



WELCOME TO THE SPARTA NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the December edition of the SPARTA newsletter.

I am sure that you are well on your way to planning for Christmas. I for one am looking forward to enjoying some of the Christmas movies.

We have heard an idea about a film club. While we are still social distancing it would involve a group of people all watching the same film and then enjoying a chat over a drink online afterwards.

The idea is that after covid the group would maybe enjoy cinema nights out. If this would interest you then please get in touch.

Remember SPARTA is **YOUR** sports and recreation association, so we want **YOU** to let us know what **YOU** want SPARTA to provide to encourage social and recreational activities and improve health and wellbeing across both DfT and MHCLG.

We are always looking for volunteers and to start new clubs. Why not contact us at SPARTA@dft.gov.uk Please send us any feedback that you have.

This month's top of the page photo features the Superstars Cricket Club in action on one of their annual May bank holiday weekend tours

HISTORY SOCIETY FREAKS US OUT

On 10 November the SPARTA History Society held an online talk about the history of the Freak Show

Dr John Woolf, author of *The Wonders*, gave an enthralling talk on the Victorian freak show and circus.

He spoke about the interesting history of these performers covering such famous people as General Tom Thumb and the original Siamese Twins, Chang and Eng Bunker who fathered 21 children between them.

This was just one of a programme of talks hosted by the History Society.

Check them out on the SPARTA website

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

8 December 2020 - 1pm
History Society Talk
Gallipoli Evacuation

21 January 2021 - 5pm
SPARTA AGM

25 - 29 January 2021
SPARTA Virtual Activity
Week 2.0





YOGA CLUB AND 2021 EVENTS

Sue Johnson, SPARTA Vice Chair, gives us an insight of the Yoga Club and some of the exciting events planned for next year by SPARTA YOUR Recreation Association

Hello! I'm Sue Johnson and I have been Vice Chair of SPARTA, for five years, and Chair of the SPARTA Yoga club for a lot longer!

I first became involved in SPARTA in 2004, when I started attending the lunchtime yoga classes, every Monday and Friday in Eland House. Eland House was previously MHCLG's main London office before we moved to Marsham Street in 2014. It had a spacious room in the basement where all sorts of activities were held, such as Circuit Training, Martial Arts, an Art club and lots more. It was so handy having all this going on in the building and was very sad for me when we moved out not only because many of the clubs had to relocate but the building was also much closer to Victoria Station!

I became Chair of the SPARTA Yoga club in 2007 and as a qualified Iyengar Yoga teacher I was more than happy to take up this role. Although I no longer teach yoga I was a teacher with the Adult Education Authorities in Bromley and Bexley and ran classes for many years which I really enjoyed and gave me a great escape from my sedentary day job.

We continue to run SPARTA Yoga classes in Great Minster House (DfT building in Horseferry Road) every Monday lunch time but, as with most sport related activity have had to temporarily close the class due to Covid restrictions but are looking forward to reopening the classes hopefully in 2021.

I was invited to be the Vice Chair of SPARTA in 2014 and felt very honoured to take up this opportunity and really want to make SPARTA a sports and recreational organisation for the 21st century. We have so many new joiners across both departments it would be great to get everyone more involved in SPARTA and set up new clubs that people are really interested in taking part in. We really want to increase SPARTA's membership so are keen to hear from you about what would attract you or your colleagues to join. We are also really keen to create new clubs and societies and hear about new ideas for SPARTA so please contact Jason Marchant or me if you are interested and would like to be involved.

SPARTA will be holding its second Virtual Activity Week during the week of 25th January 2021 so look out for more about this on the departmental intranets and on the SPARTA website which also includes lots of information about SPARTA and its clubs.

As part of Virtual Activity Week, I will be running a lunchtime "at your desk" yoga session so everyone can join in and you won't even need to move from your desk!

CHECK OUT THE
SPARTA WEBSITE

www.spartarecreation.co.uk

It will include lots of upper back, shoulder and arm work to encourage better posture while we are all sitting/hunched at our desks and tables at home. SPARTA will be using Eventbrite for all its virtual activity events to make it easier to sign up and save the dates into your diaries. Do look out for further details early in the New Year!

Next year is a very exciting year for SPARTA, 2021 is our 50th Anniversary and we are already planning lots of exciting activities to celebrate this huge milestone. We are hoping that we can run an extra special Sports Day in July to celebrate our 50th Anniversary but are also looking at virtual events that we might run as well. There will be more information about our anniversary activities so please look out for these over the coming months in the new year.

