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Foreword –Juliet



Hello and welcome to our new-look *Sentinel*. Many thanks to Lisa Truslove, one of our newer members, who has come forward to take on the editorship. Thank you also to everyone who responded to our recent communications survey, which confirmed that for many of you, the *Sentinel* is a key source of information about what's on. As the summer drought continues to challenge our gardens, we are looking forward to a busy autumn. The Crafts Group is celebrating our anniversary by creating a special 20th-anniversary Post Box Topper, which will be on display throughout September. Do keep a look out for it!

Two of our groups will also be exhibiting in the library:

The Photography Group exhibition runs from 7th–19th September, followed by the **Painting and Art Group** from 21st September to 3rd October. Please show your support by visiting during library opening hours to view the excellent work on show. Finally, look out for our core upcoming events:

- **Monthly Meeting:** Thursday 3rd September, 2pm at St Peter's Church Hall. Joanne Bogle will give a talk on the life of Sue Ryder.
- **20th Anniversary Music & Dance Evening:** Saturday 26th September, 7:30pm at St Peter's Hall. Featuring local band Prime Numbers. This is a bring-your-own food and drink event, with anniversary cake served in the interval. Tickets are £5 and booking is essential via the website.

What Makes Good Real Ale?

Good real ale is characterized by its natural carbonation, which is achieved through the secondary fermentation process in the cask. This process allows the beer to develop its flavour without the need for artificial carbonation.

Stew and 9 of the appreciators of good ale visited The Old Joint Stock in Birmingham on the 12th August. Built in 1862 in the heart of Birmingham City Centre by architect Julius Alfred Chatwin, the establishment was originally designed as a library, for the St Philip's church across the road, before becoming the Birmingham Joint Stock Bank. Lloyds Banks, then took ownership of the premises in 1889 – the very same year as Birmingham received official City status.

More than a century later, the Grade II listed building is now The Old Joint Stock and a stunning pub with its own modern studio theatre, making a wonderful feature of the original fixtures and fittings in its main bar and function rooms. One of the best pubs in Birmingham and beyond, it is the UK's highest seller of London Pride! Stew and the team took advantage of a prime location in the window, they all recommend the London Pride ale and ensured that they took advantage this amazing venue.



Recommendation score of 5/5



Open Water Swimming, Lavender Hall Lakes–Kim

The Lakes at Lavender Hall opened for swimming in 2025, and Alison and I first dipped our toes in July of that year. The main lake is just about 200m around (if you swim near the buoys) and varies in depth from about 3 feet to just over 6 feet. The water is regularly checked for quality and topped up or refreshed from an on-site bore hole.



The Lakes had only very basic facilities, but they are improving all the time. The main lake now has sauna pods, picnic tables (some of which are covered) and four recently installed changing huts. The loos are a little basic, but this all adds to the novelty of the experience.



The water temperature varies dramatically through the season, and indeed can be quite different on any one day. In autumn and winter, it can be as low as 5C – so a wetsuit is definitely recommended. The water temp depends on how long the sun has been shining, the time of day, and whether water has been recently added from the bore hole.

On Thursday 13th August, Alison, I and our daughter Holly went in at 11am and the water was a pleasantly cool 21C, when the air temperature was about 30C. On previous swims, it has been as high as 29C and occasionally gets over 30C later in the evening after consecutive very hot days



.Open water swimming is totally unlike pool swimming. Apart from the need for wet suits on colder days, you have to use a tow float (available for hire) and swimming (or beach) shoes are a personal recommendation. Swimming gloves are also useful when the water is cool. And you are swimming in untreated water, which has ducks, geese and occasionally swans to accompany you, as well as leaves and twigs from the surrounding vegetation. But before chlorinated swimming pools were invented, that is what swimming was largely about (except for those lucky enough to live by the seaside).

In terms of the clientele, it varies from older folk (some in their eighties) through to older teenagers (there is a lower age limit of 16). Some people just wend their way around gently using the tow float for buoyancy.

Open Water Swimming, Lavender Hall Lakes-continued

Occasionally one or two serious swimmer (tri-athlete types) power their way around, whilst a majority swim gently to savour the experience and the surroundings.

You have to book in advance via the website (<https://thelakesatlavenderhall.co.uk/>) and it can get very busy (you cannot just turn up). Access is via a bumpy track (no low slung sports cars) just over the railway bridge at Lavender Hall Lane. The cafe is open at various times (see the website) and other offerings (saunas, paddle boarding, wild wellness lake [shown below], etc) are also bookable via the website.



