

DESERT ISLAND TIMES

Sharing fellowship in
NEWPORT SE WALES U3A

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Turner's painting of Newport Castle, 1795

*A MISCELLANY OF
CONTRIBUTIONS
FROM OUR MEMBERS*

Easypeasy Cryptic Crossword Clues No 13 - Angela Robins

There are a dozen types of Cryptic Crossword Clues but here is a taster of how Punctuation can affect all of them. Forget all those rules you learnt at school and never trust the compiler's punctuation! Commas, full stops, exclamation marks and ellipses are sometimes used as an attempt to mislead us, when in fact, the punctuation in those clues has no part to play in the Cryptic Reading; it is simply there to make the Surface Reading more plausible or elegant.

e.g. Cut energy - drastic ! (6). = Sever E. The dash and exclamation mark in this mixed Word Exchange and A-Z Abbreviation Clue create a credible fragment of text. Without them the Surface Reading would not work.

Sometimes punctuation is placed between wordplay ingredients to obscure the answer.

e.g. Insignia found in Islamabad, generally (5). = Badge. The Hidden Word runs across two words and the comma.

However, there are a few special uses for punctuation when it does play a part in the Cryptic Reading of a clue.

[?] As stated previously, the Question Mark is used by the setter to kindly alert us to the need for some special lateral thinking.

e.g. Vehicle that delivers telegram? (5,3). = Cable car. (Pure Cryptic). Or, the Definition given is just an example; similar to the use of 'perhaps' or 'say.'

e.g. Satin restyled for Francis of Assisi? (5). = Saint. (Anagram).

[!] The Exclamation Mark can be used to indicate that the Answer is exclamatory.

e.g. Sound like pub? - No sheep! (3). = BAA! (Homophone).

Who's at fault? - Not important! (2,4). = So What! (Anagram).

['] The Apostrophe has a couple of uses in normal script; to show possession or to replace an omitted letter. When it occurs in Cryptic Clues, its use in the Surface Reading may need to be substituted by its other use for the Cryptic Reading.

e.g. Commander's force, if at sea (7). = Officer. The Apostrophe in the Cryptic Reading should read as 'is' and not the possessive, therefore the 'is' hints at an Anagram clue. Other times it has no part to play in the Cryptic Reading. e.g. Rachel's awkward boy (7). = Charles. The Apostrophe should be ignored in this anagram clue.

Occasionally we will need to put an Apostrophe into a phrase in order to shorten it to the required letters for the answer.

e.g. They said a guy would lead (5). = Guide. An inserted apostrophe makes guy'd for this Homophone Clue.

[...] The Ellipsis is normally used when omitting part of a quoted passage. It saves space by removing irrelevant text.

e.g. Today, after hours of careful consideration, they vetoed the bill, becomes Today ... they vetoed the bill. In Cryptic Clues it may appear to join two clues; but that is just an example of the compiler's deviousness. They are used just to help the clues read sensibly.

e.g. To rob /with a deadly weapon ... (5).

... Is /what stealing a /novel is like - a crime (7,3,3).

The answers are Rifle (Double Definition) and Against The Law (Anagram). These clues could be seen to have a connection, but no, they are totally independent; neither of which requires the other to obtain the answer.

Try these clues: some of them are a mixture of clues - the answers are on page 7.

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. Alice's other name (5). | Anagram |
| 2. French word for road test ... (3). | A-Z Association |
| 3. ... and French chap initially and so on (3). | A-Z Assoc/Part Word |
| 4. Bewildered chap - I'm no Victor (8). | Anagram |
| 5. Coach's shoe (7). | Double Definition |
| 6. In spandex, a mineral tester (8). | Hidden Word |
| 7. I said we had to get married (3). | Double Meaning |
| 8. Cold sound around lunchtime? Go Away! (7). | Numbers/WordExch |
| 9. Quirky hen, ebullient hit police sitcom (3,4,4,4,) | Anagram |
| 10. Chap's put on sodium for divine sustenance (5). | Word Exchange/A-Z |
| 11. Cheap? That's logical (10). | Double Definition |
| 12. Headwear? It is just odd. Leaving us in a state (6). | Hidden Word |
| 13. Skilful for a medic? Nothing to it (6). | A-Z Abbrev/Numbers/text |
| 14. In pain, her itching's really bad - get it genetically (7). | Hidden Word |
| 15. I will Cook? (4). | Homophone |
| 16. Journey East - Rubbish! (5). | Word Exch/A-Z Abbreviation |
| 17. Said I would have watched (4). | Homophone |
| 18. Amundsen's forwarding address! (4) | Pure Cryptic |
| 19. Unknown Sunday too unstable? No Kidding! (3,4,3). | A-Z Assoc/Anag |
| 20. I will briefly be unwell (3). | Double Meaning |

Contact me at valdemos2@gmail.com if you would like to receive my group's easy weekly crossword with hints and answers.

A Message from Rob Wilkinson

Did you know that there are over 900 free courses available at the Open University?

Just go to <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses> and you should find a list of 900+ courses arranged under 8 headings. The first is Health, Sport and Psychology.

You will need to register and choose a password. The courses vary from the very brief at 1 hour to the substantial 18 or 24 hours study. The first course I did was very good in that there were regular multi choice questions, so that you could check if you had understood the detail well, as an outline answer was provided. but the second course did not have this facility. I think it's possible to print off a certificate when you finish if you wish. There is also a range of standards indicated, from Beginner to Intermediate and Advanced...some of the language is quite academic, but the presentation is usually engaging and interesting with short videos included.

It's worth giving it a try...you will find virtually every possible subject included in the lists.

Sausages on Saturday by John Murray



It was not the best of times, neither was it the worst of times, it was just the times in which I lived. The orphanage at Gravesend in which I spent my early years was to some extent not too far removed from Dickens, but to me it was home, I knew nothing else. My wellbeing was in the care of Sisters of Charity and Sisters of Mercy who, let me assure you, had neither Charity nor Mercy, but what they did have was a long leather belt hanging from the waist or a cleverly hidden cane secreted somewhere within their voluminous habit, both of which they were most adept at using. Should that not be sufficient to keep us boys in order, the assistance of the Christian Brothers was waiting in reserve, but that is another story.

We were fed three times a day. It was always porridge for breakfast with the occasional rasher of streaky bacon. On such occasions we were permitted to queue at the servery to dip a slice of bread into the slowly congealing fat. Absolute bliss. The big treat of the week was on Saturday, we had sausages, or rather a sausage for dinner accompanied with a dollop of lumpy mashed potato and cabbage. The usual desert was tapioca, known more affectionately as frogs spawn.

