

# SPARTA Newsletter



## VIRTUAL ACTIVITY WEEK 2.0 A HUGE SUCCESS

Welcome to the February VAW Special Feature edition of the SPARTA newsletter.

It may have been grey, dark, wet and gloomy outside but lunchtimes on the week of 25<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> January were shining bright with things to do, as SPARTA Virtual Activity Week 2.0 kicked down your front door and invaded your home with its daily activities.

The week started on the Monday with a “Hot Jazz” Dance class, with Dance Teacher Nikki Santilli. Tuesday bought us some incredible insights into the Bayeux Tapestry with Professor Michael J Lewis of the British Museum.

Wednesday, Double Olympic Champion, Iain Percy, shared

insights into the highs and lows of his sailing career. Thursday’s “At Your Desk” Yoga stretched what was possible at your desk to new levels, and Friday’s circuit training class finished off everyone just before the weekend. It was a great week and you can read more about it in the rest of this newsletter.

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.

Why not contact us at [SPARTA@dft.gov.uk](mailto:SPARTA@dft.gov.uk)  
Please send us any feedback that you have.



### SPARTA ANNOUNCE PROVISIONAL SPORTS DAY DATE

*SPARTA are very pleased to announce the provisional date for Sports Day/Fit For Business Day*

**23<sup>rd</sup> July 2021**

We hope that restrictions will allow us to hold a full programme of events on this day.

Keep an eye out for updates on our website

[www.spartarecreation.co.uk](http://www.spartarecreation.co.uk)

#### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

23 July 2021  
Sports Day/Fit For Business Day

Check out the SPARTA website for upcoming events



## ELLA FITZGERALD AND ALL THAT JAZZ

***How did my two left feet fare during the “Hot Jazz” Dance Class? Where was the Bayeux Tapestry made? What did 10,000 people do in Beijing? VAW 2.0 revealed by Jason Marchant***

I have to admit I am an awful dancer. My Sister in Law is one of the most respected dance choreographers in the United States. As you can imagine, I do everything to avoid dancing when I am in my brothers' company. Having a dance class at the start of SPARTA VAW in my own living room was a welcome chance to see if I could improve without anyone seeing me tripping over my own feet.

Dance Teacher, Nikki Santilli (pictured below), took the class. She started with



some really easy moves, just simple bouncing up and down to the count of eight. Hey this is easy, especially as there was no moving of my feet. Next came a simple walk forward and then back all to the count of eight.

Nikki added music to these simple moves. The wonderful tones of some Ella Fitzgerald mixed into my movement and I could feel myself dancing with a bit of confidence.

Nikki included some more complicated moves and despite my struggle to get them right first time I did, after a couple of attempts, have them almost mastered.

At the end of the class, Nikki added some faster music. Although I lost the

rhythm a couple of times I was quickly back into the groove.

By the end of the class I felt good with myself. Nikki made everything so simple and you could see her enjoyment in dancing throughout. It was a thoroughly enjoyable class.

On the Tuesday lunchtime the SPARTA History Society lined up another of their incredible guests to deliver a lecture.

Professor Michael J Lewis of the British Museum gave a wonderful insight into the mysteries of the Bayeux Tapestry.

Professor Lewis is a well-respected scholar and has helped in arranging for the Bayeux Tapestry to be displayed in the UK sometime in the future once it is fully restored.

In his lecture he told us about the making of the tapestry. It was almost certainly made in Britain due to the quality of the embroidery which the British were famous for at that time. Also, the pictures included in the tapestry were influenced by drawings in other manuscripts of that time.

In the tapestry it tells the story of Prince Harold travelling to Normandy and getting himself into all sorts of trouble. The equivalent of a lad's night out and ending up in the cells. Prince Harold is depicted as a victim of the political circumstances of that time. He buys himself out with promises and returns to Britain. When King Edward dies Harold is named King and then his real trouble begins and the arrow in the eye is probably a myth.

If you are interested in hearing the full story then check our Professor Lewis's book, *The Real World of the Bayeux Tapestry*.



Wednesday's lunchtime event was held in the company of Double Olympic Champion, Iain Percy.

He gave an incredibly personal insight into his sporting life. How he was driven forward by his failure at the 2004 Olympics. The terrible sorrow he felt at the death of his best friend and sailing partner, Andrew “Bart” Simpson.

