fast fashion production depletes this crucial natural resource in huge quantities, including in production countries like India, where thousands of people lack access to clean drinking water.

### Toxic pollution

Toxic chemicals including arsenic, mercury, and heavy use of fertilisers are a standard part of cheap clothing production. The majority of this toxic waste is simply dumped into local waterways, where it pollutes the water



Tim Mitchell/Remake.World



## Useful resources

### Fashion Revolution

Publishes the Fashion Transparency Index, which analyses and ranks 250 of the world's biggest fashion brands and retailers based on their public disclosure of human rights and environmental policies, practices and impacts, in their operations and in their supply chains

<https://www.fashionrevolution.org/>

### Good on You

Research and analysis of ethical and sustainable fashion

<https://goodonyou.eco/>

### Ethical Consumer

Independent alternative consumer organisation, publishes shopping guides to a wide range of goods and services, including fashion and clothing

<https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/>

and soil, kills aquatic species, and harms the health of garment workers and the people living in local communities. And it doesn't end there - the waste eventually trickles out to seas and contaminates water around the world.

## Microplastics

Synthetic materials like polyester contain microfibres, which are tiny microplastics that break loose. One wash can release up to 700,000 microfibres<sup>5</sup> into the water. These microfibres make it into the ocean and local rivers, into the stomachs of fish, and onto our plates. In other words, we are eating the plastic we once wore.

## Deforestation

The Amazon rainforest is already producing more emissions than it can absorb. Part of the reason we are passing planetary tipping points at a dizzying pace is because corporations and governments are chopping down vast stretches of forest to make space for production of items like wood-based fabrics. This is disrupting the ecosystem, degrading the soil, violating the land rights of indigenous communities, and removing one of the most important tools our planet has for absorbing greenhouse gas emissions.

## Greenhouse gas emissions

The textiles we're wearing, the production process, shipping clothes overseas—they all use a lot of energy. Every year the

textile industry produces more emissions than international shipping and flights combined<sup>6</sup>—and it's only increasing.

## Human rights

The laundry list of problems with this toxic industry doesn't stop at the planet. Fashion production has a long history of unethical working conditions including forced labour, use of children, 18-hour working days, unsafe factories, and pay far below a liveable wage.

In 2013, the collapse of Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh killed over 1,000 workers and prompted many Western brands to promise better regulation of working conditions—but there are many brands that still have little to no protection for their workers at all.

## What can I do?

So, it's clear that our fashion production and shopping habits need to change, and fast! But how can we make a difference and develop a wardrobe that isn't part of the problem?

The first makeover should be in our attitudes to our clothes. High street brands push the idea that we should be constantly buying and renewing our wardrobe, valuing quantity and price over quality. So instead ask yourself:

### Do I already own it?

Most of us have plenty of clothes in our wardrobe already, including forgotten and neglected items. Choose to shop your wardrobe rather than the high street. Do you already have the clothes you need?

Also, learn to make your clothes last. A needle and thread go a long way towards adding a new lease of life to an old shirt! Choose fabrics that last a long time and read the clothing tags to make sure you're caring for your clothes the best way you can.



Photo by Rio Lecatompessy on Unsplash

## Do I need to buy it?

Save yourself money and effort by looking elsewhere for your clothes. Second hand clothes shops are a treasure-trove of underappreciated and high-quality gems. You could also make it a social occasion and propose a clothes swap session with your friends.

## Is there a more ethical

## alternative to what I want?

Small and ethical businesses are everywhere if you know where to look. Online guides like Ethical Consumer and Good on You have directories of brands ranked by their ethical criteria. Always check a brand's credentials online: if there's no information about where the clothes come from and the prices seem too good to be true, steer clear!

When you are buying clothes, buy as if you intend to wear it for life. Buying higher-quality clothes that last is a saving in the long run, and far more satisfying than having to return to the shops every few weeks for a wardrobe top-up.

Lastly, one of the cheapest and most effective ways you can make fashion fairer and more sustainable for everyone is to talk about it! Tell your friends and family why you're steering clear of fast fashion, and look up organisations working to change the industry like Fashion Revolution. Tackling the problems in the fast fashion industry can seem like a huge challenge for consumers, but our voice is one of the most powerful tools we have for a better world—so let's speak up about ditching fast fashion!

- 1 [https://unece.org/DAM/RCM\\_Website/RFSD\\_2018\\_Side\\_event\\_sustainable\\_fashion.pdf](https://unece.org/DAM/RCM_Website/RFSD_2018_Side_event_sustainable_fashion.pdf)
- 2 <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/news/barnardos-calls-people-think-pre-loved-buying-new-clothes>
- 3 <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/a-new-textiles-economy>
- 4 <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/the-impact-of-a-cotton-t-shirt>
- 5 <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/our-clothes-shed-microfibres-heres-what-we-can-do/>
- 6 <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/a-new-textiles-economy>

Cass Hebron is a freelance writer living in Belgium. She writes on environmental issues, and is Content Manager for [sustainyourstyle.org](http://sustainyourstyle.org), showcasing sustainable fashion brands and resources.

# Food for thought

For some, reading is as essential as eating. If that's you, here is a feast of titles, our 2022 Big Read list chosen by the NWR Postal Book Groups

## FICTION

### My Year of Meats Ruth Ozeki

A cross-cultural tale of two women brought together by the intersections of television and industrial agriculture, fertility and motherhood, life and love—the mesmerizing debut novel by the celebrated author of *A Tale for the Time Being*.

When documentarian Jane Takagi-Little finally lands a job producing a Japanese television show that just happens to be sponsored by an American meat-exporting business, she uncovers some unsavoury truths about love, fertility, and a dangerous hormone called DES. Soon she will also cross paths with Akiko Ueno, a beleaguered Japanese housewife struggling to escape her overbearing husband.

*My Year of Meats* is a modern-day take on Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* for fans of Michael Pollan, Margaret Atwood, and Barbara Kingsolver.



their courtship, and devotes hours each day to manic cycling. Then, when Pandora picks up her older brother Edison at the airport, she doesn't recognise him. In the years since they've seen one another, the once slim, hip New York jazz pianist has gained hundreds of pounds. What happened? After Edison has more than overstayed his welcome, Fletcher delivers his wife an ultimatum: it's him or me.

