

Image: Alana Bullock

Greetings from Qube...

Last week we were able to hold the first of two get togethers to say thank you to our befriending and social group volunteers! They have all been working remotely over the past year, keeping in touch with our members who were at risk of becoming socially isolated.



We've also had the pleasure of hosting a series of mini of social groups for women in our gallery each morning this week for women who love to be creative!

Work in Progress is a social group where women can come together in a non-judgmental space and work on their own creative projects. Due to the pandemic the groups were temporarily suspended in 2020. It's been wonderful to see such a variety of work and to take some inspiration!

Finally, we want you to know that we understand the last year has impacted on everyone differently and that for some life continues to feel lonely. If that sounds like you, then please give us a call. We have volunteers available to offer regular phone calls for friendship and it may be just the thing you need to brighten you day!



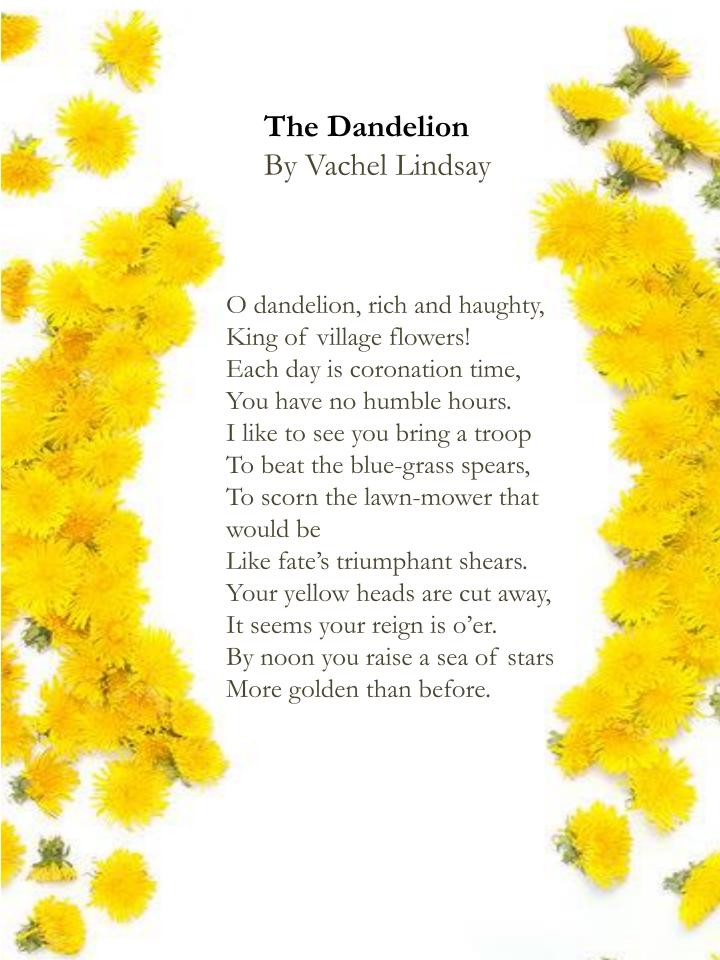


THE NATIONAL LOTTERY
COMMUNITY FUND



This week you can enjoy:

- Summer poetry
- Get to know Angie Mills
- Guide to flower pressing
- Greetings from Vicky Turrell
- Know your birdsong
- Foodie picture quiz
- Grilled chicken tacos with strawberry salsa
- Summer quiz answers



Get to know Angie Mills... By Bella Doolan

After we had the wonderful submission from our member Ken Payne, telling us the fabulous tale of his life and adventures so far, I asked our member Angie Mills if she would kindly allow me to write a few lines about her and the incredible projects and fundraising she has been doing.



A couple of weeks ago off I went all the way to Hampton Rise in Oswestry. I was made most welcome with a lovely cup of tea and a piece of home baked vanilla cake, obviously Angie knows I am partial to a slice of cake (it wasn't a bribe – honest!) no surprises that it was home baked either...

