



Cotgrave and District U3A

Keeping in Touch 46

Nature Confused, Perhaps?

Did these daffodils come into flower just a little too early, I wonder?



But there can be no denying the beauty of snowflakes – thanks to Sue Hillyard for this.



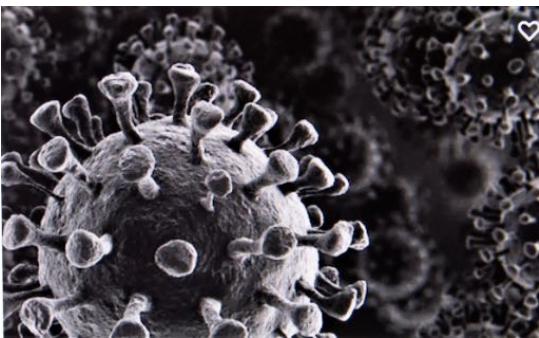
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Vaccine Success (and Failure!)



I came across a fascinating article in The Times recently which made me think a little about how we organise our public affairs. This described something of the fine detail of the UK's race to obtain a supply of effective vaccines against Covid 19 and it epitomised the importance of choosing the right team for the job. It also emphasised the fundamental problem of how best to run any very large-scale entity, such as a Nation, or even more, a Union of Nations.

It all began with an e-mail (doesn't everything begin with an e-mail these days?) from the Oxford University vaccine development team to a colleague called (appropriately enough) Hetty England who was an expert in the field of Bio-Manufacture. Their problem was that, though they felt confident in having a very promising vaccine in the Laboratory, they had no means of manufacturing commercial amounts, which would be needed for effective trials. Could England help her namesake Nation to set up the necessary facilities? Note the first important point – an Ancient University research department recognising (a) the need to think outside its academic confines and (b) knowing the person with the right expertise to contact.



♥ This was February 2020. There were very few Covid cases in the Country and no one had yet died. Nevertheless, Ms England immediately recognised the urgency of the request and contacted a number of friends in the pharmaceutical industry where such manufacturing facilities existed. Within a matter of days there was a tiny body of like-minded technologists who were prepared to work together to establish this vital need and this small group served as

the seed for the development of what became known as the UK Vaccine Task Force, a combination of high-tech scientists and industrial entrepreneurs with both the skill and commercial drive to tackle such a challenging problem. They instantly recognised the central importance of combining academic expertise with down-to-earth practical 'can do' drive.

The story was told how, at the end of one early meeting, the question of when next to get together was answered by "Let's meet next Saturday." Saturday! For heaven's sake, public bodies don't meet on Saturdays! But this body certainly did – it had urgent problems to solve and speed was of the essence. The Task Force not only assisted Oxford but also saw the importance of taking a wider view, looking at all the international vaccine developers and assessing which of these seemed likely to come up first with a practical solution to Covid 19.

Their first choice was the Pfizer-Biotech version and, as we now know, it proved correct. It was important that they were able to meet with the people doing the research as scientific equals, rather than the more usual mismatch between typical politician and bio-chemist! In fact, it was a central feature of the working of the Task Force that it could function more or less independently of Government, there being almost no-one in Government who had the slightest understanding of the technical aspects. It is, indeed, ironical that this probably accounts to a very large extent for the British success in acquiring more than its fair share of the available vaccine doses that we all welcome today.

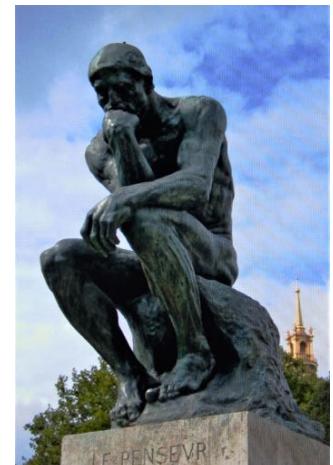
However, this triumph of technical ingenuity could not be allowed to continue unabated – it was clearly necessary for an element of Governmental control to be injected! And so, of course, it was! The take-over by Civil Servants has inevitably led to a proliferation of committees, with extravagant numbers of members. The answer to today's 'question' doesn't materialise 'next Saturday' but following the meeting of committee X, which meets in a fortnight's time! And the answer, itself, is hedged about with much greater uncertainty as a result of the committee's lack of the necessary technical expertise! The Government is, nevertheless, able to enjoy a degree of popularity on account of its excellent choice of tactics in ordering impressive quantities of vaccine



before most other countries were awakened to the importance of planning their own supplies. The classic example of this is, of course, that of the much-maligned EU. How do you possibly obtain a rapid response to any urgent difficulty when you have to deal with the conflicting views of twenty-seven nations? Their problems were not helped either by the apparent failure of the French vaccine programme on which many of those nations were relying!

