



Our Global Village

June/July 2020

LOVELY LAOS - FEBRUARY 2020 GATHERING



Planting rice with Hmong rice grower Mr Lee - Camilla, Paula, Satoko, Sally, Jenni, Pam, Verena, Patricia & Carol

Eight 5W members attended this 12 day Gathering and we all agreed we were so fortunate to be able to enjoy visiting the beautiful town of Luang Prabang under the aegis of 5W host Sally, who truly deserves a medal.



Free the Bears



The 2 Lao residents were from France and Australia, and the visitors were Canadian, German, English, Australian and Japanese. Sally arranged an ambitious but extremely enjoyable schedule – some introductions to the Lao and Buddhist lifestyle and etiquette; cutting and sewing assistance for the young girls making sanitary pads for rural women; travelling some 3½ hours each way on a Library Boat to a remote village to distribute books and supplies and receiving a tumultuous welcome; engaging in conversational English with students at the Laos Educational Opportunity Trust (5W member Jeanette is the Director) and the highlight was preparing and assisting in craft activities for the children of a remote village who then danced and sang for us in the most beautiful costumes.

We went to the morning market to buy food for our cooking class – there were reptiles, bats etc. for sale, but we stuck with the more conventional vegetables and herbs and then drove off to the cooking school to make our lunch. We survived without losing fingers and the results were edible!! We drove to an organic rice farm and were shown the old way of doing things. Sally was especially skilled at ploughing behind the buffalo. Then we threshed some rice, winnowed it, ground it on a giant stone mill, watched while a Lao lady pounded it into dough and then we took turns to squish it into a vat of boiling water to make rice noodles!! And then eating them!! We had a full day at the Ock Pop Tock craft centre where we had the choice of doing traditional Lao craft – batik or weaving or dyeing. You need the patience of Job and a very steady hand and I will never again quibble about the price of handicrafts. But we all enjoyed it and the enablers were so kind and patient.

We visited a “Free the Moon Bears” sanctuary and a waterfall. We toured a Traditional Arts Centre and learnt about the diverse ethnic groups in Lao and we all had a go at making a cross stitch square – with varied results... We visited a mulberry bark paper making centre and had a go at doing it ourselves and the bravest of us also made elephant poo paper!! We fed and washed an elephant in a quiet stretch of the Nam Khan tributary to the Mekong and then returned to Luang Prabang by kayak. This was a first for many of us but we soldiered on and felt like Superwomen at the end. This was a truly magic day.

Our last official day was spent at the Lao Buffalo Dairy where we interacted with young buffaloes, fed others and even milked one! Also enjoyed some wonderful buffalo cheeses and ice creams. The Dairy is run by 2 expat ladies who are trying to introduce healthier and more sustainable animal husbandry to the local farmers. Throughout this trip we ate some absolutely fabulous food. Sally had chosen some interesting and varied restaurants and we ate like queens. Now for the gym!! We all bonded well and are staying in touch with a dedicated WhatsApp group page. **Patricia, Western Australia**



Stupa making



Sally performing a buffalo ballet when the buffalo bolted in the rice field!

Our newsletter this time is a mix that reflects 5W membership before and after the current pandemic and highlights the many ways our members find to enjoy their membership and support friendship around the world!

Letter from Chair on Page 2, along with an introduction to our new Trustee, 5W Goes Virtual on Page 6, See Page 8 for an important announcement about your Newsletter, Local Groups on Page 9 and Noticeboards on Page 10

Members Exploring Different Ways of Enjoying 5W Friendship

The rewards of buying a bike rack for my Prius. Daphne and I drove out to Derby Reach Park near Fort Langley, BC and pedalled along the Fraser River and explored the town. Always respecting the rules, we drove separate cars, had our picnic on separate benches and restricted our liquid intake to avoid the need for washrooms. Another very successful 5W inspired day.

Carol, Canada -

With limited international or airline travel, I'm thinking of promoting more road trips, between 5W members, particularly within regional groups or areas.

I am willing to facilitate a group zoom gathering or somehow share emails from others who may be interested. I am in Rhode Island, and willing to drive north to Nova Scotia, including Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, along with south to New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Connecticut, especially, if I know there would be a welcoming host there.



Daphne offering to share a panini and gourmet chips



The Fraser River - which will likely soon be flooding due to snow melt

¿Hablas Español?

There is a 5W Spanish conversation group on Tuesday mornings at 9 am Pacific Time (GMT-07:00) on the Zoom platform.

If there are native Spanish speakers who wish to participate, we will expand to 1.5 hours and do 45 min in each of Spanish and English in order to return the favour.

This is not a class, so basic ability to take part in conversation is needed.

Members on the 5W Facebook Group have been sharing 'virtual walks' around their parts of the world, another way for members to share 5W friendship and brighten up these worrying days. Here are just a few that have been posted over the past few weeks.



Autumn colour in Springwood Australia



A walk around Lake Murray, San Diego, California



The beautiful Sussex Downs, UK

UK Based Zoom Meeting

I am a relatively new member, I first joined around ten years ago, but did not find the paper communication systems viable. I was pleased to recently rediscover 5W online and rejoined. Inspired by a Facebook post about making networks to explore local travel options, an invitation was posted and a Zoom meeting for UK members arranged for mid May. Although hosting meant that at times I was unable to focus on conversation, I found the experience more rewarding than I expected and came away enthused by the idea of 5W travel networks and friendships.

Thirteen members stretching from Cornwall and Canterbury to Liverpool and Norwich, had their locations listed beside their names and took turns to introduce themselves before moving to open chat. Conversation mostly revolved around members' travel experiences and covid barely had a mention. Together, we overcame technical hitches and I think all learned more about using zoom. How to set up meetings was explored and it was clear there was a lot of expertise amongst the group.

The enthusiasm and praise for 5W as an organisation and the friendships that have developed came over very strongly. A few invitations were made which hopefully will be taken up as we begin to move out of lockdown. As host, I was interested in locations. We were self selected via Facebook and I noted a southern bias with no-one from the far North of England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. Just an observation.

Attendees from Norfolk and Suffolk expressed interest in a regional meeting. Subsequently, Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire members (with listed email addresses) were consulted and a regional zoom meet has been agreed.

As a UK based group, we agreed to hold another meeting which Kumud has volunteered to host. **Tina, UK**