



Why the problem of single-use plastics won't go away

By Maxine Klein, of No2PlasticsN2

This Covid-19 pandemic has forced on me the realisation that I am officially old and vulnerable. It hadn't occurred to me as an active 71-year-old. My sons and the government put down their collective feet, forbidding me to go out shopping or for any other reason. I have had to rely on my lovely neighbour who is in the privileged position of having a Tesco delivery slot and has included my order with hers.

Plastic wrapping shock

I am used to shopping locally, daily, with my own shopping bags so I was astounded at the amount of plastic considered essential for my delivered order. Everything wrapped in plastic film or plastic tubs and so, so many plastic bags. My house is now full of them.

It is like the bad old days before I realised the harm single-use plastics do to the environment. I now use plastic tubs to cover seedlings and I stuff waste plastics into plastic bottles to make edging for my allotment beds. But the bags... what do I do with them?

In the light of the need for personal protective equipment in hospitals and care homes, single-use plastics are doing a sterling job preventing the spread of infection. This legitimate use makes my supermarket order look like a very, very small drop in a vast ocean.

Look to the future

What happened to sterilisation and reuse? The knowledge that old plastics never die, they just build up year on year, looms large particularly because we know that only about 15% of plastic waste in the UK ever gets recycled.

Over the past year our group No2Plastics has made great strides: our local MP Mike Freer has undertaken to influence legislation, we have encouraged our local shops and we've informed residents how they can operate and live with fewer single use plastics.

It's difficult to carry on at a time when much bigger issues prevail but the pandemic will pass. It is only by vigilance and eschewing single-use plastics now that the door will be able to swing open on a world unpolluted by single-use plastics.

Monopoly wasn't just a game in World War Two

By Diana Cormack

Have you been playing any board games during the coronavirus lockdown? If so, one of them might be Monopoly, a time consuming activity which can so attract the avarice in us. Yet that was not the aim of its American inventor Lizzie Magie.

She introduced The Landlord's Game in the early 1900s intending it to underline the economic ill effects of land monopolism and show that land value tax was a remedy for them. Unfortunately it was taken over by others and subjected to many alterations, making today's version the very opposite of her intentions.

Signs, silk and secrets

However, she might have been heartened by stories from World War Two which reveal that the game was responsible for saving the lives of many prisoners of war (POWs).

Charity groups were allowed to give them care packages which included pastimes and games. It must have been an earlier version of James Bond's Q who thought of fitting tiny hidden 'escape kits' within the Monopoly sets, which were then sent under 'fake' charity names. Compasses and files

were disguised as playing pieces; money of the relevant country was hidden below the game's notes; tiny maps were concealed in the playing board.

This was possible because maps could be printed on silk, a technology mastered by Waddington, a British company holding the licence for Monopoly in the UK. In pre-mission talks airmen were told to look out for Monopoly games with special signs on them such as a red dot on the Free Parking section. Hopefully these signs on various parts of the board would be taken as printing errors by those not in the know.

To keep everything secret, servicemen, who had a duty to escape, were instructed to destroy the games. The number of POWs helped by the Monopoly escape kit is not known and details of it did not appear until many years after the war ended.

Letters



Glorious: Lucy's mum's tree in Leicester Road

Blossom dearie

Dear Editor,

Following the article in your May edition, I think my mum's tree in her front garden in Leicester Road is the most beautiful in East Finchley. It was in fact the one that sparked the original post by Lotte Har in March on the East Finchley Community Facebook page and several other people agreed that it was their favourite.

It is difficult to really get a sense of how incredible it is when it flowers in April unless you see it in person. The bees love it too; on a sunny spring morning there is a loud humming as they graze on the blossom.

It was originally planted in the back garden as a sapling, but about 20 years ago transplanted to the front and has flourished ever since. It is my mum's pride and joy and she refuses to cut branches off even though it now makes the sitting room quite dark!

Lucy Chamberlin,
Address supplied.

Reason for running

Dear Editor,

It saddened me to read your reader's letter (*The Archer*, June 2020) which suggested all joggers were egotistic and unaware of social distancing rules. She doesn't ask herself WHY people run. I run because it helps me keep my depression and the loneliness caused by the lockdown under control. It reminds me of my mum, who introduced me to running and whom I miss dearly every day. It helps me get through this difficult time.

Christine Hoenigs,
Address supplied.

Walk aware

Dear Editor,

I read many complaints about joggers on the pavements, but little is said about others behaving inconsiderately when outside on the pavements. There are numerous dog walkers leaving bags of dog mess or having their dogs on extended leads such that no one can pass at a 2m distance.

The same can be said about others walking and talking whilst ignoring other types of pedestrians. Instead of singling out joggers, why not recognise that there are all sorts of people outside these days and we all need to be considerate to each other? Please don't litter, keep your pooch close to your pouch, run/walk aware and take care.

Name and address supplied.

Borrow this book idea

Dear Editor,

Whilst visiting Wollongong Botanical Gardens in New South Wales, Australia, I noticed various areas offering books which could be borrowed to read whilst relaxing in the gardens so I was most interested to read your article about a front garden library in Creighton Avenue ('Bring a book, take a book', *The Archer*, June 2020). Perhaps this book borrowing could be introduced in local parks.

Betti Blatman,
Address supplied.

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page" The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE or e-mail news@the-archer.co.uk

Letters without verifiable contact addresses will not be printed. Contact details can be withheld on request at publication. We reserve the right to abridge letters for reasons of space.

Save our universities

Dear Editor,

My colleague at SOAS [The School of Oriental and African Studies] University and I have been working on this Save Our Universities campaign. The situation with higher education is dire. If you studied at university, have a child at university, have ever thought about going to university, or simply believe in the need for research to better our society's knowledge, please write to your MP by filling in your postcode at this link: <https://saveourunis.eaction.org.uk/letter> Even before coronavirus, many universities were facing financial difficulties. Now, without government support we are potentially looking at the demise of many higher education institutes. Please share the link.

Emma, student support officer,
Huntingdon Road, N2.

Any reader who feels strongly about any matter is invited to use this "Soapbox" column. Please note that opinions expressed are those of the writer alone.



Open your eyes

By Hamish Hallett

The majority of us have been affected by this pandemic in all sorts of ways. Some of us were able to learn a new hobby, spend more time with loved ones, or were able to appreciate the great outdoors and the community around us.

Others do not have that luxury. We can see a rise in domestic violence within households, a rise in mental health issues, loss of loved ones, essential workers who go in every single day risking their lives and mass unemployment.

The idea that "we are all in this together" needs to be rethought. We need to be grateful. We need to be open-minded about other people's circumstances. A difficult task, maybe, but we need to be more aware of other people's situations. While we are in our houses sleeping well at night, other people in the United Kingdom and across the world do not enjoy this luxury.

The Black Lives Matter movement is attempting to bring that to the fore, by highlighting the injustices that some members of our society experience daily and disproportionately. They want an institutional rethink of how our society operates.

You may ask why. Our society benefits us over others, and this society does not treat all lives equally. It favours those who have power and luxury and neglects those who don't. If we lived in a society that treated everyone equally, why are people risking their lives to protest?

We cannot live aimlessly and forget that these issues exist. We should be grateful for what we have but use our positions for the better. Change is needed so that we can live in the same boat. Open your eyes.

East Finchley Baptist Church

Due to the Covid-19 virus our face to face services and meetings have been suspended until further notice but please go to our website for details of online services and meetings.

For more information please contact the Church Office
Email: office@eastfinchleybc.org.uk
www.eastfinchleybc.org.uk