We should not, however, use this example to denigrate the EU – they were unfortunate as well as being a little slow to appreciate the central importance of generating an adequate supply of vaccine. Nor should we bask too comfortably in our own success – it is obvious that the problem has to be solved at an international level. My point in writing this brief account of the British experience is to muse on the truly fundamental problem of how best to effect reliable decision-making in a world where so many such decisions have to be based on highly technical understanding. One simple conclusion, of course, is that we should encourage more scientists to take up political careers – it would surely help if more politicians had at least some scientific or mathematical understanding – but that suffers from two weaknesses.

Firstly, the vast majority of scientists are far too deeply in love with their research or other technical activities and have little wish to get bogged down in the cut and thrust of politics. Secondly, even if politicians themselves were scientifically educated, the problem, in any democracy, at least, is that the majority of voters are not! Indeed, the vast majority of voters will never be properly acquainted with the technicalities of political decision-making, be it scientific, commercial, economic or whatever. Nevertheless, this example could be taken to favour the setting up of relatively *small* groups of experts to solve each specific problem, rather than rely on large, ill-informed committees! Exactly how you do such a thing in practice is another question!!



Think about it.

The Art Group

Today we concentrate on animals and on Desna Haskell's representations of them, together with two photographs of the real things. It really is a pleasure to include this excellent artwork in our Weekly Letter. We're lucky to have such talented people in our Art Group.



Quiz Corner

Here are the answers to Sandra's 'Old Money' quiz from last week. I, personally, ended up 'six quid' short, which was a lot of money in those days!

	£	S	d	
1.	0	- 0	- 1¼	Penny Farthing
2.	0	- 1	- 0	Bob
3.	1	- 1	- 0	Guinea
4.	0	- 0	- 6	Tanner
5.	10	- 0	- 0	Tenner
6.	0	- 2	- 6	½ Crown
7.	6	- 0	- 0	Sick Squid
8.	0	- 0	- ½	Ape knee
9.	0	- 0	- ¾	Three-Far-Things
10.	0	- 0	- 1	Penny

£17 - 5 - 3½

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Then we have a different kind of quiz – can you name this person?



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David Jones Story

Mike Seymour has sent us the following fascinating account of how the life story of a Second World War airman has been pieced together. Mike has been interested in such things for a long time because his father was a rear gunner in Lancaster bombers who, remarkably, survived the whole campaign. Brian Fernley, who Mike refers to, used to live in Cotgrave and, as some members may remember, gave a talk to our General Meeting last year on the subject of an American soldier, Joe Beyrie who distinguished himself by fighting for both the US and the Russian armies! Thanks, Mike for something a little bit different.

THE DAVID JONES STORY

A year or so ago a friend of mine, called Lisa, was clearing out her 'mother-in-laws' home following her recent death. Whilst carrying out this unenviable task she came across an old RAF officer's uniform and knowing of my interest in the RAF and particularly WW11 she asked me if I would like it before she disposed of it to which I responded with 'yes, of course'. She duly sent me the uniform and it was instantly recognisable as the uniform of a Pilot Officer air crew displaying the 'Signallers' brevet below which were his set of medal ribbons included the DFC. This revelation intrigued me and I needed to know more about the previous owner as there weren't that many 'Signallers' who were awarded the DFC.