Angie proudly showed me the latest upcycling project she has been working on, some fabulous furniture, set in her light and airy sun room, she has completely revamped it, painting, papering adding new handles, the finished pieces look a million dollars, so unique, inventive and so Angie...

I asked Angie a few questions about herself, where her talents and interests lay, indeed where they may have stemmed from and this is what we chatted about:

Angle is from a large Italian family, her Dad came from Caserta in Southern Italy to London in the early 1950's to work for British Rail, he had an option of going to America at the time but his brother went there instead.

After finding somewhere to live and settle he was joined by Angie's Mother and Nona, they soon started their own family and began their journey living in a large shared house, as was very common in those days, in fact Angie had an older sister who was placed in a large wooden drawer as her crib, this is something that was not at all unusual in those days either.

Over the years the family expanded and Angie became youngest of 6 siblings, there is a fair age gap, so when she came along circumstances had improved on the home front and luckily, she had the luxury of a crib and bed of her own.



Growing up Angie had a lot of responsibilities around the home and was regularly tasked with several domestic duties in addition to her studies, she had little time for the usual childhood activities. Today she would probably be recognized as a young carer.

Every summer the family went back to Italy for the whole 6 weeks, this kept Angie connected to her roots and family, enjoying happy times, loving the climate and authentic foods. This also gave her a well-earned break from some of her responsibilities. Sadly, Angie recalls, when she returned to school after the holidays, she would often become subject to racist abuse, due to her skin become so much darker in the sun, name calling and poor treatment was a regular occurrence, this had such a negative impact on her that as soon as she was able to, she made the decision to stay at home in England during the holidays. We agreed that children can be so cruel, these experiences truly can stay with us for a lifetime.

Angie quickly became good at planning her time and was often to be seen with her Dad, he loved to fix and make things being a clever and inventive man, a true problem solver. Angie became his little shadow, following him around, spending time watching him and learning, understanding how things work and consequently becoming a problem solver and a 'Doer' herself. Her fascination never dulled, so those early years really did have a huge impact.

Angie soon realized that she had a real gift for planning ahead, she could problem solve, communicate well, use her skills both practically and creatively. Being enthusiastic with a thirst for learning and sharing, she became a natural and spent her career in teaching, which she enjoyed very much.

Angie moved from Norfolk to Oswestry about 5 years ago to be closer to her family and has not looked back at all, having taught herself to knit in her early 20's (amongst other things) she began to enjoy making things again and started to meet up with her new neighbours, they would take it in turns in to host creative sessions in their homes, knitting, tapestry and chatting. This was a great way to make new connections, they swiftly grew into some strong friendships and bonds, skill sharing and making things together soon became something so much more substantial than they could ever have imagined. Crafty Knitters was born.

Word had spread, more people wanted to join in and it became apparent that individual homes could no longer accommodate the volume of people, a regular meeting place was found and the group have been meeting in the Lorne Street Senior Citizens Club, there are currently 25 members. Sadly due to the Coronavirus pandemic the meetings were suspended.

That has not stopped the Crafty Knitters and Angie though, it would take a bit more than that!





There have been some difficult and hard times during this last year, having friends and the group to keep each other going has been a real bonus for the group. Doing some fantastic fundraising projects, providing some really inspiring garden and hospital displays is a real testament to the group and Angie, we must also mention her husband Barry who has also been actively involved with the practical aspects, woodworking and construction required for the projects.

I have attached an excerpt from the new Teddies in Lockdown Book by the Crafty Knitters including several photographs of all the wonderful creations.

You will see that there have been tremendous amounts of money raised and there are various projects ongoing. You may wish to get involved or if you have any wool, needles or patterns you would like to donate please get in touch with Angie.

Angie is never without a project and along with her friends have been busy making Teddies for School leavers, Hearts for End of Life Care, Special Dementia Blankets, Wrist Bags for older folks in care settings, she is passionate about gardening and is expecting a delivery of some chickens soon.

I would like to say a huge thank you to Angie for having a chat with me and sharing her wonderful, uplifting story.



