

Treasures of Lockdown 2021



Some more Lockdown reflections from
some of the amazing members of the
Love Me Love My Mind Monday drop in.

Violet



Violet has been busy making this lovely blanket.

It will be given to a patient in the hospital who may not have any family or friends and who will be moving to a nursing home.

The blanket will be a sign that someone cares.

Well done, Violet.

Edmund

The time is right to share my beautiful Twitter story which is based on true events.

It is fair to say that 2020 was a “Annus horribilis” the Latin phrase for a Horrible year due to Coronavirus and all the necessary Government restrictions on liberty that went with it. I suffer from depression, anxiety and post traumatic stress disorder. The era of Coronavirus brought along extra layers of suffering that people suffering with mental illness could never have prepared for. Closing down large swathes of the economy to protect the public was an event never seen in my living memory until now. We could no longer have a meal in a restaurant, have a drink in a pub or even get our hair cut ! We could not meet at the Monday Drop In and coach trips put on a hiatus. Acute feelings of isolation and being barraged with so much bad news every day of the week took it’s toll. I could no longer take part in one of the loves of my life and that is travel. I love air travel, the whole business of getting from A to B is an integral part of the overall travel experience, not just the destination. I missed visiting London Heathrow, I missed the buzz of a major International airport, I missed spending time in airport lounges meeting up with people with similar interests. I felt a big part of ME had died. I became very depressed and ended up taking to Social Media especially Twitter for solace during troubled times.

On the lead up to Friday the 16th of October 2020 I was feeling very low and heading towards rock bottom. It was a horrid feeling. I reflected on my experience of using Twitter and remembered a gentleman that from to time would Tweet something along the lines of “I am not having a great day, going to bed soon, please say hello”. I thought well if this approach works for him it may work for me. I decided to give it a go and on Friday 16th October 2020 at 1130pm I Tweeted:

"I am not ok. Feeling rock bottom. Please take a few seconds to say hello if you see this tweet. Thank you".

11.27pm London.

Absolutely nothing could have prepared me for the re-action to my Tweet of despair. Over the coming hours my Tweet would end up travelling to Mars and back and by the time the weekend was over, this in my opinion rather "mundane" Tweet would be seen by over 19 Million people across the world ! I was about to enter Surreal Times as the Media became aware of my Tweet and the astonishing re-action. I was in for a very busy two weeks of intense media activity. And it started with The Sunday Times !

On Saturday 17th October 2020, Emily Kent Smith a journalist at The Sunday Times made contact with me requesting an interview based on my viral Tweet. I knew at this point I needed help. I had to find two agents and find them fast. I approached The Rev Sue Bull and my son Patrick for help. They were delighted to help. Sue arrived soon after Mid Day at my home armed with a list of Media requests for me. To say I was taken aback would be a massive understatement. Nothing could prepare an "Ordinary Joe" for events that would take place over the coming two weeks or so. And now back to The Sunday Times.....

I gave Emily Kent Smith a telephone interview on Saturday 17th October 2020. We had a wonderful chat about what made me compose my Tweet, the Tweet itself and the phenomenal outpouring of love, kindness and compassion in the form of 102,000 people contacting me direct from around the world. Emily got to work on the piece. Emily got back to me late afternoon to say that The Editor has given it the green light and my story would be published in The London Edition of The Sunday Times on Sunday 18th October 2020. I was amazed ! Late that evening it was confirmed the story would be printed on the front page with a follow up inside the Editorial. Emily came up with the title,

“A little bird told us you were feeling down, 230,000 flocked to cheer you up”.

This certainly got the ball rolling with media interest. I was overwhelmed with the media inviting me to participate in interviews for Television, Radio and Newspapers. The Media could not get their heads around how people on Twitter could actually be so nice considering Twitter was heavily criticized throughout 2020 for its negativity and issues with trolling. My Tweet brought out the best in people on the platform and still does to this day. The following organisations came knocking on my door: BBC Breakfast, BBC Radio Surrey, CBS America, ITV News, ITV This Morning, Surrey Comet, The Clare Herald and Clare FM Radio.