I contacted Lisa and she was able to tell me that her mother-in-law had a long term relationship with a gentleman called THD Jones, known as 'David' whom her mother-in-law met some years later following the death of her previous husband. I asked Lisa if there was any further information she could give me on him and his RAF service? Interestingly, she found his flying logbook and his set of medals that looked so new that she thought they were fakes! Recently, she sent me a large parcel that contained the logbook, his set of medals, his photograph and several documents linked to his post war activities with ex-members of 158 Squadron. I also found a receipt from a company in Reading that mounted his medals 'court style' and dated July 1999 proving that his medals were indeed originals and plated to prevent further tarnishing and the DFC was engraved by them with his name on the reverse. It is believed that his DFC was awarded after completing 45 operations, but until we find the citation we cannot be sure. Meanwhile, Brian Cleary (Pat's brother) has offered to see if he can find the citation the next time he goes to the National Archives Office at Kew.



The most interesting document was his flying log-book which showed that he completed 47 operations over Germany and France with 158 Squadron, 27 of these were in a well known Halifax bomber called 'Friday the Thirteenth' which went on to complete 128 successful operations. A full-scale replica of this bomber is preserved at the Yorkshire Air Museum for all to see. He also flew on the ill-fated raid on Nuremberg on the night of 30/31 March 1944 where we lost 96 aircraft and 545 aircrew were killed which is more than were killed in the 'Battle of Britain'. It was Bomber Command's worst night of the entire war. David continued flying during and after D-Day and was awarded the France & Germany medal clasp.

A few months ago Lisa contacted me to say that she also has a silver rose bowl that was presented to P/O David Jones DFC by grateful people of Rudry the village where he was born and lived prior to joining the RAF. It was clearly their way of saying thank you for what he did during the war but whether other young men from the same village were recognised in the same way is unknown.

Some of you may remember that my friend and ex-neighbour, Brian Fernley, came to give us two talks, one on the 'Channel Dash' and the other on 'Albert Ball VC'. Since Brian moved to Devon four years ago he has become heavily involved in the South West Airfield Heritage Trust (SWAHT). They have a museum housed in an old Nissen hut at what remains of RAF Upottery which was the last of three airfields to be built on the Blackdown Hills. On 25/26th April 1944, the USAAF 439th Troop Carrier Group arrived by air and road from Balderton airfield, Nottinghamshire bringing four Troop Carrier Squadrons each with around twenty Douglas C-47 transport planes in preparation for the invasion of Normandy on D-Day. Amongst the photographs on display at the museum many show the training the pilots undertook, the briefings of the troops literally minutes before they flew off to Normandy.

I spoke to Brian about this story and offered him the uniform, logbook and medals to put on display at the museum as it was directly linked to that period of WW11 history. The Chairman and Trustees of the museum have gratefully accepted these gifts and in memory of P/O David Jones and all RAF Bomber Command aircrew, Brian and colleagues have built and installed a replica of the 'Signallers' position in a Halifax bomber complete with a set of restored wireless and target finding equipment. It is hoped that the museum will re-open for visitors in April 2021 if the Covid19 pandemic restrictions permit.

Lisa and her family are delighted with the outcome of this story and will be presenting the museum with the silver rose bowl that has been carefully looked after by the family since 1945. We are all sure that P/O David Jones would have been delighted and proud that memory of his RAF service and achievements will be preserved for future generations.

Mike Seymour

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How Does an Aeroplane Fly?

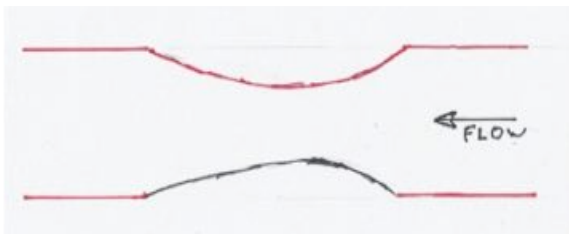
While on the subject of aeronautics, it seems appropriate to include this article by Jim Benn which explains just how aeroplanes fly. If it hadn't been for Bernoulli perhaps they never would! It comes in two parts – I'm afraid you will have to wait until next week for Part II.

You won't be surprised to learn that it is due to the shape of the wings. What is more interesting is that it is *not* due to the shape of the wings in plan form (whether the wings are swept back, whether they have rounded tips, etc.). Yes, that does have an effect, but what is much more important is the shape of the wing in section. Imagine sawing off the wing and looking at the end. This is called the "aerofoil section".

Now, I would like you to conduct a little experiment. Get two bits of cardboard say about 2 inches wide by 10 inches long. Make a fold in each about 2 inches along and curve the end. Hold the 2 bits of cardboard slightly apart and see if you can blow them further apart. Here is a photo taken by my wife of me carrying out this experiment.