I suppose I was about the age in the photograph when I discovered a rather unique way of having more than one sausage. On Saturday mornings after we had finished our duties, mine was working in the laundry, which I did every morning and evening, others polished the floors in the dormitory or cleaned out the many toilets, we were allowed to play outdoors in an area called the Squares. These were two large concreted areas surround by a high wire fence. The one exit was guarded by a nun. One sunny Saturday whilst enjoying a game of English Bulldog it became necessary to seek permission from the hooded sentinel to use the toilet. This was an outside brick-built edifice with no roof and was situated near the main building. Having carried out the reason for my request to leave the Squares I was overcome with the smell of something cooking. Making sure that nobody was watching I sneaked towards a low-lying open window and looked into the kitchen. The window was situated just above a hotplate on which dozens and dozens of sausages were sizzling away turning a lovely shade of brown. I waited a few moments to make sure that the nun working in the kitchen was out of the way before reaching in to try and grab a sausage. Alas, my arm was too short. I returned to the Squares with nothing but sausages on my mind. All week I thought of how could I get at those sausages. The answer came in the shape of a badly mishappen fork that had been thrown away. I spent some time beating that fork into shape with a large

stone. Soon it was ready to be attached to a stick of sufficient length suitably tied with a bootlace acquired from the boot room. My new-found tool was secreted under a large rock until Saturday came again.

The routine was the same, I finished my duties in the laundry and went to the Squares with the other boys. When I thought the sausages would be sizzling away I asked to go to the toilet, doing a little dance as I did so to convey the urgency of my request. Of course, I used the toilet then I went and found my newly made tool. After checking that nobody was around, and the nun was looking the other way I silently pushed it through the open window. It reached perfectly. Instantly a sizzling golden-brown sausage was easing its way out of the window and into my waiting hand. That first sausage tasted fantastic, though I burnt my tongue on it. I managed to do this for some time, never taking more than two and always eating them before returning to the squares. For those of you who are wondering, no I didn't resort to a life of crime from this little episode in my life, but I did acquire a lifelong liking for sausages.

My sausage stick was always buried in the same place, under a big rock. I eventually left the orphanage and my sausage stick remained hidden, morally, I didn't think it right to pass it on.

Some many years later, after the orphanage had been demolished a housing estate was built in its place, I stood in the place where I thought the kitchen window had been, it was now an Executive Dwelling. As I was about to leave I noticed my big rock, it now featured in somebodies front garden as part of a rockery. I smiled to myself, was my sausage stick still under it or had they found it, if they had what thoughts would have gone through their minds on discovering an old fork tied to a stick with a bootlace.

Wordsearch submitted by Barbara Phillips

Can you find the 12 words associated with the Wizard of Oz in the grid below:

Answers are on page 17.

G	B	O	K	E	L	E	O	W
E	D	T	L	I	H	D	S	O
D	E	O	U	E	A	R	C	R
I	O	T	A	N	E	Y	L	C
H	U	R	R	I	C	A	N	E
G	T	O	O	L	S	T	K	R
N	T	E	O	T	D	R	A	A
I	I	N	L	N	H	S	N	C
E	E	A	L	I	T	Y	S	S
E	G	A	R	U	O	C	A	A
W	I	S	H	B	B	N	S	R

The Way We Were - The Choir by Ian Lumley

My working life meant that our family unit moved to pastures new almost every five years, and so it wasn't until I finally retired (albeit quite early) that Choir singing re-entered my life. An ex-colleague of mine called and said he was on the point of joining the local Male Voice Choir and was I interested? You bet I was! They were performing at one of the local churches the next Saturday, so my wife and I turned up, wondering what it would be like. We had of course heard some of those wonderful Welsh choirs on television from time to time, but we knew that a local choir (which I had not heard about previously although we had by then lived in Worcester for 10 years!) could not be anything like as good.

They trooped on stage – well, some shuffled due to a variety of disabilities! - and sat down. They were nearly all grey haired and the grey coloured blazers did nothing to spice up the overall image. I was a little deflated. How would they sing? The answer was soon with me. The sound was just magical. Singing coming through a television set never carries the same raw power or feeling as sitting and listening 'in the flesh'. The variety of music presented was just immense. Religious pieces, some in Latin, were surrounded by old English sea shanties and they even sang *Nessun Dorma* (in Italian!). All of this was done from memory – there wasn't a music folder or sheet to be seen – except for the accompanist of course!

Two other pieces were, for me, quite special. 'The Lost Chord' was another of my dad's favourites and nearly had me reaching for my handkerchief. Towards the end of the concert they sang a song in Welsh that I had never heard before, but 'Yfory' just made the hairs stand up on my neck! Would I be good enough to be accepted as a member was all that was in my mind.

Two nights later, I met my friend outside the rehearsal rooms and we went in together. Although most people can only see the veneer of bonhomie that I usually affect, I am a very shy person underneath, and the thought of going into a room with over fifty strangers just made my toes curl up. While my wife has always said that my voice was properly a baritone, I've always felt that Bass was more appropriate. I was introduced to the choir member who was already seated in the Bass area. Within minutes, the hall started to fill up and everyone quickly spotted the 'newbie'. Guys came from all the sections to shake my hand and introduce themselves. All in all, it was a friendly atmosphere that was being generated, for which I was very grateful. One of the Bass section was also the Librarian so, after introducing himself, he quickly got out a set of music for me to use. Then the conductor came in, saw me, and came over.

We had met briefly at the concert, but he asked me if Bass was the best area for me to sing and then explained that he would let me find my feet (should that be voice?) for a couple of weeks before doing a test to establish my best position. Although I was a bit lost in terms of the music that night, I felt as I left that this was a place I could enjoy. Even one of the new pieces they were learning was 'The Cowboy Carol', something I had done some forty years earlier as a member of the High School Choir!

Three weeks later, at the end of the rehearsal, the conductor signalled to me to come over. 'Are you ready to try some music?' he asked. My blood pressure soared. This is when I would get told that 'sorry, but you're not up to the standard we need'. I was already enjoying myself so much, this was not a pleasant prospect. What would I do? How could I hold my head up again? There was no hiding place for the little boy inside me. He asked if I had a piece of music I would like to sing. I just knew that 'The Little Boy that Santa Claus Forgot' would not fit the bill, and anyway, I'd never be able to finish it! I think he recognised the look of panic, because he said 'it's coming up to Christmas, how about 'O Come all Ye Faithful?' I breathed a sigh of relief – my early years in church were going to prove useful at last! Not only did I know this Hymn, I knew the Bass part and, if needed, I could sing it in Latin!

I quickly decided that the Latin version might just make him (and the others who by now were circling round me) think I was trying to be too clever by half, but I could do the rest. I know in retrospect that the others who were close by, were in fact trying to lend a bit of moral support, but in my state of mind they resembled nothing more than a school of killer whales about to feast on the poor unfortunate dolphin in front of them!