Patrick and Sue came over to my home on Sunday 18th October to support me during a recorded interview with Helen Keenan for that evening's ITV News. I could not make any sense of what was going on around me. I was running on adrenaline ! I decided to wear my yellow shirt for the special occasion. Family & Friends will know I love vibrant colours and yellow is one of my favourites !

Before Sue left me on Sunday 18th October 2020, Sue remarked that my 53rd Birthday on the 19th October would be extraordinary in every way possible. Sue was not wrong ! Is Sue ever wrong ?! Sue's advice was drink it up, enjoy every minute, it will not last forever. So I did.

MY 53rd BIRTHDAY ON MONDAY 19th OCTOBER

Due to one single Tweet that went viral, my 53rd Birthday would turn out to be the surrealist of surreal celebrations kicking off with a live Television broadcast outside my home with BBC Breakfast at 0630. Speaking to Louise Minchen on live television was certainly an event I was never prepared for last year ! To see the BBC camera crew turn up outside my home at 0530 to set up a live link

with the studios at Salford Quays outside Manchester was an “out of body” experience. Something that simply does not happen to “ordinary” people or so I thought ! Louise and I got on like a house on fire ! Soon people across the world would learn about my viral Tweet through the medium of television.

The next “GIG” so to speak was an interview with Lesley on BBC Radio Surrey at 0715. We got on well, I almost forgot I was on live radio. Apart from learning about the response to my Tweet, Lesley’s focus was on how she could help me find a job. Something I appreciate to this day.

Soon I was to discover that Eamonn Holmes and his wife Ruth got to read my Twitter story in The Sunday Times at their home yesterday. Eamonn and Ruth agreed that they needed to have me as a guest on Monday’s this morning programme. The production team made contact on Sunday and it was agreed a television crew would be dispatched to my home soon after 10am to get me set up for a live broadcast from outside my home for 1130 on itv this morning. Was this really happening ? Apparently it was. The lovely Sue assisted the cameraman and it was Lights, Camera, Action at 1130 with Eamonn & Ruth. A live feed to the studios in Central London. You could not make this up ! We had a great time. Eamonn posed the question “Would any long term friendships develop as a result of my famous Tweet ? ”I replied by saying YES and that is so true.

For example I have made a friendship with a lovely family in Seattle on the West Coast of America. They have invited me to their home and I hope to visit them late 2021 or sometime in 2022. Making that leap from an online friendship to a friendship in real life. Eamonn concluded the interview by mentioning the good people living in my home town of Ennis in County Clare, Ireland. A nice touch.

BBC Breakfast & ITV London sang me Happy Birthday live on air. That was the icing on the cake ! Surreal, you will have heard me mention this word more than once. Surreal it was and surreal it is !

I ended my 53rd Birthday by having a lovely meal with Patrick at The Haywain restaurant on the Dorking Road, Epsom. I will never forget this particular birthday.

Moving on from my Birthday, the following two weeks or so were busy with the media. I was astonished with the level of interest which included Twitter Staff at headquarters in San Francisco and at it's London office. Twitter staff were moved to tears by my story as 2020 took it's toll on staff world wide.

TIMES Radio invited me to talk to Andrew Neil about my social media experience. I was feeling a little anxious about this interview. There was nothing to be anxious about. Andrew was under a lot of pressure with so many breaking news stories but put me at ease and gave me enough space to convey how I felt. Andrew posed the question "Has the response to my cry for help on Twitter restored my faith in humanity ?" And the answer is YES. Andrew was also concerned about my mental health and being unemployed. It felt like a real privilege to talk to such a professional broadcast journalist.

Apart from the off the chart statistics my Tweet generated, over 19 Million Impressions, gaining over 14,000 Followers overnight, it is the 100,000 people who contacted me directly with helpful messages, videos, art, poetry, prose, photographs that have meant so much. I simply do not have the resources to thank each of the amazing people individually. People & organisations have sent me gifts. People have offered practical help. People have offered to accompany me on walks. People have offered to talk to me at any time of the day.