You might expect to blow them apart easily but you will find, to your surprise, that you can't. If anything they will blow closer together! This is an effect discovered by Daniel Bernoulli (1700-1782).



Now I have produced a drawing for you. This shows a square pipe with a constriction in it and is viewed from the side. It is what is called a venturi. Bernoulli realised that the energy of the air all the way down the pipe has to stay the same. For the air to get past the constriction it has to flow faster and to

maintain the same energy it therefore has to have a lower pressure. He proved this all mathematically with the Bernoulli equation but I won't!

Now let's take all the red bits of the pipe that I have drawn away leaving the curve. The effect does not disappear with these changes but what we have left is the top surface of a wing, more or less. So it's the *top* surface of the wing provides the lift that lets the aeroplane fly. The bottom surface has much less to do with it.

I'm sorry about this, but I must now introduce you to a formula:-

$$\text{Lift} = \frac{1}{2} \rho V^2 S C_l$$

It is the most important formula in aerodynamics (the science of flying). I will describe the terms in reverse order, if I may.

C_l is called the “Lift Coefficient”. It is very important but I will return to it later.

S is the wing area. Obviously a big wing produces more lift than a little one.

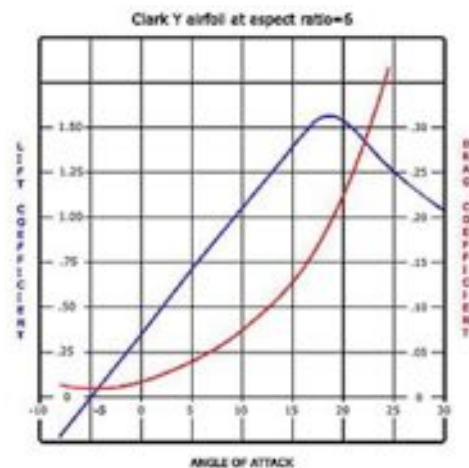
V^2 is the Velocity (Speed). Very importantly it is V squared. That means if you go twice as fast you produce *four times* the lift!

ρ Rho is the density of the air. For normal flying it does not change much but if it gets hot the air gets thinner and if one goes high up the air also gets thinner. This is why they test new aircraft at “hot and high” aerodromes.

$\frac{1}{2}$ is just an adjustment. It matters little.

Finally back to C_l the Lift Coefficient. This is just a number (but it is very important). It is determined by the shape of the wing (the aerofoil section that I mentioned at the beginning) and the “Angle of Attack”. Angle of attack has a symbol (don’t they all!) and it is α (alpha)

Now the Angle of Attack is the amount that the leading edge (front) lifts up. When the wing is horizontal it produces only a little lift but if you increase the angle of attack by a few degrees the lift increases dramatically up to an angle of attack of about 15 degrees. You will notice this when you fly in an aircraft on holiday. It will accelerate down the runway more or less level and when the pilot decides he has the right velocity the pilot raises the front of the aircraft (he “rotates” it). This increases the angle of attack, more lift is produced, and off we fly to the wild blue yonder!



So that is how a wing produces lift but we all know that you don’t get something for nothing. The counter for “lift” is “drag”. Drag is, of course, the force that slows you down when you are going fast. There is an almost identical formula for drag:-

$$Drag = \frac{1}{2} \rho V^2 A C_d$$

Only two terms are different.

A is now the frontal area. A thick wing produces more drag than a thinner one.

C_d is the drag coefficient. It works the same as the lift coefficient.

Incidentally the car enthusiasts among you may have had heard of C_d referred to in cars. Yes, it is exactly the same thing.

Now lift (C_l) and drag (C_d) and angle of attack are inextricably linked. Look at the graph for a famous aerofoil section called “Clark Y”. You can see all the effects I have described and how at about 15° the aerofoil section stalls.

Lastly, in this part, is a picture of an aircraft flying along. There are 4 forces acting on it and, in straight and level flight, they are in perfect harmony. Lift equals weight, thrust equals drag and all is well with the world!