Rich with Shriver's distinctive wit and ferocious energy, *Big Brother* is about fat: an issue both social and excruciatingly personal. It asks just how much sacrifice we'll make to save single members of our families, and whether it's ever possible to save loved ones from themselves.

### Babette's Feast Inek Dinesen (Karen Blixen)

With the mysterious arrival of Babette, a refugee from France's civil war, life for two pious sisters and their tiny hamlet begins to change. Before long, Babette has convinced them to try something other than boiled codfish and ale bread: a gourmet French meal. Her feast scandalises the elders, except for the visiting general. Just who is this strangely talented Babette, who has terrified this pious town with the prospect of losing their souls for enjoying too much earthly pleasure?



### Five Quarters of the Orange Joanne Harris

*Five Quarters of the Orange* represents Harris's most complex and sophisticated work yet—a novel in which darkness and fierce joy come together to create an unforgettable story.

When Framboise Simon returns to a small village on the banks of the Loire, the locals do not recognise her as the daughter of the infamous Mirabelle Dartigen—the woman they still hold responsible for a terrible tragedy that took place during the German occupation decades before. Although Framboise hopes for a new beginning she quickly discovers that past and present are inextricably intertwined. Nowhere is this truth more apparent than in the



scrapbook of recipes she has inherited from her dead mother.

Framboise re-creates her mother's dishes, which she serves in her small crêperie. And yet as she studies the scrapbook—searching for clues to unlock the contradiction between her mother's sensuous love of food and often cruel demeanour—she begins to recognise a deeper meaning behind Mirabelle's cryptic scribbles. Within the journal's tattered pages lies the key to what actually transpired the summer Framboise was nine years old.

### Pomegranate Soup Marsha Mehran



To the exotic Aminpour sisters, Ireland looks like a much-needed safe haven. It has been seven years since Marjan Aminpour fled Iran with her younger sisters, Bahar and Layla, and she hopes that in the small,

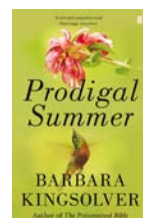
sheltered town of Ballinacroagh, a land of "crazed sheep and dizzying roads," they might finally find a home.

From the kitchen of an old pastry shop, the sisters set about creating a Persian oasis. Soon sensuous wafts of cardamom, cinnamon, and saffron float through the streets—an exotic aroma that announces the opening of the Babylon Café, and a shock to a town that generally subsists on boiled cabbage and Guinness served at the local tavern. And it is an affront to the senses of Ballinacroagh's uncrowned king, Thomas McGuire. After trying to buy the old pastry shop for years and failing, Thomas is enraged to find it occupied—and by foreigners, no less.

However, the sisters find a merry band of supporters in the stand-up-comedian-turned-priest Father Fergal Mahoney, the gentle, lonely widow Estelle Delmonico, and the headstrong hairdresser Fiona Athey. But the idyll is soon broken when the past rushes back to threaten the Aminpours once more, and the lives they left behind in revolution-era Iran bleed into the present.

*Pomegranate Soup* is an infectious novel of magical realism, a delectable journey into the heart of Persian cooking and Irish living.

### Prodigal Summer Barbara Kingsolver



*Prodigal Summer* weaves together three stories of human love within a larger tapestry of lives inhabiting the forested mountains and struggling small farms of southern Appalachia.

### The Edible Woman Margaret Atwood



Marian is determined to be ordinary. She lays her head gently on the shoulder of her serious fiancé and quietly awaits marriage. But she didn't count on an inner rebellion that would rock her stable routine, and

her digestion. Marriage à la mode, Marian discovers, is something she literally can't stomach...

*The Edible Woman* is a funny, engaging novel about emotional cannibalism, men and women, and the desire to be consumed.

"A brilliant and powerful work rich in irony and metaphor" Fantastic Fiction website

### Big Brother Lionel Shriver

For Pandora, cooking is a form of love. Alas, her husband, Fletcher, a self-employed high-end cabinetmaker, now spurns the "toxic" dishes that he'd savoured through





From her outpost in an isolated mountain cabin, Deanna Wolfe, a reclusive wildlife biologist, watches a den of coyotes that have recently migrated into the region. She is caught off-guard by a young hunter who invades her most private spaces and confounds her self-assured, solitary life. On a farm several miles down the mountain, Lusa Maluf Landowski, a bookish city girl turned farmer's wife, finds herself unexpectedly marooned in a strange place where she must declare or lose her attachment to the land that has become her own. And a few more miles down the road, a pair of elderly feuding neighbours tend their respective farms and wrangle about God, pesticides, and the possibilities of a future neither of them expected.

Over the course of one humid summer, these characters find their connections to one another and to the flora and fauna with which they share a place. *Prodigal Summer* demonstrates a balance of narrative, drama and ideas that is characteristic of Barbara Kingsolver's finest work.



## On the Road Jack Kerouac

A quintessential novel of America and the Beat Generation, *On the Road* chronicles Jack Kerouac's years travelling the North

American continent with his friend Neal Cassady, "a sideburned hero of the snowy West". As Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty, the two roam the country in a quest for self-knowledge and experience. Kerouac's love of America, compassion for humanity and sense of language as jazz combine to make *On the Road* an inspirational work of lasting importance. This classic novel of freedom and longing defined what it meant to be Beat, and has inspired every generation since its initial publication.

## MEMOIR/AUTOBIOGRAPHY

## Hungry Grace Dent

From an early age, Grace Dent was hungry. As a little girl growing up in Currock, Carlisle, she yearned to be something bigger, to go somewhere better.

*Hungry* traces Grace's story from growing up eating beige food to becoming one of the much-loved voices on the British food scene. It is also everyone's story—from treats with your nan, to cheese and pineapple hedgehogs, to the exquisite joy of cheaply-made apple crumble with custard. It's the high-point of a chip butty covered in vinegar



and too much salt in the school canteen, on an otherwise grey day of double Maths and cross country running. It's the real story of how we have all lived, laughed, and eaten over the past 40 years.



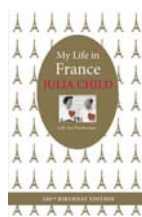
## Becoming Michelle Obama

Michelle Obama has emerged as one of the most iconic and compelling women of our era. As First Lady of the United States

of America—the first African American to serve in that role—she helped create the most welcoming and inclusive White House in history, while also establishing herself as a powerful advocate for women and girls in the US and around the world, and standing with her husband as he led America through some of its most harrowing moments. Along the way, she showed us a few dance moves, crushed Carpool Karaoke, and raised two down-to-earth daughters under an unforgiving media glare.