I barely had time to take a deep breath when the pianist started up. I sang the tune for the first verse, and then some of the others quite voluntarily sang Tenor parts for the chorus, allowing me to come in with the bass. By the time the second verse got under way, some of the others were singing 'their' Tenor part, so I was able to switch to the Bass all the way through. Before I had finished the Hymn, half the choir seemed to be singing with me and experiencing (as always) the sheer joy of singing in harmony. The conductor who had been listening just held out his hand and said 'welcome to the choir'. He didn't get the chance to say more because everyone around wanted to do the same. On my way home that night, if you had asked if I could walk on water, I would probably have said 'yes!'

Quiz for Foodies – Pam Cocchiara

Identify the cooking terms and dishes from the descriptions given below. Answers are on page 12.

1. Small cubes of fried bread used as a garnish for soups.
2. A Mexican dip made from avocado, garlic and lime juice.
3. Small pasta squares stuffed with meat or vegetables.
4. Chicken stuffed with garlic, butter and chives, covered in breadcrumbs and fried.
5. French sauce made with egg yolk, butter and vinegar and served with Eggs Benedict.
6. A style of Indian cooking (literally meaning 'bucket') where dishes are cooked in a small, two-handled wok-shaped pan.
7. Italian term for toasted bread brushed with oil and garlic and served with a variety of toppings.
8. French term for vegetables cut into thin strips.
9. A green Italian pasta sauce made from olive oil, basil, garlic and pine nuts.
10. The food flavouring, often used in Chinese cooking, made from sodium salt and glutamic acid.
11. A French term meaning 'between the ribs' usually applied to steak.
12. A southern France fish stew cooked in a strongly flavoured stock, usually with saffron and tomatoes.
13. Oysters wrapped in bacon.
14. The French term for custard.
15. Bow-tie or butterfly shaped pasta.
16. Soya bean paste used in Japanese cooking.
17. French term for gravy, usually juices from roast meat.
18. From Russia, small pancakes usually served with caviar and sour cream.
19. Italian term for appetiser (literally before the meal).
20. A cooked mixture of butter and flour used as a basis for any sauce.

Cryptic Crossword Clues (page 3) - answers

1. Celia
2. M.O.T.
3. et/c
4. Champion
5. Trainer
6. Examiner
7. Wed
8. At 1 shoo!
9. The Thin Blue Line
10. Man/na
11. Reasonable
12. Hawaii
13. a/Dr/0/i t
14. Inherit
15. Isle
16. Tripe!
17. Eyed
18. Mush!
19. Y/ou don't say!
20. ill.

A DAY WITHOUT LAUGHTER IS A DAY WASTED

Bob was in trouble. He forgot his wedding anniversary. His wife was really miffed.

She told him "Tomorrow morning, I expect to find a gift in the driveway that goes from 0 to 200 in 6 seconds AND IT BETTER BE THERE!!!"

The next morning he got up early and left for work. When his wife woke up, she looked out the window and sure enough there was a box gift-wrapped in the middle of the driveway.

Con

fused, the wife put on her robe and ran out to the driveway, brought the box back in the house.

She opened it and found a brand new bathroom scale.

Bob has been missing since Friday.

WALKING THE DOG

Reportedly, a woman was flying from Seattle to San Francisco. Unexpectedly, the plane was diverted to Sacramento along the way.

The flight attendant explained that there would be a delay, and if the passengers wanted to get off the aircraft the plane would re-board in 50 minutes.

Everybody got off the plane except one lady who was blind.

A man had noticed her as he walked by and could tell the lady was blind because her guide dog lay quietly underneath the seats in front of her throughout the entire flight. He could also tell she had flown this very flight before because the pilot approached her, and calling her by name, said, "Kathy, we are in Sacramento for almost an hour. Would you like to get off and stretch your legs?"

The blind lady said, "No thanks, but maybe Buddy would like to stretch his legs."

Picture this:

All the people in the gate area came to a complete stand still when they looked up and saw the pilot walk off the plane with a guide dog for the blind! Even worse, the pilot was wearing sunglasses!

People scattered. They not only tried to change planes, but they were trying to change airlines!

True story.....

Just remember.....

THINGS AREN'T ALWAYS AS THEY APPEAR.

A gardening tip from Dave Woolven:

It's coming into slug season. To protect those expensive plants:-

Take a handful of the old, double sided razor blades. Place them in a circle around the plant, on edge with a sharp side up. Next place a ring of pepper just inside the circle. The slug comes along, looks over the edge of the blade, gets a whiff of the pepper, sneezes & chops its head off.

Slugs are clever & soon cotton on to this - so, put the ring of blades as before, but with no pepper. Sluggy comes along, looks over & thinks 'Where's the pepper'. He looks to the left, he looks to the right, he looks to the left - and in doing so saws his head off

What We Were Doing This Time ... Angela Robins.

Last year, on 25th June, a coach full of our members went on a Mystery Trip arranged by the Out and About Group. En route members speculated about the destination at every junction until we finally arrived at the traditional Herefordshire market town of Bromyard.

After sampling the cafe culture, some followed the heritage trail and explored the fine black and white half-timbered buildings, whilst others visited the small shops, galleries or museums. Then we took a short ride to the Ralph Court Gardens set in 3.5 acres of a gothic rectory. Here we meandered through 12 themed spaces marvelling at the creative landscaping. They contained many art works and sculptures made by local artists which contributed to the garden's quirkiness and imparted a flavour of their stories.

The Italian, Japanese and African gardens transported us around the world. We reminisced about our childhoods in the Pirate Ship, Alice in Wonderland and Wind in the Willows gardens. Medusa's Temple and Triton calling the waves evoked mythological stories and there was even a homage to Monet's garden complete with the artist at his easel! All provided many photo opportunities - and did you manage to avoid the spitting Jack in the Green!

To complete the perfect day a scrumptious home-made cream tea had been laid out for us in the charming restaurant that has sweeping views across the Malvern Hills. We were seated in the unique Victorian theatre and were entertained with a few arias by the fully animated 'Ralphio.'



Seven Sins need Seven Virtues by Alan Barrow

If there were no Poets
there would be no poems
and if there were no poems
there would definitely be no poets.

Without conflict there are no winners,
without sin there are no sinners,
without sinners, it's a shame
for we would have no one to blame.

In life we learn
that each needs each in turn.

Some say sin is a sin
and so they may
but the right sin
could be the right thing
on the right day.

1. Lust

Lust is a must for the start of love,
desire is as a fire from above,
so much so that we do not know
what world we are in,
but I understand if you
find this a sin,
then perhaps chastity
for you is the only thing.

2. Envy

At times everybody envies
those who sin, with envy
there is no need for lies
for jealousy is easily seen
raging in the eyes,
but you can remove
the raging blindness
of your jealousy by showing a little kindness.