Yes 2020 was a bleak year. However my Tweet that went viral illustrates that good far outweighs evil on the platform. I will never fully comprehend how my simple Tweet ended up going viral. It is beyond human comprehension. The fact is it did. The timing of the Tweet was perfect. It resonated with millions of people across the world. It shows that even in the darkest of times with Coronavirus sweeping the world claiming so many lives and resulting in untold misery human beings are still capable of pulling together for a common cause. I never expected such an outpouring of LOVE, COMPASSION and KINDNESS in my direction. As we enter Happier times with the rollout of the Coronavirus vaccination programme across The United Kingdom and Ireland, I hope my story provides people with solace.

I look forward to the day when I can see people again in person at the Love Me Love My Mind Monday Drop In. I look forward to being able to hug those I love.

Brighter Days will return in 2021.

Thank you to The Rev Sue Bull, Patrick O'Leary and Jayne Millicheap in Birmingham for being by my side last October. I could not have coped with all the media interest without you.

Thank you for reading.

Best Wishes & Love,
Edmund O' Leary

Alan

Hi, my name is Alan and this is my story from the early 90s to now.

During this time I got hooked on gambling and in the early 90s up to 2019 I was gambling and I did a lot of bad things. I smashed my mum's window and all that sort of stuff and was taking my brother's care money but I learnt a lot from that since then and I am a generous person and caring now. I'm good and also I am reliable and am willing to help other people and also my mental health has improved since I stopped gambling. I have become less hostile towards people. Before, what I used to do was borrow money from them to buy cigarettes and spend the money on gambling and that sort of thing. It wasn't a nice thing to do. I took out payday loans. I took out a loan from a bank under false pretences and I knew I wasn't going to pay them back so the debts built up. It wasn't until recently, about two or three years ago, that I got in contact with Christians Against Poverty and they helped me do a budget plan and they said that the best thing that I could do was to go bankrupt so I am now bankrupt and I pay a small part of the bankruptcy fee and my debts are cleared. I don't have any worries now of the rent not being paid or the bills not being paid. I am able to keep a tidy flat with the help of my sister, who comes round due to my medical condition that I have had recently. I keep working at it, making myself stronger by going for walks and meeting people and sharing my story at Gamblers' Anonymous meetings or wherever I go. Thank you very much for reading my story.

25 March 2021

Lucy

Refelecting on lockdown and shielding since the very first lockdown last March 2020. In someway seems such a long way away and in others seems only yesterday.

My first thought was how am I going to get through the next 12 weeks alone, with just my cat, Tinkerbelle for company. Unable to see my children. My eldest daughter in Greece with my grandchildren always come over for Easter have had to cancel their plans to visit due to covid and my youngest daughter is a carer in the community is unable to visit as I'm classed as extremely vulnerable. Of course there is face time online so we can see each other but it's not the same.

I also struggle with agoraphobia so I had to make sure I stepped out into my garden everyday which on some days was hard, I just had to keep thinking it's only 12 weeks.. little did I know then it would be extended.. what a cruel virus this is.. so sad for all those who lost love ones due to it.. So I did what was advised and I stayed away from people and stayed home with tinks.. I did colouring made some jewellery had days in bed went to sit in the garden when I could and of course I face timed my children and grandchildren every single day. Some days like many others it was hard for me and I was down and cried a lot but had to remember there would be a light at the end of all this.

In October I heard that my youngest daughter and her partner were pregnant and my new grandson is due May 7th something to look forward to.

Now I have another reason to get through this lockdown and stay safe.

Shielding has now been paused and I saw my daughter for the first time in months, I felt my grandson move she has 3 weeks left exciting times ahead now. So I hope and pray now that the light has come to the end of this awful

time and we can gradually start to get to see family and friends.. I know for me it has, so what started off as 12 weeks ended up as a whole year and I got through it.

Lucy Summers

9 April 2021

Muriel

Muriel's evacuation story

Sue asked me if I would like to write of the memories that I have of being evacuated during the war (1939 – 45). I was born and lived in Deal, Kent, a quiet seaside town, just living 3 to 4 minutes away from the beach. Memories of that time are lovely warm, sunny days spent playing on the beach with my three elder brothers Jim, Max and John. When war was declared in 1939, I was eight years old. I remember the Sunday morning hearing on the radio that we were at war and seeing my father cry (the only time I did see him cry). He was in the First World War, fought in the trenches in France and got shot while rescuing a fellow soldier.