Angie will be doing a talk at our Social Groups in Qube in September (provided we can speakers have back in groups) She will be giving us much more detail about the projects and maybe a sneaky peak into future projects, as you will have guessed by now Angie is already planning the next big thing....

Excerpt from Teddies in Lockdown 2020

Coronavirus was spreading rapidly, and on the 23rd March 2020 the United Kingdom entered a full lockdown to control the outbreak.

The Government instructed that schools, shops and businesses should close and told everyone except key workers to stay at home for 12 weeks. The lockdown rules were that we should go out only for shopping for essentials like food and medicines, and to take one hour's exercise a day.

To cheer people up, the Oswestry Crafty Knitters decided to create knitted teddies and friends to display them in a front garden in Hampton Rise, Oswestry. These displays encouraged people of all ages to walk past and enjoy the latest creations.

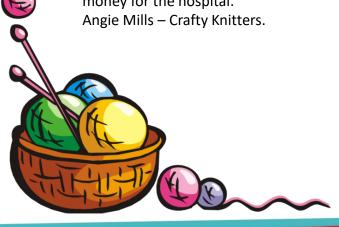
Every week there was a different themed display. Before long, the teddies and friends were posted onto social media, and photos were sent around the world.

At the same time, a "clap for the NHS" started each week and people asked if they could purchase the knitted teddies and friends.

Crafty knitters decided to make the knitted toys available for adoption in exchange for donations to the Rheumatology Association at the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital.

More than 200 teddies and friends were adopted during the lockdown period, with many of them sent to families and friends all over the world for adoption.

A big thank you to everyone who adopted these teddies, as this helped raise £1,000 for the hospital ORA. This book has been created as a record of the lockdown and to help raise more money for the hospital.



Have a go at flower pressing!

Once you've mastered this simple technique, you'll find many uses for the flowers and leaves you press.

Why not embark on a craft project and decorate special cards for family and friends, create beautiful art, or make a collection of herbarium sheets recording the plants growing in your garden?

You will need:

- -Books
- -Newspaper
- -Card
- -PVA glue
- -A pen



What to do:

- 1. In a spot where you have permission to pick flowers, carefully pick a section from a plant. Try not to damage other flowers or take too many.
- 2. Open a book and line it with parchment or newspaper. Place your flowers (as flat as you can) on the newspaper between the pages of a book.
- 3. Carefully close the book and weight it down additional heavy books work well as weights.
- 4. Store this pile in a warm, dry place and check on your flower specimens daily.
- 5. Once your flowers are dry, carefully remove them.
- 6. You can then create your own flower collection or make some beautiful art. Use glue to mount the pressed flowers on card.
- 7. If you are creating a collection or would like to record details about your flowers, add a label. The key information to note on a herbarium sheet is when and where it was collected, by whom and if you know what the flower is.







Greetings from Vicky!...

Have you ever watched a bird building a nest? I expect we have all seen birds carrying hay and moss and bits of twigs to a hidden place. But garden birds are so secretive that we do not see much more until their fledglings are out and about on the lawn.



Luckily, I have a nest box just outside the kitchen window, on a wall about a metre away. What a pleasant surprise I got when one year a wren nested in it. Then came the tree bees who took advantage of the shelter and the wren's hard work.

This year the blue tits have decided to use it. It all started several weeks ago when they collected materials for 'building'. The finishing touches were cobwebs taken from our old cow byre. Then they were ready, and the female laid her eggs. I do not know how many she laid but the books say that there could be up to 14 eggs. There was a quiet time when the female was sitting.

If I was lucky, I saw the male dip in to feed his mate. Then after two weeks they both started bringing grubs and caterpillars, so I guessed that there were nestlings. You must look very carefully to see anything at all and be very patient. They move in the shadows and are as quick as a flash. Firstly, they land on the cotoneaster twigs then they look around. When they are satisfied that there is no threat, they pop in and the next minute I see a blur as they leave.