I would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a safe and well 2021!

Namaste





SPARTA HISTORY SOCIETY

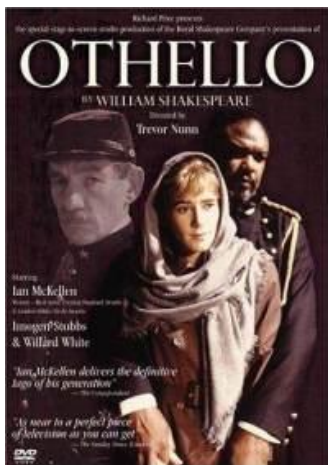
In the second of our recap series SPARTA History Secretary, Robert Baker, shares a few of his memories of SPARTA past and present.

I joined the “Ministry of Transport” in the late 1980s working in Department of Environment and the Department of Transport’s Bedford office.

One of my first roles involved helping in the purchase of snacks for the Tea Trolley, which was a big source of funds for the Sports & Social Club. The trolley went around each floor of the building selling tea, coffee and snacks. We also had our own vending machine.

The money raised helped to fund the annual Christmas Party, various sports teams, trips to the theatre, Quiz nights etc. I also took part in Cricket matches, Sports Day and various other sporting events, mostly to make up the numbers.

I helped organise theatre trips, including Othello at the Young Vic, this involved booking the tickets and arranging the bus, all was well until the bus driver got lost (before sat nav), which meant that we only just made it.



I moved to London in the early 2000’s but although still a member of SPARTA I wasn’t so actively involved. I had attended a couple of History Society events but then, one-day, David Nicolson the soon to retire Secretary informed people that unless a volunteer was found to organise events then the History Society would be wound up.

I contacted David and now ten years later I am still involved in organising talks and walks. The History Society has been going for over 50 years, it is a general history society which makes it different to many other government history societies which tend to have a narrower departmental focus. There are many highlights to remember but stand outs are: Going on a guided tour of Westminster with the tour guide dressed as a suffragette showing us places associated with their campaign. Between 2014 and 2018 I organised a series of First World War talks for the centenary anniversaries, I enjoyed arranging these as we managed to cover some of the less obvious subject areas, such as the Zeppelin Raids.

At the beginning of this year we had a full programme of events planned. As GMH was going to be refurbished, we had planned to hold joint events with the Westminster City Archives Centre, sadly in March most of these were cancelled, hopefully these talks can



take place next year.

In September 2020 as part of the SPARTA Virtual week we restarted our programme doing online history talks and we now have virtual talks planned for the next 6 months. On 8 December we have Peter Hart talking us the Gallipoli Evacuation. In December 1915, some 135,000 men, were trapped at Gallipoli, Peter will talk about how the Gallipoli garrison escaped to fight another day.

The virtual history talks have been a big success with more people attending month by month and have enabled the society to reach out to staff in different office’s all over the country as well as staff who work overseas. I think they have also allowed us to have speakers who may not have been able to attend in person, so for example next year we will have a speaker from the University of Manchester and are even looking at speakers who are based in other counties.



SPARTA still has many active clubs. Check them all out on the SPARTA website www.spartarecreation.co.uk Got some SPARTA memories to share? Send them to SPARTA@dft.gov.uk



THE SPARTA CLUBS

SPARTA supports a number of clubs and associations across the UK and is always looking to start new clubs. Here is just a taster of the current clubs

CD CLUB 
www.spartarecreation.co.uk/cd-club

SPARTA GOLF SOCIETY 
www.spartagolf.co.uk/

YOGA CLASSES 
www.spartarecreation.co.uk/yoga

SUPERSTARS CRICKET CLUB 
www.superstarscricket.org.uk

SOFTBALL CLUB 
www.spartarecreation.co.uk/softball

RAILWAY SOCIETY 
www.spartarecreation.co.uk/railway-society

CIVIL SERVICE CHOIR 
www.civilservicechoir.org.uk

HISTORY SOCIETY 
www.spartarecreation.co.uk/history-society

FITNESS CLASSES 
www.spartarecreation.co.uk/fitness-class

TENNIS CLUB 
www.spartarecreation.co.uk/tennis

TENPIN BOWLING 
www.spartarecreation.co.uk/tenpin-bowling



Want to start a new SPARTA club or volunteer to help SPARTA?
Get in touch with us at SPARTA@dft.gov.uk

Check out all the SPARTA clubs on our website

SPARTA
SPARTA@dft.gov.uk

Phone 07884 390878
www.spartarecreation.co.uk

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