

Cooking up a storm

When Gill Roberts decided to retire in 2019 from a 40 year career of teaching cookery, it was her wish to be with her soon-to-arrive first grandchild. She also imagined there would be more time to devote to the children's cookery lessons and parties she ran from home, and to catering for large functions such as significant birthdays and canape parties. But whilst Covid derailed these culinary plans it did not diminish her love of cookery. What was needed was a re-think.

Her first initiative was to start offering meals to locals who were shielding and could no longer enjoy regular visits to their favourite restaurants or were just fed up with cooking and wanted a break. So, a menu of individual dishes was created for a simple supper or when put together could form a special meal for a birthday or anniversary. The demand took a while to build up but soon Gill was carrying her wicker basket full of tasty morsels around the Suburb streets like a latter-day Red Riding Hood. Word got out and soon a car was needed for those further afield and a meals-on-wheels-type service was born. What a joy to get out of the house! And delivering the dishes gave Gill the chance of getting to know the families, make new friends and share news during the pandemic.

But how could Gill possibly continue with her children's cookery lessons and parties which were not allowed as we entered



BRIAN ROBERTS

the highest tiered restrictions? Well, if Joe Wicks can teach workouts on YouTube maybe cookery could work out too? So, after some fiendish IT challenges and immense anxiety, Gill started her cookery classes on Zoom. And so far, it seems to be a great success. The children are in their own kitchens and are supervised during the call by their parents or nannies. The menu is sent in advance with the ingredients and utensils required, together with the meeting invite. There was a thought that the children would be Zoomed out after their schoolwork, but it seems that doing something practical is a welcome change from academic studies. And, just maybe, a few new budding MasterChefs will be inspired during this very strange time of ours!

BRIAN ROBERTS

Happiness is... an allotment

I've always loved being outside in nature, but I only really got into gardening two years ago after a visit to Japan, where I fell in love with the gardens of Kyoto and the national obsession with flower viewing seasons. So, when I got back, I started small with the front garden. Fast forward to now and the front garden looks passable – and actually, it is a delight to be watching the alliums and peonies bloom from the sitting room, which has now become my office (complete with ironing board standing desk) for the foreseeable future. So, thoroughly infected with the gardening bug and with the arrival of lockdown, taking on the new challenge of my stepdad's allotment became the number one priority in attempting to make it through the pandemic sane and happy.

In previous years my allotment jobs have mostly been the tidy things, like growing fancy Italian tomato seeds. But this year lockdown has been exactly the impetus my mum and I needed to really get our hands dirty. We've seized control of the plot and spent all our weekends toiling away clearing some of the vast network of bindweed that underpinned the entire plot. We've used our precious hour of daily outdoor time to prowl the skips of the Suburb for useful bits and bobs, and as a result now have four pallet composts and two raised beds. We've redrawn the map of the allotment to make it a bit more navigable – with narrower

beds and thinner paths, including some artistic new path-laying by me. And I've put my crafting skills to practical use with two macrame bean frames, the fancier of the two featuring some disco-sparkling hula hoops.

In the process I've made good friends with the local robins, met several cats and a fox, and even had a show-down with a free-ranging dog (Boris, fittingly a small blond poodle). I've learned all sorts of new knotting skills, picked up the odd bit of carpentry, got sunburnt in April, and eaten my first batch of home-grown pak choi.

I've loved watching the season progress over the months of lockdown alongside progress on the plot. It's amazing thinking back to when lockdown started – the leaves were just starting to pop out on the trees and the

allotment was a sad and neglected place. Really getting to grips with it, planting things, losing them to slugs, planting them again, eventually and hopefully watching actual useful veg emerge, has been very rewarding and a good excuse to nip away from my ironing board desk at regular intervals to get some sunshine, sneak in some watering and enjoy the fresh air. It's also been a lovely way to connect with neighbours – swapping seeds and seedlings and jam and cake with appropriate social distancing measures in place.

Thanks to the allotment, I couldn't be happier. Lockdown has been a chance to stay home and focus on things that couldn't be more rewarding. I'm sure the slugs are delighted!

MAVIS MCKENZIE



Socially distanced croquet



Until the summer of 2020 I, like many, had an image of croquet as a gentle and somewhat sedate pastime. When joining Fellowship's Croquet Club I expected afternoons of fresh air and very good (socially distanced) company. This was true, of course, but I had not anticipated the confusing croquet jargon, the match tactics required or the sheer competitiveness!

All standards of player can join in and enjoy the game – mixing and matching the inexperienced with the experts gives every couple/team the chance of winning. As a beginner, however, I soon decided even more fun was to be had if I played a little better and so started to practice in the back garden; I even resorted to watching croquet matches on YouTube! What started as a mild interest had become an engrossing sport.

To join Fellowship's croquet club, you can contact Chris Page on 8455 2785.

JACKIE MURPHY

Temple Fortune Health Centre's vaccination hub

I expect many of our readers will either already have attended Temple Fortune Health Centre (TFHC) for their Covid vaccination or will know someone who has. TFHC was one of the first GP-led healthcare centres to receive the brand-new Pfizer BioNTech and then the AstraZeneca vaccine for administration.

They started giving injections in the surgery, however, due to the need to carry on providing the normal range of medical services and the need to increase the number of patients that could

be safely vaccinated at speed, the TFHC team decided that a special purpose vaccination centre in the staff car park located under the building was called for. Marquees were hired to provide suitable temporary accommodation comprising a reception area plus several vaccination cubicles and a marquee to deal with people in wheelchairs or with mobility issues. All this is supported by post-vaccine observation (needed for the Pfizer vaccine) with volunteer paramedics (in case

of need), as well as security staff and volunteer marshals to help people find their way.

The vaccination centre opened in the first week of January and is serving many Suburb residents as well as other locals, since the Health Centre is acting as a hub for seven GP practices in the area. Local healthcare and care home workers have also been able to be vaccinated here.

Local doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, paramedics and other GP practice staff have been working hard to administer the

vaccine and deal with copious paperwork. They included several retired clinicians and practice managers who have volunteered their time to help the vaccination campaign. This has been a Herculean effort by all TFHC staff and some of you may have seen the feature on BBC1's Panorama programme about it. Local volunteers have provided invaluable support, helping out in various ways including with the logistics and even bringing in hot homemade soup and meals for the staff who have been working outdoors in the bitter months of winter.

Dr Luisa Pettigrew, Clinical Director for Primary Care Network 6 in Barnet and a GP at TFHC who was instrumental in planning this military style operation said: "It's been a major undertaking to set up the vaccination hub in such a short space of time, but with an incredible team and wonderful volunteers we've done it. Now



PHOTOS: LUISA PETTIGREW

we just need a continual supply of vaccines to meet demand!"

The vaccine hub will contact patients when they are eligible, as soon as vaccines are available. To prevent the practice phonelines becoming overwhelmed, the health centre kindly asks patients

to wait to be contacted - just make sure the surgery has your up to date contact details, ideally with a mobile contact number.

For more information about the COVID vaccination please go to: shorturl.at/xEJMY.

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