We thought we were safe when London got bombed, we had London evacuees to live with us as we had a spare bedroom, but when the German army overran France and got to the coast – on a clear day, you can see France from Deal – the huge rescue of our soldiers got under way, and it was thought the Germans would cross the channel next, so it was then decided that the children on the Kent coast must be evacuated.

My mother had a week to get four of us ready to leave. She made a type of rucksack for us to carry on our backs that had to take all the clothes we would need – no suitcases were allowed – we had to carry our own things; I was just nine years old. On Sunday morning, 3rd June (I think), it was a lovely sunny day, we were at the train station at 9 o'clock to get on the train starting from Deal (I can't imagine what my mother must have been feeling). My parents didn't know where we were being taken to – as Jim and Max were in senior school, John and I had to go with them.

It was a long hot day. I think the journey was slow because we didn't know, but we were on our way to South Wales and stayed in the same train all day.

We stopped at a large station during the afternoon and people were handing drinks of water to us – we had had to take our own lunches with us.

At about 5 o'clock we arrived at Merthyr Tydfil station and then we were put on coaches and taken down the valley to Aberfan – some of you might recognise the name Aberfan, it was where the slag, taken from the coal mine, was dumped up the mountain and during a very wet winter slid down the mountain and buried the school with children in it. This happened years after the war in the 1960's.

When we got to Aberfan we were taken into a large hall and given something to eat and they started dividing the children out to the homes that had volunteered to take us in. It was around 10 o'clock and there were a few of us left. It was dark and of course no light because of the blackout. We had to walk to the other side of the valley to Merthyr Vale. Aberfan was on one side of the valley, Merthyr Vale on the other side, with the coal mine and river Taff in the middle. Max and John were taken to a house and two streets on, the last in the village, where Jim and I were taken, there a lady was asked would she take a boy and a girl, as she had requested two girls. She was a widow and didn't have any children of her own. Over the five years I lived with "Aunty Cassie" she was extremely good to us and to my parents.

On the Monday morning some local children were knocking at the door, wanting to meet us – the word had got around quickly that Aunty Cassie had got two evacuees. They took us out to show us around. The mountains started over the road, but the bottom part was covered with slag – which was very dirty and dusty. We could go anywhere up these mountains, which were not very high really.

I went to the local Welsh school. There isn't much Welsh spoken in South Wales, but my foster mother could speak it. Then after some months I had

to go to Aberfan to school, where there were some other English children. I went to five schools in five years: as some children returned to their homes, the class got smaller and so they joined the different classes up. My next move was back to Merthyr Vale school and then a class of English children arrived there, so I had to join them, then that class got too small and had to go up the valley to the next village and eventually they all went back to Deal, but as my parents had moved to Wimbledon for family reasons I couldn't go because of the 'flying bomb', so went back to the Welsh school in Aberfan until I went home in 1945.

I quite enjoyed school, especially in the winter when it snowed and the teachers couldn't get there – no buses could run. Then all the children used to toboggan down the next street which was steep, and I was allowed to join in on the rides. I had a friend who lived up on a farm and used to go up there in the summer to play. In Wales for summer holiday we had six weeks, in Deal we only had four weeks.

Aunty Cassie, my foster mother, was Welsh Baptist, and on Sundays we went up the valley to the next village for Sunday School – the older people of the chapel went as well – it was in English, but the evening service was in Welsh – no good to me! I did learn a little of the language – most forgotten now. Jim left school and went into a factory for a time and then got called up for the army. Max left school and joined the navy as a trainee officer, and John went home to my parents in Wimbledon to help my father keep open the second-hand book shop in Charing Cross Road – all one side of the road in those days were second-hand book shops. It was my grandfather's wish, in his will, that the shop should be kept open for six months after the war to see if his only son would return, as he had been lost at sea. He was in the Merchant Navy. So, I was the only one of the family left as an evacuee.