In her memoir, Michelle Obama chronicles the experiences that have shaped her—from her childhood on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing the demands of motherhood and work, to her time spent at the world's most famous address. With unerring honesty and lively wit, she tells her full story as she has lived it.

## My Life in France Julia Child



Although she would later singlehandedly create a new approach to American cuisine with her cookbook *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and her television show *The French Chef*, Julia Child

was not always a master chef. Indeed, when she first arrived in France in 1948 with her husband, Paul, she spoke no French and knew nothing about the country itself. But as she dived into French culture, buying food at local markets and taking classes at Le Cordon Bleu, her life changed forever with her newfound passion for cooking and teaching. Julia's unforgettable story—struggles with the head of Le Cordon Bleu, rejections from publishers to whom she sent her now-famous cookbook, a wonderful, nearly fifty-year long marriage that took the Childs across the globe—unfolds with the spirit so key to Julia's success as a chef and a writer, brilliantly capturing one of America's most endearing personalities.

## Wilding: The Return of Nature to a British Farm Isabella Tree

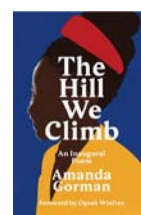


Forced to accept that intensive farming on the heavy clay of their land at Knepp in West Sussex was economically unsustainable, Isabella Tree and her husband Charlie Burrell made a spectacular leap of faith: they decided to step back and let nature take over. Thanks to the introduction of free-roaming cattle, ponies, pigs and deer—proxies of the large animals that once roamed Britain—the 3,500-acre project has seen extraordinary increases in wildlife numbers and diversity in little over a decade.

Once-common species, including turtle doves, nightingales, peregrine falcons, lesser spotted woodpeckers and purple emperor butterflies, are now breeding at Knepp, and populations of other species are rocketing. The Burrells' degraded agricultural land has become a functioning ecosystem again, heaving with life—all by itself, and against a backdrop of catastrophic loss elsewhere.

In *Wilding*, Isabella Tree tells the story of the Knepp experiment. It shows how rewilding works across Europe; that, as well as benefiting the land, it can generate economic activity and employment, and with astonishing speed. Part gripping memoir, part fascinating account of the ecology of our countryside, *Wilding* is, above all, an inspiring story of hope.

## POETRY



## The Hill We Climb: An Inaugural Poem for the Country

Amanda Gorman

On 20 January 2021, Amanda Gorman became the sixth and youngest poet to deliver a poetry reading at a presidential inauguration. Taking the stage after the 46th president of the United States, Joe Biden, Gorman captivated the nation and brought hope to viewers around the globe. With a foreword by Oprah Winfrey, this book celebrates the promise of America and affirms the power of poetry.

*Descriptions are taken from Goodreads and all books are widely available in multiple formats.*

**NWR Postal Book Group** members receive a new book each month. Books are recommended by NWR members and accompanied by their reviews. Find out more: [www.nwr.org.uk/network/special-interests/](http://www.nwr.org.uk/network/special-interests/).

# Raffles—right man, right place, right time

Best known as the founder of Singapore, Thomas Stamford Raffles was surprisingly idealistic, writes author and speaker **Lisa Conway**.

Most people know of Raffles Hotel in Singapore, where the Gin Sling was invented in 1900, but who was the man behind the name? Thomas Stamford Raffles was born on 6 July 1781, aboard his father's ship, just off the coast of Jamaica. Little is known about his childhood apart from his being removed from school at fourteen, when his father became bankrupt. He became a clerk in the East India Company, where he worked for the next nine years before being selected for the post of assistant to the Chief Secretary in Penang.

Unlike the majority of Europeans at the time, who weren't interested in eastern thought or culture, Raffles learned to speak Malay on his journey out east in 1805. He soon realised

Archaeological sites were surveyed and the ninth century Buddhist temple at Borobudur—the largest in the world—was liberated from the volcanic ash and jungle that had hidden it for centuries.

Tragedy struck in 1814 when his wife, Olivia, became ill and died. Raffles spent the following year travelling, finally reaching the island of Bali, where he rescued a Papuan boy from slavery. By then, Napoleon had been defeated at Waterloo and the Company agreed to hand back Java to the Dutch. Raffles was out of a job.

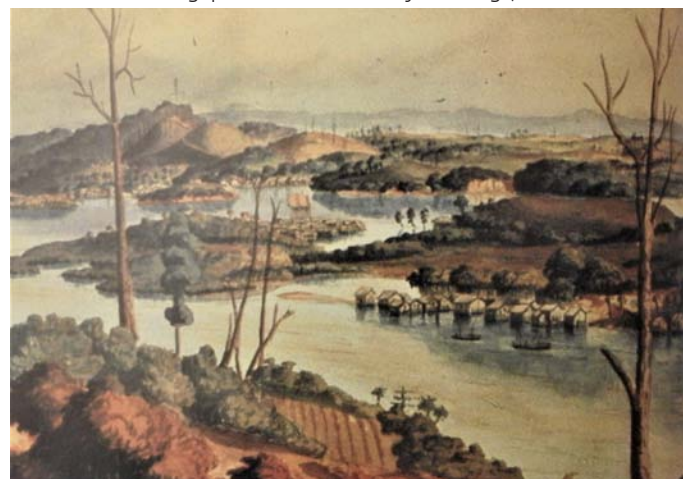
He returned to England in 1816, met his second wife Sophia and, when they travelled back east in 1817, he took up an appointment as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengkulu, in Sumatra. Raffles knew the importance of expanding the Company trade with China and, before leaving England, various regional advisory duties were added to his work in Sumatra.

In 1818, he convinced the new Governor-General of India to fund an expedition to establish an additional British base. After exploring islands at the tip of the Malay Peninsula, he anchored off Singapore. It possessed an excellent natural harbour, fresh water supplies, and timber for repairing ships. Most importantly, it was unoccupied by the Dutch.

