



NEWSLETTER

4th May 2020

Happy Star Wars Day!

I think it is particularly important at the moment, that the force is with us so we can keep ourselves and our families positive, so let's all channel our inner Jedi, and work as champions of the forces of Good. (I must say that my knowledge of Star Wars is a little hazy, though it is due to get a refresher soon, due to the combined factors of lockdown and a six year old son...)

Of course, Star Wars Day is not the only significant event happening in our cultural landscape: on Friday, it is the 75th anniversary of the end of the second world war in Europe. There are increasingly few people around who really remember the struggles of that war, but there are many whose families were affected, so it is a time for us to think of those and to reflect on the challenges that previous generations were faced with. As an historian, I know that we cannot always trust the stories that people tell us about the past (for example, although we all think we know that people during the Blitz helped each other, and pulled together to defeat a common enemy, without wasting time on frivolous activities, it is less well known that crime rates and unplanned pregnancies went up!), but there are always examples from the past which can inspire us to different actions. While I do not want you to take this as advice to commit crime, or indeed, to have unprotected sex during a time of national emergency, we can remember the ways in which people in the past survived, and helped others to survive. Common themes of survival stories include having a sense of humour, and building a sense of community with others.

This links in with a third aspect of our culture in modern Britain. We have recently celebrated Passover and Easter, and are now in Ramadan. All these religious festivals are about a period of reflection about what your life is about, and how you want to use it, as well as about a celebration of community. Whatever your thoughts, and practices, on the subject of religion, it helps, at a time like this, to think about what you can do to help others, whether this is a handwritten letter to a grandparent, taking your time to communicate more slowly, and perhaps more deeply, or baking a cake for the staff and patients at a local hospital, or dare I say it, a school that remains open for some of its students! Some students in LaSWAP have signed up as volunteers speaking to people who are self-isolating and lonely, and some have even found paid work as healthcare assistants. You might want to do something like that, you might want to concentrate on your studies, you might want to help your parents by entertaining and educating your younger siblings. Whatever you choose to do, make sure you are maintaining a balance between your need to relax, with your need to feel that you have achieved something each day, and your need for your own space and privacy, with your need to feel connected and useful to others.

Please contact us on our emails if you have any particular thoughts, problems or worries.

Flora Wilson (Darth Vader); Mr Mangham (Han Solo) and Dr Smith (Princess Leia).