When peace came to Europe, I was allowed to go home to my parents' house in Worcester Park. The day I came home I was collected by my mother from Sutton and as we arrived in Worcester Park, my father was arriving with Aunty Cassie, as she had been invited to stay. She stayed for two months and for the next eighteen years she came up every year in the summer for a month. When I got married and had my first baby, she used to come to my parents for two weeks and to me for two weeks. When she was 80, she gave up coming. I went to see her a few times on my own, and then when she died at 90, Jim and I went down for the funeral.

We were very lucky to have been billeted with Aunty Cassie, some children, including Max and John, didn't have it so good. Aunty Cassie was very good to Jim and me and also to my parents, they used to come and see us. When the air raids were quiet, I was allowed to go to Wimbledon for summer and Christmas holidays, and my mother was always sending us parcels all during the war.

March 2021

Sarah

We all need things to care for – people, pets, gardens, books, bikes, cars, whatever – and people to care for us. This is beautifully shown in the following words and pictures from Sarah Beattie: “There has been a gorgeous development in my life for which I largely owe a debt of gratitude to the Monday drop in. There was a visit one day from Maisy, a pet therapy dog who was gorgeous and cuddle-icious! Well, I am certain this played a part in my realising I would love a doggy presence in my life, but I was not sure how this could happen in a 2nd floor flat with lots of clutter! And then, 2 summers ago I met up with an Occupational Therapist on a sunny day at the local park ... and she noted how much I loved the cuddly kind of pooches that passed by! Then last year one September day I ran into a local resident living only 4 doors away with a gorgeous pooch named Buddy, who was ripe for a “borrow my doggy” kind of arrangement! Wow! Bingo! No need to look on the website... this arrangement is perfect: I need not look any further. Especially useful now the owners are more often out at work, and I am happy to fit in time with Buddy around just a few weekly events and am finding it so therapeutic. Like Poppy says of her cat, he is always happy to see me, he makes me smile tonnes, and is never boring! He also has oodles of character and has brought huge amounts of joy into my life. Luckily, I think the owners realise it is so helpful to me and offer me to spend time with Buddy even if they are not in great need! What a bonus! Soo ENORMOUS GRATITUDE to the drop in for the pet therapy session.

Lots of love Sarah







Sue

Yesterday I heard a song* that usually brings a tear to my eye. Sometimes the only thing that we can do in a storm is to take shelter, to hide under the duvet. Sometimes the pain of life is so great that we cannot do anything.

But sometimes....

'When you walk through a storm,
Hold your head up high,
And don't be afraid of the dark,
At the end of the storm is a golden sky.
And the sweet silver song of a lark.
Walk on through the wind,
Walk on through the rain,
Tho' your dreams be tossed and blown,
Walk on, walk on, with hope in your heart,
And you'll never walk alone.
You'll never walk alone'.

We are together at this time. We are not alone.

Sue Bull

January 2021

*From the musical Carousel, written by Rodgers and Hammerstein.



Mary and Poppy

Mary and Poppy's Friendship.

Mary and I live in Epsom. We live alone. But not quite alone because we both have a cat. Mine is called Lucky and Mary's is called Rosie.

So we have partly escaped the rules of Lockdown of living alone.

We got to know each other a few years ago through an art group at the Longmead Centre. And we sang in the adult Epsom College choir.

Our friendship grew when I joined Mary's church, St Barnabas, three years ago. And I met Mary and her husband ^{colony} at church socials.

Later I helped Mary in her beautiful garden. Then Mary joined us at the Monday Dropin as a volunteer.

Up till March 2020 we had both been having our own busy social lives. With the coming of coronavirus and lockdown, these social activities came to an abrupt end.

Since then we have got to know each other in a different way, mostly through zoom, i.e. through a fun singing group and church activities which have mostly been on zoom.

When Lockdown allowed we have socialised in each others homes, i.e. celebrating a friend's birthday, or doing art together.

Unfortunately at the moment this is not allowed. Instead we chat on the phone. And we can be there for each other.

We are looking forward to the end of Lockdown and the control of coronavirus, when life can get back to 'Normal' for all of us.