3. Gluttony

Gluttony truly is a waste of life
where food is more important
than your loving wife.
There is no pretence
the only hope against gluttony
is abstinence.

4. Sloth

Sloth is a cause for wrath,
laziness has no place
in the human race.
If you will you can wait,
but usually the sloth
is chained to its fate.
The sloth should have
a bit of sense
and at least try
a little diligence.

5. Wrath

Wrath itself is usually seen
as men being men
but then It could be
natural ignorance
and bad manners
once again,
and once again t
he answer is the same
without any pretence,
simply the magic word is patience.

6. Pride

A little pride has meaning
but too much pride
is to see not just wealth
but everything solely in yourself.
Such pride will in the end
be a pride that has no friend.
The only chance of tranquillity
is at the very least a showing of humility.

7. Greed

Greed is the worst of all,
for we must listen to all
that call for help and must share
each fault, what ver the cost,
or I fear all humanity is lost
for the core of humanity is
it's steadfast liberality.

It is not by chance
that man needs
the counterbalance
to choose
between sins and virtues.

50 Mile Challenge – Caerphilly by Mike Brown.

We catch the bus to Caerphilly occasionally to take a circular walk around the perimeter of its spectacular Castle before attending an afternoon concert at St Martin's Church or visiting the shops.

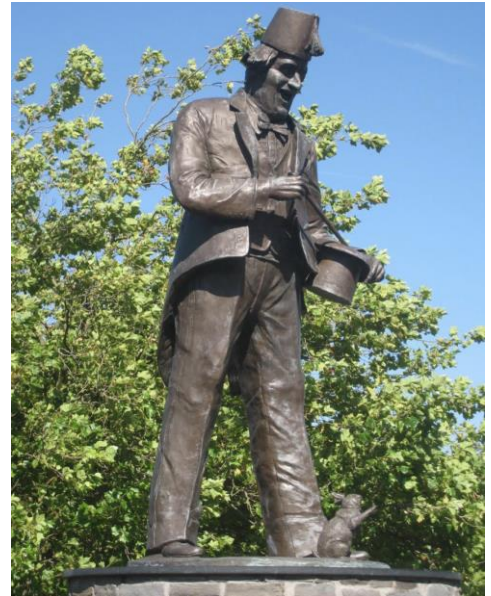
We particularly like to go the third weekend of June during their annual free Flower Festival. There are displays at various churches, the Community Centre, the Library, Wetherspoons and in the town centre. The impressive displays highlight the interesting buildings in which they are held.

There is a 'Hop On - Hop Off' courtesy bus which offers visitors a bird's eye view of the area and takes them to all the participating venues. What's more, on board, members of the local dramatic society, The Caerphilly Players, offer animated commentary on local points of interest.

The medieval castle is at the heart of the festival; it is the largest castle in the U.K. after Windsor. It is surrounded by a moat and lakes in 30 acres of land. Its iconic S.E. tower is even wonkier than that of Pisa!

There are other summer events on almost every weekend after; visit www.caerphilly.gov.uk/events.

Do you have a favourite day out you would like to share with our members? E-mail your account to Stephen for inclusion in our Newsletter.



Quiz for Foodies (page 7) – Answers

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Croutons | 11. Entrecote |
| 2. Guacamole | 12. Bouillabaisse |
| 3. Ravioli | 13. Angels on horseback |
| 4. Chicken Kiev | 14. Creme Anglaise |
| 5. Hollandaise | 15. Farfalle |
| 6. Balti | 16. Miso |
| 7. Bruschetta | 17. Jus |
| 8. Julienne | 18. Blini |
| 9. Pesto | 19. Antipasto |
| 10. Monosodium Glutamate | 20. Roux |

The Bristow Inheritance – is it in the Genes? by Stephen Berry

Those who know me well know that I have four major hobbies – Music, Local History, Railway History and Family History. Within the last-mentioned I have traced nearly all of those ancestral lines for which information is available on the internet, but in the early days (we started in 1976) everything had to be done the hard way, visiting churches and county archive offices and spending days trawling through parish registers and other relevant documents. The upside of having made an early start was that a number of elderly relatives were still living and able to provide a huge amount of information and pass on the family stories. The significance of railway history will emerge through this story!

The one great grandmother who was alive for the first fifteen years of my life was my mother's father's mother, Ellen Pedlar, née Bristow. I would say that my Bristow ancestors and their close family are amongst the most interesting of all my relations. They have proved extremely difficult to track down – and, indeed, without the help of the internet, I would never have constructed the interesting history that attaches to them.

Ellen Bristow was born in Liskeard, Cornwall, on 5 December 1869 and died in Newport on 25 November 1964. She had married my great grandfather, Harry Pedlar, in Cardiff on 16 March 1892. Harry had been born in Instow, North Devon, on 23 April 1870 but had moved with his family to Ilfracombe quite early in his life. Ellen, as was common for girls of her "class" in that era, went "into service" in Ilfracombe and it was there that the pair met. It was on a sunny day in 1891 that the pair took a pleasure steamer trip to Cardiff – a trip that was to prove eventful. While in Cardiff, Harry spotted an advertisement offering employment as a furniture salesman. He "enquired within" as instructed, and was duly taken on. Ellen found no difficulty in obtaining work as a servant in Cardiff and the couple married there on 16 March 1892. Ten years later they moved to Newport – and their only great grandson is still there!

Ellen's parents were John Bristow and Mary Ann (née Blight); they had both led eventful lives before the births of their four children, Harriet in 1864, Ellen in 1869, Harry in 1873 and Fred in 1875. The story which I had been told by Ellen's elder daughter, Vera, (and which, indeed, was *nearly* true!) was that John Bristow had moved into the Plymouth area and lodged with Mary Ann's family. She was only in her teens and led an unhappy life, acting as an unpaid and very overworked house servant in a household which was a lodging house. They fell in love and decided to elope, since she was under the age of 21.

For 30 years any record of this marriage eluded me. I had checked every John Bristow marriage entry and every Mary Ann Blight marriage entry in the General Register Office indexes, but there was no instance of a common reference pointing to the marriage (the usual way of tracking a marriage). The 1871 census for Liskeard showed John, Mary Ann, Harriett and Ellen, John having been born in Maidstone, Kent, and Mary Ann in Saltash, Cornwall. Within a few years of this census, the family had moved to Shutta, East Looe, and, in the census for 1881, John gives his place of birth as Sussex. Eventually I discovered John and Mary Ann on the 1861 census – they were living as man and wife at Liskeard, John again giving his place of birth as Sussex. The first breakthrough came with the appearance on the Ancestry.com website offering free birth, marriage and death lookups of a marriage in the March quarter of 1861 of a John Bristow. On the same page was a Mary Ann Bright! The marriage took place in the Bristol Registration District.