When he went ashore, he found a small Malay settlement at the mouth of the river. He was made welcome, and following negotiations with the Temenggong, or local chief, and the Sultan an agreement was reached. Raffles agreed to pay the Sultan five thousand Spanish dollars per annum and three thousand per annum to the Temenggong. On 6 February, with much pomp and ceremony, a treaty was signed, presents were exchanged and the Union Flag was raised.

Raffles left the following day, leaving Major William Farquhar in charge of the new settlement. In spite of the difficulties

Watercolour of Singapore River with Malay dwellings, around 1820



The Buddhist temple at Borobudur

that he was near one of the world's main crossroads, where the cultural influences from China and India intermingle.

He worked almost non-stop for the next two years before his health suffered and he went south to Malacca. His knowledge and enthusiasm brought him to the attention of the Governor-General of India and before the end of the year he was appointed Agent to the Governor-General in the Malay States; this required him to advise on the annexation of Java to the Company's empire.

He sought support from the Regents of Java and Sultans of other islands, then devised the best route for the expedition, avoiding monsoon winds. On 4 August 1811, the fleet anchored off Batavia. The troops landed, experiencing only minor skirmishes with the French before Lord Minto declared Java annexed to the Company and appointed Raffles Lieutenant-Governor. For the next five years he worked relentlessly, both at his administrative rôle and at his studies of eastern culture and natural history.



Portrait by George Francis Joseph, 1817



that initially beset the new colony it rapidly proved to be a spectacular success. News of the free port spread across the archipelago and regional traders flocked to Singapore, seeking to circumvent Dutch trading restrictions.

Despite its success, the East India Company remained reluctant to recognise the fledgling settlement, not wanting to antagonise the Dutch. As a consequence, very little financial support was provided.

Raffles remained occupied in Bengkulu for the next three years, but early in 1822, both he and Sophia suffered ill health. Three of their children had died within the previous months and the baby was sent back to England with her nanny. Raffles' headaches intensified, not helped by reports received from Farquhar in Singapore. He decided he must return once more.

They arrived in October; initially he was delighted with what he saw, but as he discovered more about Farquhar's revenue raising methods, he was less than happy. Farquhar had accepted bribes, allowed warehouses to be built on land reserved for government buildings, sold licences for opium dens, cockfighting and prostitution—all things loathed by Raffles. Worst of all, he'd turned a blind eye to slavery.

Raffles set about putting everything right. A Town Committee, comprising Europeans and locals was formed; he presented them with a different town layout, arranged to have the mangrove swamps drained and earth moved from nearby hills to accommodate the warehouses. He banned gambling, opium dens, brothels and slavery. He devised a constitution and a skeletal legal system. He made plans for a school—one of his passions, having had his own education cut short—and collected donations to get it started. All this he achieved in a period of eight months.

Between June 1823 when he returned to Bengkulu, and the following April when he and Sophia finally boarded *The Mariner* for their voyage back to England, they'd encountered one tragedy after another—the loss of another baby, ill health, near drowning and the loss of all their possessions.

On arrival in Plymouth in August 1824, Raffles reported to East India House. Rather than being lauded for his achievements in founding Singapore, he was criticised for taking decisions and spending Company money without approval. They demanded he pay back the debt out of his own purse.

Raffles Hotel, Singapore



Photo by Shawnn Tan on Unsplash



Present day Singapore, with the Merlion mascot in the foreground

Eventually, he settled in Hendon, then a rural suburb, next door to his friend William Wilberforce. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society and, with Humphrey Davy, he founded the London Zoological Society, becoming its first President. His dreams ended when his headaches returned; he had a brain tumour and died one day short of his forty-fifth birthday.

Because of his anti-slavery stance Raffles was refused burial inside the parish church, the family of the vicar having made its money in the slave trade. Not until the church was extended in 1920 was his tomb incorporated within the building.

Today, Singapore is a vibrant and sophisticated city. Raffles is generally remembered fondly, as a benevolent character who opened doors of opportunity. Since independence in 1965, the government have not only kept his name alive, they have turned it into a brand.

My novel, *A Strand of Gold*, explores attitudes to slavery, prostitution and opium addiction against a backdrop of East India Company bureaucracy and Raffles' idealism. The intermingling of imagined female characters with real historical people gives the reader a fresh perspective on the last months that Raffles spent in Singapore, before he returned to England for the last time.

*A Strand of Gold* is published by  
Atmosphere Press





# The ultimate holiday experience

When her European holidays began to merge into one another, **Ellie Charleston** of Swindon NWR set out to find a more memorable destination. North Korea did not disappoint.



There are two ways a tourist can enter North Korea, or the DPRK—the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. These are either by train or plane and I chose Air Koryo, landing at Pyongyang International Airport after a flight from Beijing. The airport was swarming with official personnel, but very few travellers. At customs control, my passport was taken away from me, my hand luggage was thoroughly searched and my telescopic umbrella was meticulously examined and questions about it were barked at me. The strangest thing though was that my reading matter, a battered copy of Alan Bennett’s *The Lady in the Van*, was confiscated, never to be seen again. Fortunately, my passport was returned but on reaching the hotel it was taken away again for “security reasons”.

I was travelling alone but, as you can only enter the DPRK as part of an organised group, I met my other travelling companions on the coach, two young men. Our coach was a 50 plus seater with the hardest and most uncomfortable seats I have ever had the misfortune to sit upon. As tourists, we were not allowed to walk freely anywhere, so we had chaperones: a

female one for me and a male one for the two men. The female guide was highly educated, spoke excellent English and was interested in our country. Apparently, all she knew of the UK was Buckingham Palace and Stonehenge. She had no idea of concepts such as civil rights, freedom of speech or freedom to choose your job.

I stayed in the Yanggakdo Hotel in Pyongyang on a full board basis. My bedroom was a large en-suite room. It was a bit shabby but adequately furnished. On a table there was a piece of electrical equipment with lots of dials and knobs, somewhat akin to a radiogram. Was it a listening or surveillance device? Who knows? I never found out.

The DPRK has its fair share of tourist attractions. Most of them are monuments to Kim Il-sung, the founder of North

*Photos, clockwise from top left:* The Juche Tower, Pyongyang. Juche is the principle of man being the master of his destiny.

Bronze statues dedicated to Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il.

Typical propaganda poster, in the metro.

Arch of Triumph, Pyongyang, the second tallest triumphal arch in the world. Note the lack of traffic.