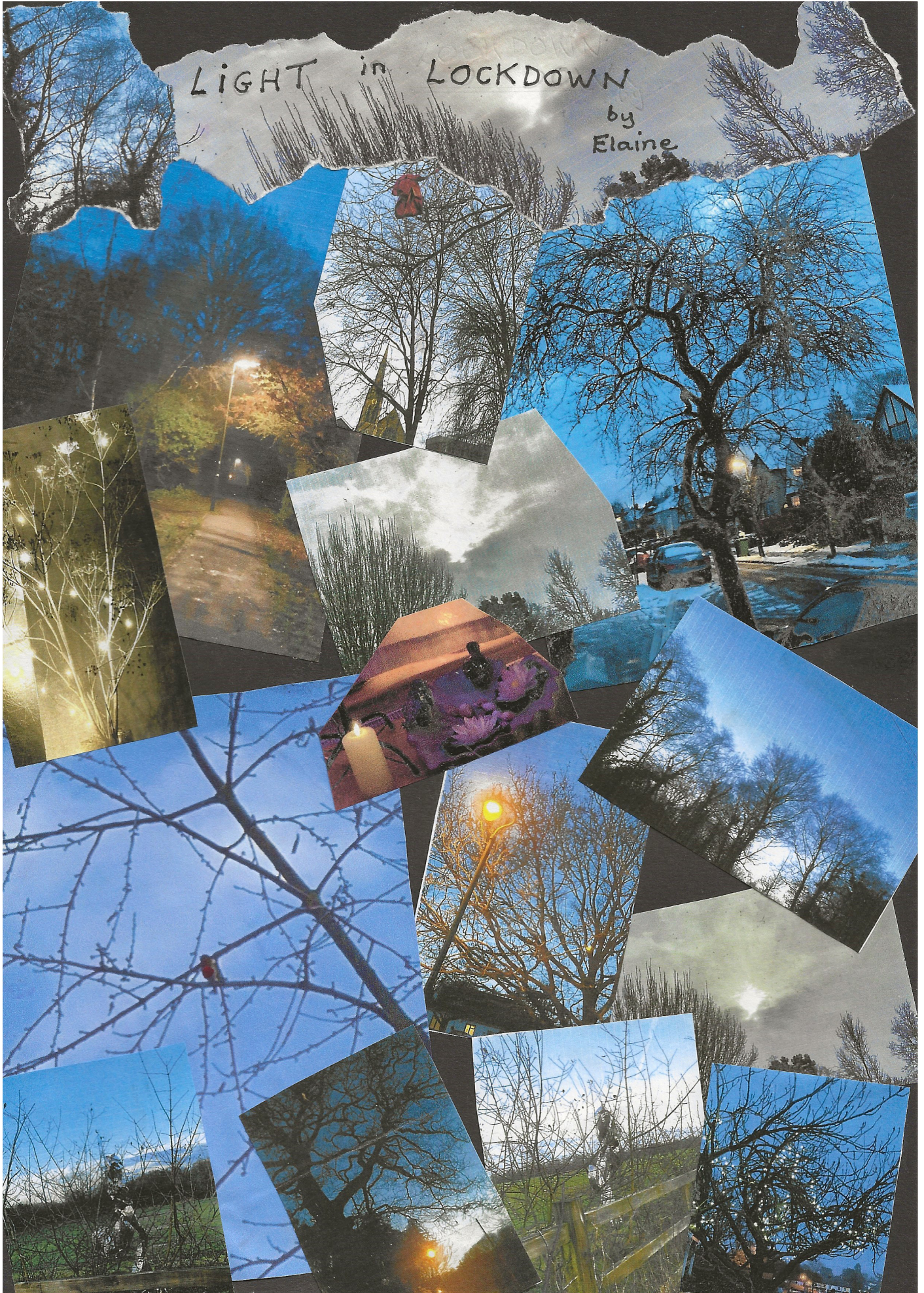
Many adds; I am thankful for our friendships which continues to grow. Poppy has gladly helped me with shopping and some gardening tasks.

We have shared many activities on Zoom since March of last year. These include gardening and singing along with Barbara the programme organizer and pianist. Church services, events & a weekly "coffee & chat" session take place which keep us together.