He marveled at how the Chinese got 10,000 people to turn up to clear a thick algal bloom that had carpeted the water at the Olympic sailing venue and the difference between the organisation at the four Olympics he attended.

He held nothing back and became quite emotional when talking some aspects of his incredible life.





## SPARTA VIRTUAL ACTIVITY WEEK 2.0

Thursday was yoga day, but not just any yoga, it was “At Your Desk” Yoga.

Qualified yoga teacher, Sue Johnson, who is also the vice chair of SPARTA, gave a different class to any I have done before.

With all of us spending so much time at home sat down and working it is vital that we exercise our muscles by stretching them on a regular basis.

Sue started with some simple breathing exercises to open our chests. It is strange to think that we spend so much time hunched over our keyboards that we do not even think of how important just simply breathing properly can be.

Working along the body, next were the shoulders, then arms, torso and legs.

I have to admit that on a couple of exercises that Sue made look so simple I thought that I was going to dislocate a joint or two. That just shows how poor my flexibility is in some areas.

All of these exercises were done while seated on a simple office chair.

The importance of looking after your body during these unusual times is paramount. When things return to some sort of normality, if you haven't looked after yourself then you may find yourself suffering some unwelcome health problems and struggle to cope with what is your new working routine.

Friday was the Fitness Class. Keeping fit is always the aim of the Fitness Class. Pre-Covid the class took place every Friday lunchtime in GMH. Now the class still takes place every Friday lunchtime but is online.

I host the class and it is based on classes that are used across UK Athletics.

Last Friday's class started with a quite vigorous warm up (some people do struggle with this), then some gentle stretching (this is much easier and you do catch your breath), then the heart of the class, the Circuit Training. Two sets of 15 exercises, 45 seconds hard work on each exercise followed by 15 seconds recovery. A short break is held in-between the sets of exercises.

After the circuit a set of seated stretches finish off the class.

Even though the class ran over by 10 minutes most of the attendees stayed to the end. It was a fitting and energising way to finish SPARTA VAW 2.0.

Anyone who is interested in doing the online Friday Fitness Class then please get in touch with me at [SPARTA@dft.gov.uk](mailto:SPARTA@dft.gov.uk)

It was great to see so many of you attending the VAW 2.0 events and posting such positive comments in the chat bar at the events. We would welcome any further feedback that you wish to share.

SPARTA is doing everything possible to ensure that opportunities are available for all staff during these difficult times.

On our website why not check out the Civil Service Choir and some of the brilliant stuff that they are still doing despite the challenges of Covid-19

Check out all of SPARTA's upcoming events on our website

[www.spartarecreation.co.uk](http://www.spartarecreation.co.uk)



Jason Marchant



# 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](http://www.spartarecreation.co.uk/cd-club)

**SPARTA GOLF SOCIETY**   
[www.spartagolf.co.uk/](http://www.spartagolf.co.uk/)

**YOGA CLASSES**   
[www.spartarecreation.co.uk/yoga](http://www.spartarecreation.co.uk/yoga)

**SUPERSTARS CRICKET CLUB**   
[www.superstarscricket.org.uk](http://www.superstarscricket.org.uk)

**SOFTBALL CLUB**   
[www.spartarecreation.co.uk/softball](http://www.spartarecreation.co.uk/softball)

**RAILWAY SOCIETY**   
[www.spartarecreation.co.uk/railway-society](http://www.spartarecreation.co.uk/railway-society)

**CIVIL SERVICE CHOIR**   
[www.civilservicechoir.org.uk](http://www.civilservicechoir.org.uk)

**HISTORY SOCIETY**   
[www.spartarecreation.co.uk/history-society](http://www.spartarecreation.co.uk/history-society)

**FITNESS CLASSES**   
[www.spartarecreation.co.uk/fitness-class](http://www.spartarecreation.co.uk/fitness-class)

**TENNIS CLUB**   
[www.spartarecreation.co.uk/tennis](http://www.spartarecreation.co.uk/tennis)

**TENPIN BOWLING**   
[www.spartarecreation.co.uk/tenpin-bowling](http://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](mailto:SPARTA@dft.gov.uk)

Check out all the SPARTA clubs on our website

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