Korea and his son, Kim Jong-il—enormous statues depicting strength and unity, and arches and towers. At many of these places, it is customary to bow down, and at some we were expected to buy a bouquet of flowers to lay at the base. One of my visits was to the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, a mausoleum to the two former leaders who permanently lie in state. Here, I had to bow to the sides and feet of the embalmed bodies but not the head. I was berated for bowing with my hands behind my back rather than at my sides. I did not make that mistake again.

Throughout the trip, I was very aware that the people looked decidedly undernourished, even among the relative wealthy of Pyongyang. There were no disabled people to be seen and when I questioned the guide about this, her reply was that they are a strong nation. I did not see any old people either but then they are encouraged to kill themselves once they become a burden to their children.

Despite being a vegetarian, food was always in plentiful supply. The regime tries to put on a good show for tourists. Kimchi was served at most meals, along with Korean staples such as mung bean pancakes, spicy cucumber and naengmyun, a mixed noodle dish. Food was generally palatable, although not delicious.

North Korea was the ultimate holiday experience. At times I didn’t know what to believe, what was real and what was just for show. However, strangely enough, I did feel safe at all times.



# The price of freedom

Robina Fisher of Giffnock NWR muses on the many faces of freedom

## Freedom:

The power or right to act speak or think as one wants.  
The state of not being imprisoned or enslaved.

## Freedom's innocence

When ten years old I stayed with a cousin who had recently given birth to her first baby. The young family had moved into a modern flat in one of the new towns built to house the overspill from Glasgow's overcrowded tenements. One day she allowed me to take the baby for a walk. The sun was shining and I felt very important, in charge of baby and a large Silver Cross carriage-built pram. Access to the surrounding green belt was easy and it didn't take long before I meandered down country roads where bluebell meadows carpeted the woods on either side.

Free as a bird, and blissfully unaware of the consequence the disappearance of me and the baby would have. I eventually sallied back and felt completely bemused by the welcome which greeted me. I was dispatched home, my mother being informed that "I was a little madam" which at the time I felt was unfair. In my mind I was a very clever girl and the baby was fine—what could be the problem? I would learn later in life that freedom to do whatever one wants comes at a price. Now I understand how frantic the mother must have been.

Image by Ben Kerckx  
from Pixabay

## Freedom of choice

I recall a talk given by an author to promote his latest book. Its theme was: do we have freedom of choice? At that point I believed that of course I had total freedom of choice. As I tried to grasp his intellectual considerations, I began to question this belief. Based on the fact that individual brains are all wired differently, we do not have total freedom of choice, as a brain's physical makeup will influence our choices. Does this explain why people

Continued on next page



## The Phantom Killer and Her Autistic Son

Grace Venters of Barton on Sea NWR made use of the first lockdown to write a book, one which she hopes will help other parents of children with autism.

"I'm not weird, my brain is just wired differently!"

Autism is a lifelong disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. Lifelong is the word that best expresses our joint adventure, which started when my autistic son William was born and will continue for the rest of his life. William is just different, and he sees the world from his own perspective.

This is the story of my life with William, now 42, from my own perspective as well as from his own views of the world. His stories will make you laugh, and some of mine will make you cry. His mathematic abilities will surprise you, and his imagination will have you in stitches. It has been like a rollercoaster, laughing out loud on the way up, and screaming on the way down!

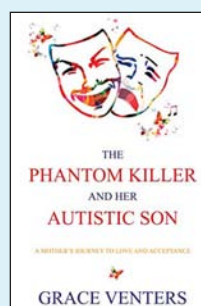
*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*  
From *The Road Not Taken*, Robert Frost  
Life is a journey, and decisions need to be made. Which way should you go?

With an autistic son, nobody can tell you exactly which road to take. They can tell you that this road has a better surface, or that it is very bumpy, or to take that other one with less traffic, or this one with terrific views. In the end, YOU, as a mother, will know which the best road is to make your life-journey with your son a happy one.

The title is based on some of William's stories, but you will have to read the book to find out why!

I hope the book helps other parents of children with autism. Although each child is different, and their autism manifests itself in individual ways, they all share some traits of the same behaviours.

I would like to share my life's journey with those in a similar situation. I'm hoping to shed light on what is still a little-understood condition, and to provide some comfort to parents by



reassuring them that they are not alone on their own life's journey. When your child behaves in a way not expected, or approved by society, you feel as if you are drowning in a sea of uncertainty, and you are at a loss as to how to keep afloat. I hope my story will show that you can indeed keep afloat and reach the shore safely.

I'm hoping my readers—not just parents raising an autistic child—may be able to understand the complexities of the autistic mind and why autistic persons behave in apparently weird ways. It is precisely those peculiarities which help them make sense of the world.

I hope you will laugh and cry. I have opened my heart to show how I coped over so many years, with a positive and fun outlook, while trying to be a mother, a wife, and a woman!

Always remember that without challenges life could be far too boring. Having a son with autism will provide you with all the challenges you need to make your life a good adventure!

Find out more about Grace and William, and Grace's book *The Phantom Killer and Her Autistic Son*, on her Facebook page: <https://business.facebook.com/ventersgrace/>

make illogical choices despite their environment and life experiences? Who hasn't paid a price for a choice which, in hindsight, was proved to be wrong and costly? What part did our brain play in the choice? It would be interesting to find out how much blame for a wrong choice could be excused by "It wasn't me, it was my brain". Somehow, I don't think it would stand as a defence, after all, the choice was made freely—or was it?

### Freedom's sacrifice

At the end of the film *Braveheart*, Wallace drew his last breath and, as his innards spewed from his belly, he cried, "Freedom". Everyone knew that the character of Wallace was played by Mel Gibson and much artistic licence dramatised his cruel end. At that point the cinema was silent, no one got up to leave, then applause broke out in recognition of sacrifice for the universal cause of freedom.

Another example was the iconic image of Nelson Mandela on his walk to freedom from prison, a fist raised in salute. His spirit still burned bright, not dimmed by bitterness. He paid a price for his cause with years of his life imprisoned on Robben Island. Again, Mandela's sacrifice for freedom was recognised and cheered around the globe.

Footnote—it is interesting that both these characters were considered as terrorists at some point—but that would be another story.