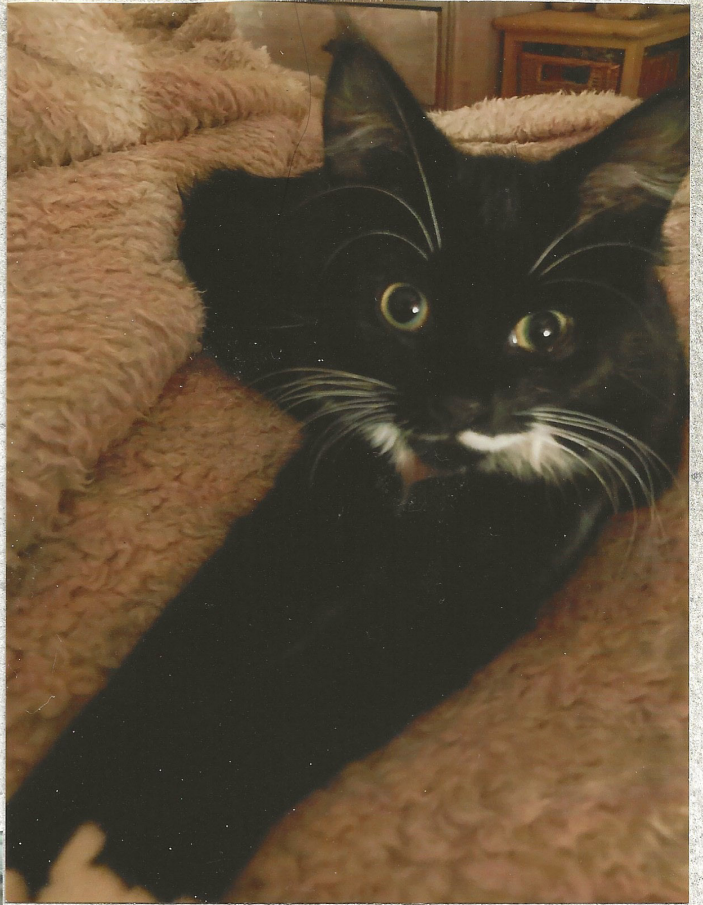
See Bull, the leader of Love Me Love My Mind writes and delivers a weekly newsletter including a treat which is often edible. During Advent she continued with a separate treat for each day, leading up to Christmas Day. This helped to bond us together during this waiting time, and is ongoing. Thank you so much See.

We all look forward to socializing again.

Elaine



Treasures



Freedom to Dance.....



Dancing to my singing soul.....

Breeze.....

Music from my inner being

Sunshine.....

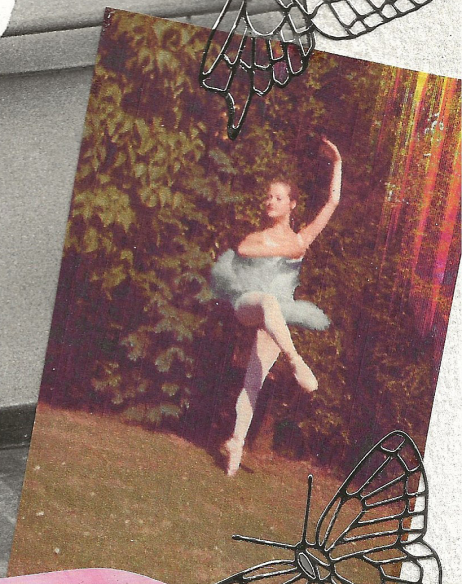
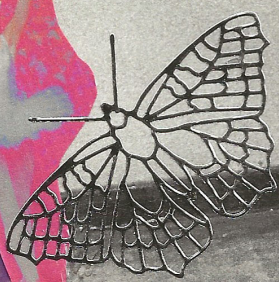
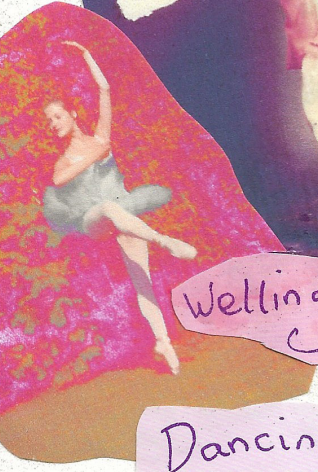
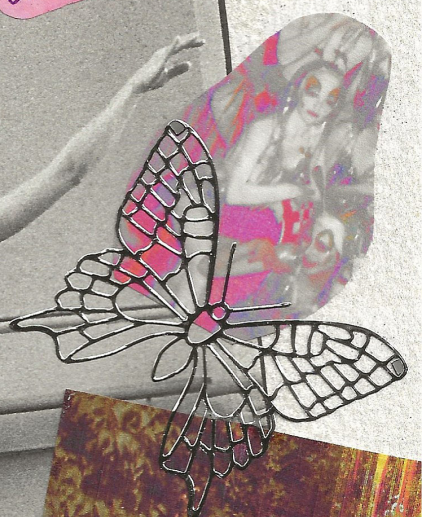
Barefoot in the grass... Dancing