By the way, Alison has got me into this so much that I have now purchased a wet suit so that le can swim with her through the autumn and spring months. But we will probably limit ourselves to saunas and a dip (equivalent to a plunge pool) in the winter.

The Dark of the Moon (Fiona Valpy)- Kathryn, Book Club 1

The Dark of the Moon is cleverly told from two different viewpoints, Philly a 90 year old WW2 veteran and Finn a 13 year old boy with Autism. Philly is visiting Finn's mum who wants to write a book about her war experience as a pilot for Air Transport Auxiliary Corp and at Bletchley Park. She was involved in dangerous missions delivering decoding mission to France. When young, she falls in love and marries Ben . Ben disappears and it is feared he is captured, Philly is unable to track him and Philly goes through the rest of her life wondering what became of him. Yet she never gives up trying to find his resting place.

Kathryn's feedback is that, unusually, everyone liked this book and it stimulated interesting discussion over the plot. Using the book club 1 recommendation scale,



Walking Cricket Group – Ian

Sunshine and showers in late August brought the return of our normal British summer weather. It also brought the return of the Walking Cricket group after its heat-induced absence! Techniques were honed during a well-attended Monday morning session in the nets and the following day the game was on.

The players were delighted to find that the match had been moved from the customary Lavender Hall Lane Triangle to the main Berkswell Cricket Club square at the Lant which was a lush and unfamiliar shade of green. Arms turned (somewhat creakily), bats flailed, wickets tumbled and runs accrued. Last to bat were a pair of newcomers to the group, Martin Williams and Ivan Lewis who had interrupted his afternoon nap to join the fun. Needing 134 to overhaul old stagers and hot favourites Kim Hathrell and Chris Ramsey, they cruised past the target making 136 without losing a wicket.

The only disappointment was that the bar wasn't open to celebrate their success.

Well done to everyone who turned out and our thanks, as always, to Berkswell Cricket Club for their help and support.



Out and About Group- The Coffin Museum – Peter

20 members recently visited this very unusual museum sited on the edge of the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham. Although called the Coffin Museum it is an example of Victorian engineering and working practices. Newman Brothers was established in 1882 by Alfred Newman and his brother Edwin. Originally brass founders, they predominantly made cabinet furniture until 1894, when the company moved to the present site on Fleet Street and began to specialise in the production of coffin furniture. Newman Brothers continued to specialise in this area until, due to competition from abroad and failure to modernise, they were forced out of business and ceased trading in 1998.



In 1998 the factory workers laid down their equipment and walked out of the building for the very last time, leaving everything behind. These works made the furniture for the coffins for Winston Churchill, Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother and many other distinguished people.



What's on in Balsall Common u3a

Date	Group	Event
1 st – 30 th September	Craft Group	20 th Anniversary Post box topper challenge
3 rd September 2pm St Peter's Hall	Monthly Meeting	September monthly meeting : The life of Sue Ryder – speaker, Joanne Bogle
7 th – 19 th September Balsall Library	Photography Group	The Balsall Common u3a Photography Group are holding a public exhibition of their work in Balsall Common Library. The exhibition can be viewed during normal Library opening times.
13 th – 18 th September	Out and About Group	6 Day 5 Night Coach Holiday to Northern Ireland. Cost: £695.00 each based on 2 sharing. £175 Single Room Occupancy SOLD OUT
21 st September – 3 rd October	Painting and Art Group Exhibition	The Balsall Common u3a Painting and Art Group are holding an exhibition of their work in Balsall Common Library. This public exhibition can be viewed during normal Library opening times.
26 th September 7:00 pm St Peter's Hall	All Welcome BOOKING REQUIRED	The Balsall Common u3a <u>20th Anniversary dance</u> will be held on Saturday 26 th September, at St Peter's Hall, doors open 7:00 pm for a 7:30 pm start. Dance the night away with the Prime Numbers Cost: £5.00 per person https://balsallcommon.u3asite.uk/dance-booking/

20th Anniversary Events- more details to be posted when available

13 th December 2026 in St Peters Church starting at 2:00 pm.	20 th Anniversary Brass Band Christmas Concert	The concert will include some Christmas Carols that the audience can participate in
3 rd of November	20 th Anniversary Ramble	A recreation of the very 1 st walk 20 years ago
Appeal from St Peter's Hall	www.justgiving.com/page/stpeters-newchairs	The chairs in St Peter's Hall are somewhat past their life expectancy. Can you help?