### Freedom's legacy

I live in a democratic western society. I can move geographically without question, I have freedom of speech, a democratic vote and I am equal in law to anyone else. The price paid for these freedoms was great, and borne by previous generations who, for example, fought in wars, took up the suffragette cause, and improved working conditions. The fight for causes over the past hundreds of years is too long to list, but every aspect of our life today is touched in some way by those hard-won freedoms.

The digital world we now inhabit provides platforms of influence for those that would destroy their legacy. We must be vigilant, protect our heritage and continue to pay the price for our freedoms.

## Members' Corner



Above: Adam Brooks with Doris the mannequin and members and friends of Loughborough NWR

## Needles up! The reality of being on a TV show

Loughborough NWR were buzzing recently when one of the contestants on this year's Great British Sewing Bee, Adam Brooks, came to talk to us about his experiences on the popular BBC programme.

Adam, who lives nearby in Leicester, spent a sunny afternoon in Penny Bryce's garden, sharing tales of his experiences on the show with 20 guests, who included NWR members, friends and relations.

Penny and fellow member Pat Scholes-Noble met Adam when visiting St Joseph's Tea Rooms, a local not-for-profit café and craft centre, where he has been working as a volunteer during lockdown.

Adam told the group how he was taught to sew as a child by his grandmother, and even asked for an overlocker for a Christmas present in his early teens! He has put his skills to good use both at work as a cruise entertainment director when doing running repairs on costumes and, more recently, at home making clothes for his little nephew and scrubs during the pandemic.

It was while he was sewing up scrubs last summer that a friend suggested he should apply for the show. More than 16,000 people entered, so he was thrilled to be selected. Because of Covid restrictions, the programme was filmed over a shorter period than usual—two 15-hour days followed by one day off over a period of six weeks. Of course, the days off weren't relaxing—the contestants used the time to practise for the next round.

Adam brought some of the garments he made on the programme, including a shell top, a pair of shorts and a shirt dress. He also brought his mannequin, known as Doris, and a 60-year-old hand sewing machine, which was very nostalgic for some of the group, who remembered their grandmothers using similar machines.

"We are so grateful to Adam for spending the afternoon with us," says Penny. "He was so entertaining and interesting, and a few of us are feeling sufficiently inspired to get our own sewing machines out!"

Penny Bryce, Loughborough NWR

## Les femmes à l'esprit vif

Wantage NWR's French Group comprises a small number of members who enjoy meeting up on a regular basis to speak French together. NWR members of all abilities are welcome to join us.

Before Covid we had a range of activities including board games—Cluedo, Monopoly, Tell Me, Scrabble—French songs, French films and TV programmes, boules, researching a topic, discussions, and an annual meal in a French restaurant.

Of course, Covid changed all that. A lot of these things were not possible on Zoom, but we adapted. We could still

chat—in French—we tried listening to songs, we had topics to discuss, we chose poems to share, and when lockdown eased we had a "déjeuner sur l'herbe".

We look forward to meeting again in person, but are glad we kept going.



Please note: the photo was taken before Covid

Groupe Français, Wantage NWR



## Flowers and flamingos

We thought you might like some photos from Leicester South NWR's visit to the beautiful Coton Manor Gardens in Northamptonshire. Coton Manor was the winner of The Nation's Favourite Garden award and, in June, featured in Channel 5's Great British Gardens, with Carol Klein.

We had a lovely day in this wonderful 10-acre garden, with plenty of time

to chat and catch up in between coffee, lunch, and strolling round the garden. Apart from the lush, flower-filled borders, the garden features a stream, a wild-flower meadow, a sun-dappled, five-acre beechwood and a shimmering globe sculpture, reflected in a pool... and some very elegant flamingos.

Anne Garrick, Leicester South NWR



## Books, bicycles and bric-à-brac



In July some of the Cheltenham and Charlton Kings NWR met to discuss the book *Lady in Waiting* by Anne Glenconner. The meeting had been planned as an outdoor meeting but on the day it began to rain. As there were about 10 of us present and some were rather wary of meeting indoors, especially those who had been shielding, the hostess suggested we all sit in the garage. It worked very well as it was not a cold day, but it was a new look being surrounded by bicycles and pots of paint.

The book was not an obvious selection but a curious member had bought it after visiting Holkham Hall, where Lady Glenconner was born, and swimming at the estate's private beach. It was an extraordinary real-life story of Lady Glenconner and her aristocratic friends, including royalty. It surprised everyone who read it, and led to an interesting discussion.

Gillian Clarke Hill, Cheltenham and Charlton Kings NWR

## Not so silent reading

During lockdown Vale of Evesham NWR continued our regular monthly meetings via Zoom. Sometimes technology—Android tablets and Zoom are not that compatible—and my dodgy internet connection let us down, but for the most part it was a very good way to keep in touch with each other.

Many of the group enjoyed, and are still enjoying, the varied and excellent programme put in place by the NWR national team. These talks have provided us with yet more topics of conversation, although, I suspect like many other NWR groups, we need little prompting to go off on a tangent!

Our Zoom Christmas panto, Covid

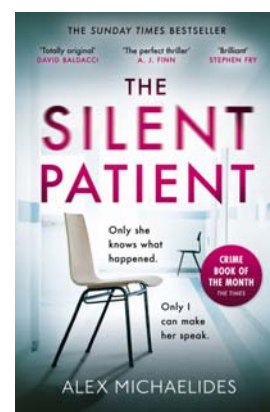
compliant and NHS themed, worked pretty well but I truly hope that we won't have to do it again—while it was fun, it lacked the immediacy that you enjoy when performing with a group that you can see and interact with, plus the audience participation was hard to manage without a bit of prompting.

Since we are now able to physically get together, we have planned meetings up to March 2022 with a host and venue in mind, but I fear that we may have to revert to Zoom again at some point in the future. At least we now have a better idea of how we can manage the meetings using this medium.

To celebrate our second outdoor, in person meeting, we had a lovely afternoon tea and discussion about our

chosen book for 2021, *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides. Stephen Fry apparently thought it was absolutely brilliant, but we were not so sure—overall, we gave it a thumbs up, but there were some reservations about the plot.

Mandy Penney, Vale of Evesham NWR





# Teas and trees



Above and below: Chandler's Ford Groups B and D placed a plaque under a tree in our local park to celebrate NWR's 60th Anniversary. Members from both groups attended the unveiling ceremony.