So what happens if the pilot closes the throttle a bit? Thrust gets smaller and the aircraft slows down until drag equals thrust again. But since the aircraft is slower, lift is lower but weight stays the same. So the aircraft goes down! What the pilot can do is raise the nose to get more lift. This will only work until the nose is raised to 15° or so. The aircraft then stalls and the aircraft must go down unless the pilot opens the throttle again!

That is it for part 1. In part 2 I will talk about stability. Why an aircraft has a tail plane!!

Jim Benn

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Creative Writing Group

This week we have an article by Chris Tomblin – the challenge was to write a ‘Magazine Article’ and Chris chose a Gardening Magazine.

Oh and, by the way, the celebrities referred to in last week’s Creative Writing were Pam Ayres and Vivienne Westwood (the latter being fairly obvious!).

The Simplest way ever to grow your own succulent sweet tomatoes.

Chris Tomblin

Everybody loves to eat home grown tomatoes. They just taste so much better and there’s nothing nicer than taking a couple of ripe tomatoes directly from the plant for your lunch, but can anybody grow them. Well yes all you need is a small sunny space.

Tomatoes can be one of the easiest plants to grow from seed but if you are a complete beginner maybe you need a foolproof method that will get those plants on the go and get them germinating quickly. You can normally buy tomato plants but during last year’s lockdown when garden centres were closed it was difficult to get hold of both plants and seeds. This method is almost like a magic trick and you won’t be able to believe your eyes when you see the amount of tomato plants you get from a couple of tomatoes bought from the supermarket. You’ll even be able to impress family and friends by presenting them with your surplus plants.

There are lots of different packets of commercially produced tomato seeds for the purist tomato grower with lovely sounding names like Gardeners Delight, Sungold and even Shirley but if you just want to grow tomatoes easily and productively this method is for you. I like to grow two types of tomatoes one to eat in salads, sandwiches and simply by the handful so I like to grow a cherry or mini tomato and a larger type I can use in cooking like a large plum or larger tomato. For my experiment and let’s face it my last chance of growing my own tomatoes last year I chose a nameless large tomato sold loose in my supermarket and a mini plum that I’d been enjoying for salads called San Marzano. I used one large tomato and two of the mini plums and cut them into fine slices and discarded the ends. Oh but just make sure they’re ripe.

So, for the growing medium you need to mix 50% of garden soil 25% compost and 25% fine sand. Pop it into a suitable container? I used two round shallow crème fraiche pots. Place your sliced tomatoes on top and sprinkle over more of the mix just a fine layer only. Water in thoroughly and place in a warm place in partial shade (I used the spare room windowsill) keeping it moist for 6-8 days when they will have germinated. You will not be able to believe your eyes when you take a look, there will be so many tiny little tomato plants. Then 15 days later transfer to individual pots filled with the same compost mix. Plant each seedling deeply and water thoroughly. Keep the plants in partial sunlight for 2/3 days and then they’ll be fine in full sun. Tomatoes are delicate little plants so although you can start growing them as early as February you can’t put them outside until all danger of frost is past. That will be the middle to the end of July in the U.K. Once the plants have grown to a reasonable size they can be potted on into a larger container and then when weather conditions allow into their final position in the garden or large pot outside. But if you have the space or a greenhouse do pot them directly into that large pot as it will speed up growing time.

Tomato plants grow quite tall and will need support so pop some tall sturdy canes in the pots when you put them outside and tie them in regularly, using the central stem. There should only be leaves growing on this stem so if you get any little stems growing between the main stem and leaves nip them out. You want all the goodness from the growing medium going into the main plant. Be vigilant. As soon as flowers appear start feeding using a proprietary tomato feed and do it once a week. Make sure you water regularly and when you have five trusses of flowers on your plant nip off the growing end. The plant will not be able to ripen more than this before the weather turns at the end of the season and you want all that goodness going into your tomatoes to make them sweet. The best position for tomato plants is a sunny one.

And that's it - a simple way to produce delicious home-grown tomatoes. Enjoy.

Oh yes how did the actual tomatoes taste compared to commercially bought plants. They were delicious and actually tasted much sweeter than their parents from the supermarket. Must be all that love and attention and oh I forgot to say, you do need to talk to them.

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News from the Eco Group

We continue to meet via Zoom each month to discuss a wide range of topics. This week we are looking at the 'intergenerational' aspect of climate and ecology, including this [report](#) that has some interesting things to say on the matter.

