



ABINGDON IN 100 WORDS

BY ANGHARAD SAUNDERS, FRIENDS OF ABINGDON CIVIC SOCIETY

Despite the fact that many of the usual summer events have had to be cancelled this year, there have been some imaginative alternatives. Last weekend saw a brilliant “Make Music Abingdon Day” of live-streamed music and a “Not Mayor’s Day” with a Lockdown Mummings’ Play and socially-distanced Morris Dancing.

You Tube has numerous local ensembles and choirs creating music together and making it available for us

all to hear. Social media is full of wonderful pictures of the town and the wildlife as people hone their photographic skills, and some new Facebook pages have emerged with rarely-seen pictures shedding light on the town’s history.

We had “Abingdon Zoo Day” at the end of May, and adults and children have regularly decorated the town with rainbows, painted pebbles and paper boats.

So carrying on the creative theme, to mark National Civic Day on 20 June 2020 and to bring a little diversion to life in lockdown, Abingdon Civic Society and Mostly Books have launched a micro-fiction writing competition: Abingdon-on-Thames in 100 words.

People are invited to write about a particular place or event that holds a special memory for them – or conjures up something in their imagination. Or maybe about how lockdown has led them to rediscover the town and its communities. Or a fictional story about an imaginary Abingdon, past, present or future.

The inspiration came from the city of Santiago de Chile where, in 2001, groups established a micro-fiction writing competition, asking residents to share their stories of the city in no more than 100 words. They wanted to celebrate the creativity inherent in the local community. The competition was so successful that it became an annual event, with winning entries posted on billboards, the sides of buses and metro trains, and published in a book.

A number of European cities, including Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw, have since run their own micro-fiction writing competition, but to date no British town or city appears to have adopted the idea so Abingdon will be trail-blazers.

There will be separate categories for adults and under-17s. Full details of the competition and how to enter are on the Abingdon Civic Society website <https://abingdoncivicsociety.org.uk/> The closing date is 31 July.

The Museum is also running a competition: this one is just for children who are invited to create an artwork or poem on the theme of single-use plastic. The closing date is 26 July and details are at <https://www.abingdon.gov.uk/partners/abingdon-county-hall-museum> They are also running virtual craft workshops for children and a fascinating blog about items in their collections.

So, there is plenty to keep us busy and to help us enjoy our beautiful town, but I have to add a final plea to those whose enjoyment includes loud noise and leaving litter: please do enjoy yourselves, but please allow others to do likewise.