leaping... higher....

Spinning..... leaping

and higher.....

Spirit Soaring.....



Welling up.... Rising from my being

Dancing..... to no one

Dancing.....

Exhilaration-

Inspiration flowing.....

Powered by movement
and emotion.....

Unconfined by technique.....

Just Free..... Sheer Joy

Release.

Carried in the Joy of Movement

Freedom to Dance to the
music within my body.....

Carried away into Realms of
Joy and Freedom to Dance
and be myself.....



Elaine Goodhand

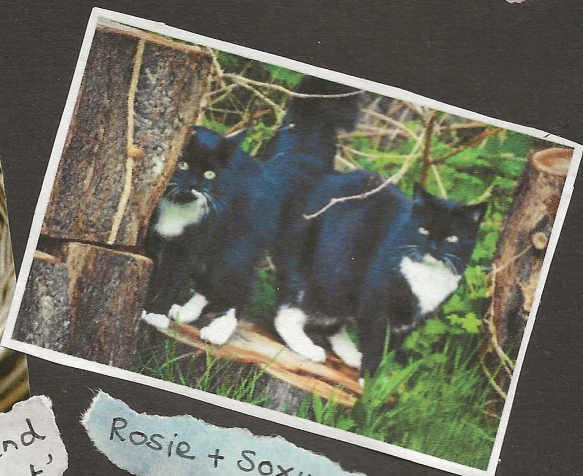
My Life in Cats

By Elaine Goodhand.



'Nutmeg' with her 2nd litter.

'clover' + her 2nd litter - with 'Humbug' (black + white 'helping'!



'Humbug' + her sister 'Daisy'

me + my friend 'crotchet'

Rosie + Soxy - by James

Also Remembered
Tiddles
Jackson
Fleur
Barnaby
Biggles
Fozzie
Rupert



Rosie



'Aramis' my 'star'

Dearest 'Twiglet' my very Best Boy...



Poppy



'Willow' Sunbathing



Christmas adventure
'Rosie'



Humbag + her sister
Daisy



Willow - 'where's
my present?!



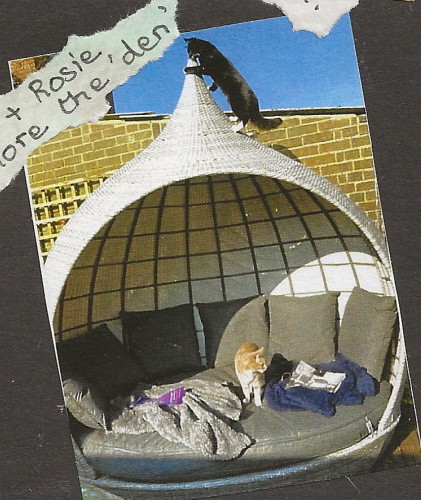
The Wonder of snow!
'Rosie'



soxy



'Rosie' hiding
in the cupboard!



Willow + Rosie, den
Explore the den



'Rosie' - where's
my tuna?



Twiglet



Freedom - from original on canvas - Elaine Goodhand
May 2021



Epsom Mental Health and Well-Being Festival is organised by Love Me Love My Mind, a charity dedicated to promoting understanding about mental health issues. Registered charity no:1177683



Design by Caroline Wright
Email: Caroline@lovemelovemymind.org.uk