I obtained a certificate – and it was the one I wanted. Since the entry was a copy of a copy of the original, it is easy to see how Blight could have been mis-transcribed or misread as Bright. The marriage took place at Temple church, Bristol, and was by licence rather than after the calling of banns. These two points are of significance.

One thing which I have not yet mentioned is the age difference between John and Mary Ann. This varies census by census, and the marriage certificate is one year out for Mary Ann, but the fact seemed to be that John was 23 years older than Mary Ann. I can only surmise that she provided some sort of false evidence of parental agreement (or told a downright lie!), since her father was dead by this time and her mother had remarried. However, the marriage was by licence, so this could have been obtained on one day for a marriage on the next. The railway timetable for 1863 (in which train times would have been very similar to those of 1861) shows that it would have been possible for the pair to have travelled up by train from Saltash, Devonport or Plymouth on Tuesday, 22 January 1861, arriving in time to obtain the necessary licence – Temple church was only five minutes' walk from the station and was the nearest church to it. They could have married early on the morning of Wednesday 23 January and returned by train, arriving back at around teatime. Witnesses to the marriage were church people rather than family.

Mary Ann was certainly living with her elder sister at the home of an aunt, the lodging house in Devonport, in the 1851 census. However, before we turn to how and why John Bristow came to Devonport to lodge, let us look briefly at Ellen's sister and brothers.

Her sister, Harriett, followed the standard Victorian "career" path for girls from poorer homes and went into service. She obviously ended up in London, for it was there that she married her husband, Richard Salt, though as he came from Looe, there is every possibility that they knew each other previously. He was a seaman. They had six children, of whom I knew three, Leslie, Gerald and Minnie. Leslie lived at West Looe, Gerald at Exeter and Minnie, after her marriage to Garnet Harris, at Redruth, Cornwall. Gerald never married and owned a large house opposite Exeter Central railway station; it was something of a ritual to visit him on the way home from trips to the West Country, and, since Exeter Central railway station was one of the busiest and most interesting places to be on a summer Saturday (I was a train-spotter in those days!), I would spend hours there while the family caught up on the gossip. Minnie's husband was the village policeman and the police station used to be the front room of their house. We always visited them when on holiday in Cornwall and my memories are particularly of lush Cornish cream teas and being dressed in extremely large police uniform for photographs. Harriett spent her time between Redruth and Exeter, dying in Exeter in 1960. Minnie was the last survivor of her generation, dying early in 2006. We are still in contact with her daughters.

The two sons. Harry and Fred, both went to sea. Fred died in 1911, but Harry had a much more dramatic death in the following year when he went down on the Titanic. He was a 1st Class Steward on board the liner. His body was never recovered, or, if recovered never identified. Like everyone else who sailed on her, Harry had high hopes and expectations and confidently anticipated a secure future as a member of her crew. We have the text of his final pieces of correspondence to his wife and these speak of his hopes and ambitions.



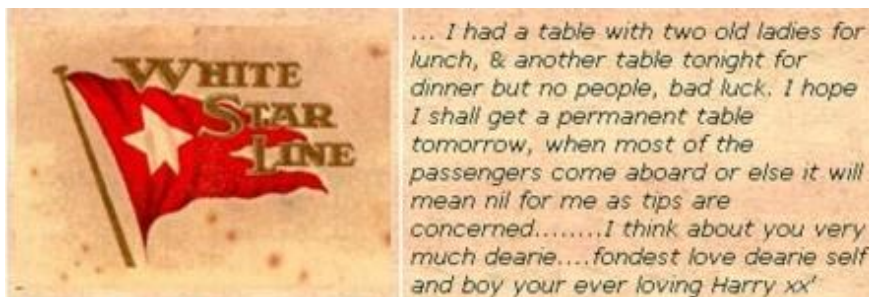
Postcard sent by Harry to his wife Ethel the night before he embarked on the Titanic

Titanic
Southampton 9-4-12

Dearest Et

I have earned my first days pay on the Titanic 4/- & been paid & I may say spent it do you know dearie. I forgot about towels, also cloth brush so I've to buy two, the brush I need tomorrowmy uniform will cost £1-17-6, coat plus waistcoat and cap and Star regulation collars and paper front (don't laugh dearie it's quite true) two white jackets etc. so it won't leave me very much to take up, my pay is £3-15 plus tips. I'm in the first class saloon so I may pick up a bit. I've been scrubbing the floor today in Saloon, about a dozen of us. I lost myself a time or two, she is such an enormous size I expect it will take me a couple of trips before I begin to know my way about here. I believe we're due back here again about the 4th next month I am not sure though - but if I can manage it & the tips turn out alright, I shall have to leave again Sunday night. I shall try and come Saturday night but I expect I shall have to leave again Sunday night to report 8o/c Monday morning, but of course dearie I'm not sure, its only what some of the old hands told me.....I haven't had a talk with Bert Dodds yet...he's what they call 2nd Steward not 1st but very nice I've heard and liked. I've to be aboard tomorrow morning 6 o/c sharp, means turning out at 5am.....you might send a letter to me addressed as envelope enclosed a day before we're expected in so that I could have it directly I come ashore, now dearie with fondest love to boy and self & be brave as you always are, your ever loving Harry

His last full letter to his wife



... I had a table with two old ladies for lunch, & another table tonight for dinner but no people, bad luck. I hope I shall get a permanent table tomorrow, when most of the passengers come aboard or else it will mean nil for me as tips are concerned.....I think about you very much dearie....fondest love dearie self and boy your ever loving Harry xx'

Fragment of his last note, posted at Queenstown, Ireland, on 11 April 1912



Harry Bristow, whilst serving in the Boer war

Whilst it was easy enough to determine that Mary Ann's husband was John Bristow who, from all available evidence, was born in 1820 or 1821 in the South East England, determining his parentage was impossible before the arrival of that elusive marriage certificate. I had carried out an extensive search of the parish registers for Maidstone and the surrounding areas for the period around 1820 but was unable to find a relevant baptism. As two censuses gave Sussex rather than Kent as the place of birth, I reluctantly had to accept that Maidstone was incorrect; but Sussex is a very large county!

I knew that John worked on the Liskeard to Looe railway and had heard, again from my great aunt, that his move to the West Country had been to do with building a railway. With the advent of the Ancestry census website it proved possible – though time-consuming – to search for him on the 1851 census by examining every possible entry and eliminating those who were clearly wrong. In the end it came down to only one possible record – he was lodging at Grantham, Lincolnshire, and was a railway contractor! Applying a similar process to the 1841 census when that became available produced again only one possibility – and he was actually living in one of the “shanty” villages that sprang up during railway construction. This time he was near Godstone, Surrey, the village being in the area around the place where the station was subsequently built. Armed with these facts I was soon able to find out just why John was in these places at these times. Godstone was a fairly insignificant spot on the line which was built between Reigate and Tonbridge and formed an important link in the first line between London and Dover. The line opened in 1842 and was progressing well in June 1841, the date of the census. The line between Peterborough and Retford, passing through Grantham, was opened in 1852 and was similarly in an advanced state at the time of the 1851 census. John was a railway “navvy!”