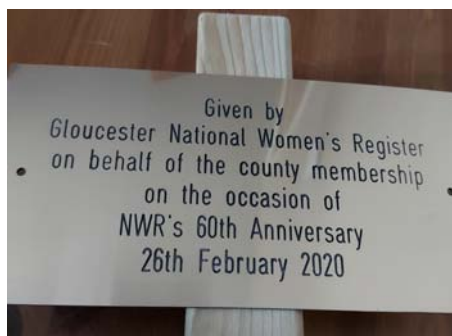
## Grown in Gloucester

In August, 18 months after our original Diamond Day Celebrations, Gloucester Group finally gathered with representatives from the other five Gloucestershire groups, at Nature in Art Museum and Art Gallery, Twigworth. We had donated a tree to the museum, where our celebrations had originally taken place, and this occasion was to unite the tree with a commemorative plaque. Delays were beyond our control but we were rewarded with a fine, sunny afternoon in splendid gardens while we hammered in the stake of the plaque, followed by tea, coffee and cakes kindly provided by Nature in Art, who had opened specially for us that day.

The tree was a Gloucestershire Underleaf apple tree, which was first recorded in 1883, and in 1993 was

collected for propagation from an old tree in Tawnes Farm, Oxenhall, Gloucestershire. It was a very popular variety as it could be cooked, eaten as it is or made into cider. It has a sweet plain taste and is slightly crumbly in texture. We hope it will continue to bear fruit for many years to come.

Sue Farmer, Gloucester NWR



Below: Poole NWR decided to celebrate coming out of lockdown with a tea party. We wanted to remember everyone who had been directly affected or lost loved ones due to Covid, so we wore sprigs of rosemary for remembrance and decorated a memory tree with messages and wildflower forget-me-not seeds.

Below: In July Marlow NWR finally met in person for a summer garden party.





## Polish up your tiaras, it's time for tea!



Like most groups, Wokingham 1 NWR had to be creative when organising meetings while we were coming out of coronavirus restrictions, as we combine face-to-face opportunities with Zoom options to enable full participation by as many members as possible.

To that end, our Right Royal Tea Party had groups of six people meeting in gardens for afternoon tea, with a separate Zoom breakout for those still shielding.

We ate delicious homemade sandwiches, cakes and scones with full-on cream and jam. The tiered cake plates were groaning with goodies—and moved undercover to take account of the very mixed weather. Some dressed up, and



our Zoom gathering sported pearls and a tiara and served themselves cake and tea on the very best china!

Coming together in person was such a refreshing change and our conversation ranged over all manner of things, including our topic for the day: the future of the royal family. We had several questions to consider and all groups reported a lively discussion.

Not everyone would describe themselves as a monarchist and we shared our views about Charles and Camilla—king and consort?—press coverage and whether staying silent

## In Memoriam

**Stephanie Turner 1942-2021**

In fond memory of Stephanie, a loyal and highly respected member of Letchworth NWR for 43 years.

is now regarded as good advice, the rôle of the younger royals, THAT interview, and whether The Crown is a fair representation of the "faction". We were divided in our views about whether young people support the royal family; some felt they have little or no interest in the monarchy, while others have children in the armed forces for whom serving Queen and country is very important.

Most of us decided we would keep the royal family. Some thought they would be more popular if they were lower profile, as the European monarchs are, while others feel the higher profile tours, walkabouts and patronage generate significant economic benefits and create non-political goodwill. We all agreed we had no desire to change places with any of them!

The afternoon created much fun and laughter and, in true NWR style, we arrived in torrential rain, adapted to indoors, enjoyed the sun beaming through and didn't stop talking. We may have to organise a walk to correct the effects of afternoon tea!

Ann Stainton, Wokingham 1 Group



Below: Poynton 3 members celebrated a real, live get together with an afternoon tea of cake, strawberries and a glass of fizz.



Below: Dibden Purlieu NWR met for a cream tea in a member's garden. Nine of our 12 members were there, and they very much enjoyed meeting for the first time since March 2020.



# Where is your nearest NWR group?

Are you interested in joining NWR?  
Visit the NWR website to find your  
nearest group or contact us about  
setting one up.

01603 406767  
office@nwr.org.uk  
www.nwr.org.uk/network/groups



## ENGLAND

### BEDFORDSHIRE

Leighton Buzzard  
Luton & S Beds

### BERKSHIRE

Binfield  
Bracknell  
Burnham/Taplow  
Caversham  
Cox Green  
Earley  
Maidenhead  
North Ascot  
Wokingham (2)  
Wokingham Forest  
Woodley  
Woolton Hill

### BRISTOL

Thornbury North  
Westbury-on-Trym

### BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Amersham (2)  
Beaconsfield  
Buckingham & District  
Lacey Green & Hughenden  
Marlow  
Milton Keynes  
Milton Keynes (West)

### CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Bar Hill  
Cambridge  
Elsworth  
Hemingfords  
Peterborough  
Somersham  
St Ives  
St Neots  
Wisbech

### CHESHIRE

Appleton  
Bramhall Village  
Chester/Grosvenor  
Chester South/Eaton  
Congleton  
Crewe & District  
Culcheth  
Goostrey  
Holmes Chapel  
Knutsford  
Lymm  
Macclesfield  
Marple  
Mellor  
Nantwich & Audlem  
Nantwich B  
Poynton (2)  
Romiley  
Tarporley (2)  
Timperley  
Wilmslow 1  
Wistaston

### COUNTY DURHAM

Durham City  
Hartlepool

### CORNWALL

Cornish Alps  
Playing Place/Carnon  
Downs  
Roseland  
Truro

### CUMBRIA

Carlisle  
Egremont  
Kendal

### DERBYSHIRE

Bakewell  
Chapel & District  
Chesterfield (2)  
Dronfield  
Glossop  
Hayfield  
Matlock

### DEVON

Exeter & District  
Horrabridge  
Ivybridge  
Newton Abbot  
Otter Vale  
Ottery St Mary  
Paignton  
Plympton  
Tavistock  
Yealm

### DORSET

Boscombe East  
Broadstone (2)  
Dorchester  
Ferndown/West-  
Moors  
Poole  
Ringwood  
Weymouth (2)  
Wimborne