If you attended the Branch's first zoomed monthly meeting on Tuesday and would like to learn more about eco-matters, climate and the environment, then these are some of the options:

- Cotgrave and District u3a Eco Group currently meets via Zoom on the second Friday of the month at 2.00pm.

In addition, Trust u3a* offers 3 Eco/Climate groups:

- Eco Matters, monthly on a Sunday evening (2nd Sunday)
 - Eco Group, every other week on a Tuesday afternoon
 - 'Countdown to COP' monthly on a Friday morning (last Friday of month)
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- Trust u3a is an online u3a that gives you the opportunity to join groups, talks and courses. Like any u3a, activities are run by members for members. Take a look at the [Groups](#) page, for details of groups, courses and talks.

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Cartoon Corner

Finally, we must have a cartoon to keep our spirits up.



And finally, finally we have a bit of serious stuff from the Patients Participation Group (PPG) at the Belvoir Health Centre:

As always, massive thanks go to all staff of the local surgeries and pharmacies for the quality of care provided to patients during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Belvoir Health Group requests that patients do not go to the surgeries for anything other than booked appointments or to collect medication. For all other queries, please telephone the appropriate surgery and follow any instructions given. Cropwell Bishop surgery currently has no clinicians on site so all patients are being seen at either Cotgrave or Bingham. The dispensary is open for the collection of medication and the telephone is being answered as usual.

Extended Hours Surgeries are suspended at the moment. However, If you are ill at the weekend call **111** and, if you need to be seen by a GP, you will be directed to a Rushcliffe practice, quite often Castle at Wilford Lane, West Bridgford. If you want help with minor conditions and self-treatment the Belvoir Health Group website contains useful information.

Vaccine roll out

It has been very good to see the speedy delivery of the Covid vaccine to the first four vulnerable groups. At the time of writing, the advice is to wait for a letter inviting you for a Covid vaccine and then to book your appointment at one of the available sites, either online via swiftqueue or by telephone. Please do not telephone the surgery, they cannot book or influence appointments for you. If you are in one of the first four categories and have not yet received a letter you should, ideally, go online to book your appointment. Our surgeries have been very pleased to be involved in vaccinating housebound patients and residents of local care homes. The practice requests that anyone who is able to attend a centre for their vaccination should please do so but, if you consider yourself housebound and have not been contacted yet, please call the surgery.

Some things to remember:

1. There is **NO CHARGE** for the Covid vaccine. If you are contacted by anyone asking for personal details and payment for your vaccine, **THIS IS A SCAM**. The NHS will invite you for your vaccine and it is free.
2. You do not get the full benefit of the vaccine for around three weeks after you have had it and then again after your second dose, so you should still follow all the current restrictions and remember to keep socially distant from others, wear a face covering and wash your hands.
3. Please book and go to a centre when you are invited. Don't wait to have your jab at your local surgery. The practice does not know when it will get any vaccine, and it's really important that people get their Covid vaccine as soon as they can.
4. Transport to vaccination sites: The Nottinghamshire and Nottingham bus pass can be used before 9.30 a.m. to enable people to get to the vaccination sites. The Medilink service which runs between Queens Drive Park and Ride, QMC and the City Hospital now also runs to the Kings Meadow vaccination site and bus passes can be used on this service. In Newark, a shuttle bus runs from the town centre to the showground vaccination site every 20 minutes.

(Continued overleaf)

Support for carers

There was a virtual support meeting held on ZOOM for local carers in place of the usual drop-in meetings. It was a good session and those that were able to take part were able to share experiences and get some useful information from each other and speakers. It is hoped more sessions will be held soon. To set that going, a sub group of the PPG also held a meeting to discuss the way forward.

The Nottinghamshire Carers Hub will be holding a series of virtual support meetings via Zoom during February. Email nottinghamshirehub@tuvida.org for more information.

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That's all again for this week. I trust most of us have either had or have made an arrangement for a vaccination.

Best wishes,

John

P.S. On waking up one morning this week:

Well, I'll be jolly well blowed!
It's gone and jolly well snowed
And I needn't be told
That its freezingly cold.
Yes, it's gone back to winterly mode."