Although John was a “navvy”, he was clearly one who was not itinerant in the way that many were. He worked for Peto and Betts, who were contractors for portions of the lines being constructed, and who worked to the consultant engineer. It is no coincidence that William Cubitt was consulting engineer to both the South Eastern Railway, which ran through Godstone, and the Great Northern Railway, which ran through Grantham. Cubitt liked to keep his contractors and his contractors liked to keep their best workers, so John would have moved from place to place as contracts were obtained. Since this team did some work in Portugal in 1848 there is a possibility that John actually worked overseas for a while, though it is unlikely that this will be proved one way or the other!

It is interesting to note that Peto and Betts were contractors for the South Eastern Railway lines in the Maidstone and north Kent area during the period 1853 and 1858. It may well be that John was working in this area at this time before transferring to the West Country; the Cornwall Railway between Plymouth and Truro, passing over the Royal Albert Bridge at Saltash, was in construction during the period 1856 to 1859, opening in May 1859. It could account for the fact that John’s birthplace was given as Maidstone in 1871 if the enumerator had phrased the question “Where did you come from?” rather than “Where were you born?” Being at best semi-literate, it is very unlikely that either John or Mary Ann would have completed a census form themselves and if John had been out when the enumerator called, Mary Ann might simply have answered as best she could.

The marriage certificate gave John’s father as John Bristow, labourer. An investigation of the 1841 census revealed few John Bristows in Sussex and only one who could possibly be John’s father. He was an agricultural labourer living at Wivelsfield, Sussex. In fact, John had been born in 1812 and was therefore 31 years older than Mary Ann, but inconsistency in ages was a real feature of the Bristow story! A look at subsequent censuses enabled a family picture to be built up for this family, the eldest daughter of which was a Harriett! It has since been possible to trace many of John’s ancestors back to the 16th and 17th centuries – in fact, one of his distant relations on one branch was a Bishop of Carlisle! Generally, though, finding much information about the earlier ancestors has not been possible. It is the 19th and 20th century family members who are exciting!

After their marriage John became a linesman on the Cornwall Railway and subsequently the Liskeard & Looe Railway. His death seems to have been caused by a local incident involving a maypole of all things! It seems to have been a custom to try to sabotage the maypoles of neighbouring communities and John was either involved in this or in guarding his community’s pole. The pole fell on him and activated a cancer which was the cause of his death.

Is my great interest in, and love of, Railway History something I have inherited from one of the original “navvies?” Who knows – it could be in the genes!

Sudoku

Each row and each column has to contain numbers 1 to 9 once only; each large square of nine smaller squares likewise. Do not guess numbers! Work out each by elimination.

This week, although you have four puzzles again, the second pair (those at the bottom) are described as being of "Medium" difficulty. The first two are "Easy"!

8				3		6		5
		3		8	4			
2	4		1				3	
	7	4		5	9			6
			3	7	2			
3			6	4		7	5	
	2				3		7	1
			4	1		2		
4		9		2				3

		9		3				1
		3			9	2		8
6	2		5		7	9		4
			2	6	1	8		
		9	7	5	8			
4		5	8		9		7	6
	6		1	7		3		
7					5			2

1		4					5	8
2	6	3		8		4		
	8					9		3
			8				2	
		2	7		4	1		
	4				1			
4		8					1	
		6		4		8	9	5
9	2					3		7

8			2	5				3
3		9	4	1				
2						9	1	
	5	2	7	8				
		3						5
					4	3	2	9
		1	8					5
					7	4	8	1
	2				9	5		3

Wordsearch – Wizard of Oz (page 5) – answers (in no particular order)

TOTO
SCARECROW
DOROTHY
WISH

TORNADO
KANSAS
BRAIN
HURRICANE

HEART
CYCLONE
COURAGE
LION

CIRCLES by Martyn Vaughan

Do you know how many circles of Hell there are? Dante said that there were nine, each more horrific than the one above it; some with freezing cold, others with bubbling lava and fierce demons gleefully prodding you with their pitchforks – for ever and ever. Which one do you think you will spend Eternity in?

Johnson had known nothing of the Circles of Hell that night as he hurried back to his flat that stormy evening, eager to relax with his new adult movie. How as he to know that there are witches out there and that he was about to meet a real, live one? He had always thought that they were just silly fantasies in video games for dull, retarded children. Certainly, that was what in his subconscious when the rag-wearing hag jumped out in front of him.

‘Spare some coppers for an old lady’, the hideous wretch whined ‘I ain’t eaten since last Thursday. Spare a few coppers and I’ll bring you luck.’

Johnson glared and flicked the butt of his last cigarette at her, narrowly missing an eye.

‘Out of my bloody way you old bitch,’ he snapped and made to push past her.

‘Please sir,’ the crone pleaded, ‘Just a few coppers.’

Johnson wasn’t quite sure why he did it, but he pushed her away so violently that she bounced off the nearby wall and fell at his feet like a pile of discarded rags. He glanced around to see if the scene had been witnessed, wondering if he should stop and at least apologise for the trickle of blood that was now making its way along the pavement but the call of the adult movie was too strong and, anyway, people like this old woman were simply too damn ugly to make it worth his while.

He had just taken one step onward when he felt a bony hand on his shoulder. He spun around to face the withered creature.

‘You are cursed!’ the old woman hissed, her hideous features made more hideous by burning hatred, ‘Madame Agatha curses you to be dragged to the Fifth Circle of Hell!’

Johnson found himself strangely shocked by this display of rage but decided that this was no time to display weakness.

‘Crawl back under your stone you *<Expletive Deleted>* bag of *<Expletive Deleted>*. I’m a very important guy and people like you should be put down!’

The old woman did not appear to be listening and continued: ‘Before midnight tomorrow you will see a ring and then a Fire Demon will appear and drag you to the Fifth Circle. Madame Agatha never lies!’

Johnson was about to deliver another withering insult when something happened that turned him rigid with eye-popping fear. There had been a small puff of violet smoke and a blood red little imp had appeared on Madame Agatha’s left shoulder. Another violet puff and a snot green imp appeared on the other shoulder. Bothimps leered horribly at Johnson. He ran all the way home.

After a nightmare-filled night, he faced the fateful day as a firm believer in the occult and witches in general and in Madame Agatha in particular.

But it all seemed so simple – all he had to do was avoid seeing a ring before midnight that day. Avoid it until the witching hour and then he could decorate his flat with Olympic flags if he wanted to (or Madame Agatha's guts, his mind added vengefully).