### EAST SUSSEX

Battle & District  
Brighton  
Eastbourne  
Lewes  
Seaford (7)

### ESSEX

Braintree & District  
Buckhurst Hill (2)  
Chelmsford  
Galleywood  
Hadleigh/Southend  
on Sea  
Harwich/Dovercourt  
Ilford  
Saffron Walden  
Shenfield/Hutton  
Upminster

### GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Cheltenham &  
Charlton Kings  
Churchdown  
Cirencester (2)  
Gloucester  
Stroud

### HAMPSHIRE

Barton on Sea  
Basingstoke  
Bishops Waltham  
Bramley  
Chandlers Ford/  
Eastleigh B & D  
Chineham & Old Basing  
Dibden Purlieu  
Farnborough  
Hook  
Hythe/Waterside  
Lee on the Solent  
Marchwood  
Odiham  
Park Gate  
Sherfield-on-Loddon  
Southampton  
Southsea  
Sway  
Tadley  
Totton  
Winchester  
Yateley

### HEREFORDSHIRE

Hereford  
Ross on Wye

### HERTFORDSHIRE

Abbots Langley  
Harpenden  
Hatfield  
Hemel Hempstead (2)  
Hertford/Ware  
Hitchin  
Letchworth  
St Albans (2)  
Tring

### ISLE OF WIGHT

Medina

### KENT

Beckenham  
Bexleyheath  
Canterbury (2)  
Dartford  
Edenbridge  
Folkestone  
Hayes  
Herne Bay  
Maidstone  
Medway  
Petts Wood/Orpington  
Whitstable

### LANCASHIRE

Eccleston  
Lytham St Annes  
Ormskirk/Aughton  
Penwortham  
Rainford  
Rossendale & Bury North  
Thornton Cleveleys

### LEICESTERSHIRE

Leicester South  
Loughborough  
Lutterworth  
Quorn

### LINCOLNSHIRE

Boston  
Brant & Witham  
Deepings  
Grantham  
Grimsby/Cleethorpes  
Lincoln South  
Navenby & District  
Stamford  
Sudbrooke  
Waltham  
Welton

### LONDON

Barnet  
Finchley/Whetstone  
Kenton

### MERSEYSIDE

Burbo Bank  
Crosby  
Eccleston & Windle  
Formby

### MIDDLESEX

Pinner  
Ruislip  
Twickenham/St Margarets

### NORFOLK

Dereham  
Park Gate  
Downham Market  
Norwich  
Wymondham/  
Attleborough

### NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Brackley  
Great Houghton

### NORTHUMBERLAND

Hexham & District  
Morpeth

### NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Arnold  
Bramcote  
Carlton  
Keyworth  
Sawley  
West Bridgford  
Worksop

### OXFORDSHIRE

Banbury  
Henley on Thames  
Sonning Common  
Thame  
Wantage  
Witney

### RUTLAND

Oakham

### SHROPSHIRE

Market Drayton  
Newport  
Shrewsbury

### SOMERSET

Chard  
Clevedon  
Congresbury  
Nailesea  
Portishead  
Taunton  
Wells

### STAFFORDSHIRE

Eccleshall  
Lichfield  
Marchington  
Newcastle-under-Lyme  
Rugeley  
Shenstone  
Trentham  
Wolstanton

### SUFFOLK

Beccles  
Bury St Edmunds  
Haverhill & Villages  
Sudbury One/Long Melford  
Stour Valley/Sudbury

### SURREY

Bookham  
Burgh Heath  
Byfleet  
Camberley  
Croydon  
Dittons/Esher  
Dorking  
Farnham  
Godalming  
Guildford  
Horsley  
Kingston on Thames/  
New Malden  
Reigate & Redhill  
Sutton & Carshalton  
Woking North  
Worcester Park

### TEESIDE

Middlesbrough

### TYNE & WEAR

Newcastle-upon-  
Tyne (West)  
Whitley Bay/Tynemouth

### WARWICKSHIRE

Coventry  
Dunchurch  
Kenilworth  
Rugby  
Warwick/Leamington Spa

### WEST MIDLANDS

Balsall Common  
Dudley  
Edgbaston  
Halesowen  
Harborne Central  
Hasbury  
Knowle  
Solihull  
Wolverhampton/Tettenhall/  
Codsall

### WEST SUSSEX

Bognor Regis  
Chichester  
Hassocks & Area  
Horsham  
Shoreham-by-Sea (2)  
Steyning  
West Chiltington Area  
Worthing (Broadwater)

### WILTSHIRE

Calne Central  
& District  
Derry Hill & District  
Devizes  
Marlborough  
Salisbury & District  
Swindon  
Trowbridge

### WIRRAL

Heswall (2)  
Irby  
Wallasey  
West Kirby/Grange  
West Kirby/Newton

### WORCESTERSHIRE

Cleeve Prior  
Droitwich  
Malvern  
Pershore  
Vale of Evesham

### YORKSHIRE

Ackworth  
Aston  
Bedale & District  
Beverley & District  
Harrogate  
Horbury & District  
Leeds NW  
Northallerton  
Pickering & District  
Rotherham  
Sheffield (3)  
Wetherby  
York

## SCOTLAND

### ABERDEENSHIRE

Banchory  
Bridge of Don

### ANGUS

Arbroath

### DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

Castle Douglas

### DUNBARTONSHIRE

Milngavie/Bearsden

### EAST LOTHIAN

Longniddry

### EAST RENFREWSHIRE

Giffnock  
Glasgow

### FALKIRK

Falkirk

### FIFE

Dalgety Bay  
Dunfermline  
Saline

### MIDLOTHIAN

Edinburgh/Colinton

### NORTH AYSRSHIRE

Beith  
Largs

### PERTH & KINROSS

Crieff  
Kinross  
Perth

### RENFREWSHIRE

Bishopton  
Bridge of Weir  
Houston  
Kilbarchan

### STIRLINGSHIRE

Stirling & District

### SOUTH LANARKSHIRE

Strathaven

## WALES

Chepstow  
Hawarden  
Mold  
Radry

352 Groups

5,016 members

Every effort is made to fact-check NWR magazine, however, we cannot guarantee it is error free. The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of NWR. Please accept our apologies if you find an error—and please let the National Office team know. Thank you.