Nothing has put them off from the start. We go past the nest to the dustbin every day, the oil tank nearby has been filled by a singing delivery man and the electricity meter has had to be read and it is only a short distance away.

Yesterday, the blue tits decided to go into our greenhouse, through the open window, to get insects. The only trouble is that the window automatically closes when the sun goes in. A blue tit got trapped and it was frantic with its little face up to the glass, unable to escape. What a good job we got there in time.

They have persisted for nearly three weeks, and I expect to see the fledglings gingerly leaving the nest any time now. Their adventure has only just begun!

What's that noise?!...

At this time of year, you may catch yourself listening to the melodic chatter of birds in your garden. But can you pick tell the difference between a melodic tune and an alarm call? Take a look at this simple guide taken from discoverwildlife.com and head outside to see what you can hear...

Birds make two basic types of noises: contact calls, which include alarm calls, and songs, a more complex series of notes. Contact calls tend to be short sounds that, in certain small birds, are frustratingly similar.

Alarm calls, by their very nature, are harsh and loud. They include the explosive chattering of blackbirds and the churring of blue tits. Listen out for these avian warnings, especially if you are in a wood, because they could lead you to a roosting tawny owl.





Songs, by contrast, are all about attracting mates and staking out territory, and the best time to enjoy them is dawn.

Bird songs differ greatly in their construction and volume. Bullfinches have a barely audible, simple string of notes, while blackbirds, blackcaps and

nightingales produce rich, evocative arias. Wrens emit strident bursts, and song thrushes repeat a loud and vibrant three-note refrain. Great tits have a huge repertoire: it's often said that if you hear an unfamiliar call, it's bound to be one of them!

-Finally, you can also learn bird songs by recording them on your mobile phone or a dictaphone, and then compare them to recordings available on the RSPB's website or in MP3 player applications.

Grilled-Chicken Tacos with Strawberry Salsa

Sweet strawberries and creamy avocado make a luscious yet light topping for these chicken taco

Ingredients1 1/4 lb chicken-breasts

1 tsp. chili powder

1 tsp. canola oil

12 fajita-size flour tortillas

Olive oil cooking spray

8 oz. strawberries

2 medium tomatoes

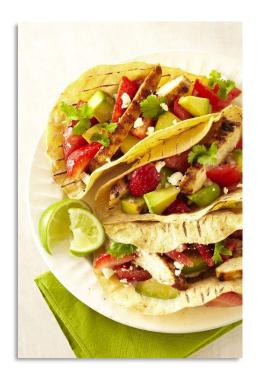
1 medium avocado

1 small shallot

2 limes

1/2 c. crumbled feta cheese

2 c. Cilantro leaves



Directions

- 1. Prepare grill for direct grilling on medium.
- 2. Rub chicken with chili powder, oil, and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Grill chicken, covered, 12 to 15 minutes or until cooked through (165 degrees F), turning over once halfway through.
- 3. Transfer cooked chicken to cutting board. Let stand 5 minutes.
- 4. Meanwhile, spray tortillas with cooking spray. Grill 1 to 2 minutes or until grill marks appear, turning over once halfway through. Transfer to plate.
- 5. While chicken rests, in medium bowl, stir together strawberries, tomatoes, avocado, shallot, and 1/8 teaspoon salt. Squeeze juice of half of 1 lime into mixture, stirring to combine.
- 6. Thinly slice chicken and serve in tortillas topped with strawberry salsa, feta, and cilantro. Garnish with remaining limes, cut into wedges.

Summer quiz answers

- 1. Blackpool tower
- 2. Southend
- 3. The Corrs
- 4. Wish you were here
- 5. True
- 6. 21st June
- 7. Julius Ceasar
- 8. XFactor
- 9. September
- 10. Iceland
- 11. Summer loving had me a blast
- 12. Saint Swithins
- 13. Ronald Reagan
- 14. Donna Summer
- 15. Homer Simpson
- 16. Bleak House
- 17. Sirius
- 18. Indian Summer
- 19. Sonnet 18
- 20. Clegg