First of all, he had to stay indoors all day. If he went outside his first glimpse of a car or a bicycle would damn him.

'Stay in all day', he thought, over and over, 'Do not look at anything that could be interpreted as a ring.'

He looked around the flat through narrowed eyelids. What circular objects were there that he could accidentally see? His clock was OK; it was digital. He didn't own any LPs or CDs. His table was rectangular, as was the mirror on the wall. He decided to have his reflection give him a reassuring grin and was halfway to the mirror when it hit him – his eyes! – if he saw his own pupils, they would be circular and damn him. He approached the mirror from the side and turned it reflecting side to the wall. He wiped his forehead, conscious that his close escape had caused blobs of cold sweat to break out. He sat down heavily, looking furtively around, desperately trying to think of other circular traps waiting for him. As he turned his head, he noticed a shaft of golden sunlight illuminating the floor near his main window. Ah, to see the sky again, Johnson thought, that would calm his nerves.

He was almost at the window when once again he realised his folly – he'd done it again! If he saw the sun it would be the end; even if it were behind clouds, there were such things as haloes.

Traps everywhere! But then a steely determination came over him. He would beat Madame Agatha and then strangle her with one of her own filthy rags!

He closed the blinds and sat back down, breathing heavily. He was certain that there was nothing even vaguely circular in the flat. All he had to do was sit it out.

The hours crawled by, each one feeling like a century. He had no appetite for a meal but nibbled some dry crackers – rectangular of course. As midnight approached the strain on his nerves became intolerable. He paced back and forth like a wounded animal. He'd give anything for a drink. Wait a minute! – had he finished that whisky? Was the bottle still in the drawer? He opened it. There was no whisky but, joy of joys, a cigarette packet! His heart sank as he snatched it out of the drawer – it felt empty – but no! there was one inside and flat as a flatworm so there was no chance of seeing a circle. He glanced at the clock – five minutes to midnight. He'd done it. He'd won.

'You messed with the wrong man this time you *<Expletive Deleted>* bag of *<Expletive Deleted>*!' he shouted out loud. He felt the tension slowly fade away as he sat back down in his armchair. After a slight panic that the cigarette might be too flat to light, Johnson was gratified to see the end glow a cheerful red. He drew the comforting smoke deep into his lungs. It was bliss! And then, as he always did, he blew out a perfect smoke ring.

Madame Agatha wasn't always entirely truthful when it came to her curses. When the Fire Demon appeared, it dragged Johnson to the Seventh Circle of Hell, not the Fifth.

Perhaps one day you'll meet him there.

New Challenges - Dave Woolven's Responses

School experiences.

I started in St Woolos School in 1947 at the age of 5. In those days we all sat in rows, we listened to what our teachers had to say, we learned our alphabet and times tables by rote - once learned, never forgotten even after 70 years. We all wore the same uniform - grey scabby knees & matching necks, home knitted jumpers with stiff sleeves (you had to wipe your perpetually snotty nose on something), some classmates had mobile dandruff. We were dirt poor but we didn't know it because everyone we knew was the same. Yet - it was a good time, the teachers were dedicated & did everything they could for us, teaching us everything including respect and duty. I enjoyed my school years.

Favourite books

When in St Woolos Primary School, our class was marched in a crocodile down to the Central Library in Dock St. We were given a tour of the building including the strong room, then all given cards to be filled in by our parents, after which I received my library card. Central was divided into two parts - children on one side, adults on the other. The books that I can remember best were the "Twins" series telling of life of a pair of twins in different countries & different eras; 'Just William' with his Outlaws and Violet Elizabeth Bott who threatened to 'thream and thcream and thcream until she was sick' if she couldn't join the Outlaws. Then onto Biggles - I have half a dozen of my own books in the attic given as birthday & Christmas presents. Some years later I found out about Science Fiction (cowboys with goldfish bowls on their heads) - many stories were written by scientists who had some outlandish ideas that could only be expressed as novels - some of those ideas are now very relevant today. I was an avid reader until the day I lost my beloved wife. I've only now just started reading again.

Childhood hobbies

I've been interested in making things including models since receiving my first train set at about 7 years of age. At about 11 or 12 I was into making model aircraft powered either by rubber bands or solid fuel jet engines. I also made several music boxes - several of the planes & boxes are in my attic. In those days there was either little to help model making or was outside the range of pocket money. My 'craft knife' was half of a discarded 7 o'clock razor blade which cut fingers to ribbons, mother's dress making pins to hold bits until the glue dried, the edge of a matchbox to sand the balsa wood. In later years I went into model engineering - this is the process of turning expensive metal into scrap. When I lost my beloved wife, I locked my shed and walked away.

Oh Dear!!!

I just rang B & Q and asked, "How big is the queue?"

He said, "It's the same size as the B".



Via Barbara Phillips from her brother

Back In The Day by John Williams

Back in the day
all I had was
cash, comb, condom
and your caress.

Now forget all four
add denture, hearing aid
specs and stick
and your retreating back.

When did my poetry
reverse to prose?
like a jack-booted,
scent of rose.

Am I the living dead?
sans dancing, sport
jazz, company.
imprisoned in silvered glass.

Once days didn't drag on for a week of Welsh Sundays
trains, buses ran full
and people weren't
afraid of cough or sneeze.

Grandpa was safe
in care home
no one wore a T-shirt
over their nose.

Now my only thrill, now
is whooshing, wheeling downhill
and fading echoes of you
in spring's view.

The Dolls – and the Money submitted by Barbara Phillips

A man and woman had been married for more than 60 years. They had shared everything. They had talked about everything. They had kept no secrets from each other except that the little old woman had a shoe box in the top of her cupboard that she had cautioned her husband never to open or ask her about. For all of these years, he had never thought about the box, but one day the little old woman got very sick and the doctor said she would not recover.

In trying to sort out their affairs, the little old man took down the shoe box and took it to his wife's bedside. She agreed that it was time that he should know what was in the box. When he opened it, he found two knitted dolls and a stack of money totalling £95,000. He asked her about the contents. 'When we were to be married,' she said, 'my grandmother told me the secret of a happy marriage was to never argue. She told me that if I ever got angry with you, I should just keep quiet and knit a doll.' The little old man was so moved; he had to fight back tears. Only two precious dolls were in the box. She had only been angry with him twice in all those years of living and loving! He almost burst with happiness.

'Honey,' he said, 'that explains the dolls, but what about all of this money? Where did it come from?'
'Oh,' she said, 'that's the money I made from selling the dolls.'

I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY by Ann Anderson

Once upon a time, or so it seems to me, at Christmas my milkman asked if I would like to purchase a raffle ticket which was in aid of a local charity. I replied in the affirmative, but added that I never had any luck with this sort of thing.

However, I was mistaken, because guess who won the first prize of a large turkey which gave us great satisfaction as our Christmas dinner.

Not long afterward my sister, Liz told me excitedly that she had won a cross-channel ferry trip in a competition. This got me thinking and so started an era of our lives when we adopted a new hobby, that of entering competitions.

I started by picking up leaflets that were distributed around our local Asda store at Duffryn. These leaflets were, of course, advertising ploys and encouraged you to buy all sorts of products such as beer, chopped ham or cornflakes. Guess what! - within a month we had won a trip to Paris. All you had to do was to work out how many tins of Plumrose chopped meat it would take to reach the top of the Eiffel Tower. As arithmetic was my most hated subject in school I left the calculations to my better half. We bought some tins and calculated. Of course, I am sure there was a slogan to write, but I cannot remember what we said. I can assure you, though, it was not rocket science. Off we went to Paris, all expenses paid, for a very cold but exciting weekend that Winter.

Over the next 10 years or more we continued entering competitions, many of them in the local South Wales Argus. We won tickets to concerts in Newport and Cardiff, a mountain bike, a microwave, wine, meals out, chocolates and hampers. Our luck had really changed.

We also continued to win holidays one of which was with Heineken Lager. This was a big sporting competition with many holidays connected to various sports venues around the world. We did not play golf, which made it even more surprising that we won a holiday to the Penina Golfing Hotel in Portugal. As we were not golfers we could not take advantage of the great golf facilities. However, it was a top-class hotel and as we made up a group with 8 other winners we had a very good time on the Algarve. To add to the exciting event the Scottish world cup squad were also staying at the hotel and I had my photo taken with the team and Kenny Dalglish. I will try to dig out the photos and attach them for you to see.

The best prize I ever won, however, was the American Dream Holiday on our new local radio station in Cardiff Bay. For a chance to win, it was announced, you were asked to ring the station every time a record was played by Shirley Bassey or Tom Jones. I listened for a few days as this was happening, then one quiet Saturday morning I sat in the lounge and before every record came on I dialled ahead of it. Bingo, eventually I got through and went into the draw. At the end of the week I received a phone call from Capital to ask if I would be available early on Saturday morning as I was one of the entrants that might receive a phone call about the competition. I forgot to tell my husband about the phone call. The next morning, early, when we were still planting Z's the phone rang. Michael answered and passed the telephone to me. Half asleep still, I became aware that this was live on air, the programme was called 'Its George'. George told me that I had been chosen to answer a question, which was the final part of the competition. The question was 'the first president of the USA and the present one have the same Christian name - what is it? My brain was still asleep and not functioning. Michael, meanwhile having realised what was happening was whispering in my ear 'Its George'. Senses functioning again, I replied, down the phone, Its George. Bells rang and canons boomed on the radio station and yes I had won the American Dream Holiday and was broadcast live shouting hooray for the rest of the day.

We could choose where to go in America from a selection of holidays. Michael and I finally plumped for Memphis and Nashville as this was a part of the USA that we had not already visited. As we would be near New Orleans we decided to visit there also at our own expense. We flew into New Orleans first and stayed in a brightly lit hotel in Bourbon Street, spent about 3 days visiting all the tourist haunts and listening to all the unique jazz band and players, plus eating plenty of gumbo and the likes. Next we flew to Memphis and were lucky again as that weekend there was a Fete called 'Memphis in May' being held. In the evening the city became pedestrianised and in all the main square bands were playing. In the main square Brenda Lee was being advertised. We did not think it would be the real lady, but it was. We even managed to sit in the front row and it was a top class show she put on. Afterward this was followed by a Light show that was truly amazing. I expect you can guess where we went the following day, but in case you can't, it was Gracelands. Memphis is of course famous for being Elvis Presley's home town. I had always enjoyed Elvis's music and films, but my elder cousin had been more of a fan than me. I, being a bit younger, preferred Adam Faith or Bobby Vee at that time, before 'The Beatles' came along. Gracelands is not really what you would expect. It is quite homely and not really a large estate. It is, however, a very interesting place to visit. Elvis and his family are buried around the fish pond in the side meditation garden. They had to be removed from the local cemetery because of the number of fans visiting and disturbing the graves. You could not go upstairs in the house because Elvis's Aunt still lived there, but we could visit the jungle room where all the walls and ceiling were covered in grass. At the end of our tour, in the gift shop we met Elvis's Uncle Vester, who use to be his doorman at the famous musical gates. He was promoting his book and he told us that fans who use to gather at the gates would be invited into the house when Elvis was there, but that later on he was a very sick boy. We bought Uncle Vester's book entitled A Presley Speaks and he signed it for us. Looking up on-line this week it could be sold for £100 to collectors. I could spend all day telling you about all the motorbikes, cars, planes, gold records and memorabilia that make Gracelands such an interesting place to visit. I want, however, to move on and tell you about the other treasures of Memphis and Nashville.

Next we visited Mud Island which is just across from the promenade on the riverside in Memphis. It was a lovely warm day in May and being a little short of time we decided we not to visit the museum there, which in hindsight I regret because it held lots of interesting artefacts about the Mississippi riverboats and native Americans right up until recent times. What I do remember most about the Island, in fact the only thing, is that the Memphis Belle was there. How many of you remember her? She was a famous American World War 2 Fighter Plane that undertook many actions over Germany. After the war she was returned to America and was on show in Memphis for many years. She is now in a museum in Utah where she has been refurbished. She was famous also for a risqué art featuring a scantily clad pin up girl. Why Belle, what a life you have had!

Memphis is also home to Beale Street, the birth of the blues and next we took a trot down this historic, musical street to pay homage. Lots of bars and restaurants and statues to famous blues artists such as Fats Domino and Elvis so I am sure we would have stopped for a beverage or two to toast the home of the blues. I forgot to tell you we were given £500 spending money on this holiday, as part of the prize, so we could afford a glass or two.

One of my fondest memories of Memphis, however was of a different kind. This happened at the Peabody Hotel. The Peabody's story as one of the grandest, most historic hotels in Memphis dates back to 1869. It was the 85 year old tradition of the 'March of the Peabody Ducks' that is my most treasured memory. Every day at 11 am and 5 pm crowds gather in the foyer of the hotel to see the ducks that live on the roof, march down, after a fanfare is played, to the garden fountain in the morning or back up to the roof pool in the evening. How this started was that in 1930, Frank Schutt, who was the general manager went on a weekend hunting trip. They had a little too much Tennessee whisky and decided it would be fun to put the live ducks that were used as decoys in those days, into the hotels beautiful fountain as a dare and so it began. In 1940 Bellman Edward Pembroke (what a name) a former circus animal trainer, volunteered

to train the ducks to march to music and he stayed looking after the ducks until he retired in 1991. We booked afternoon tea here, which was very sophisticated and every one came dressed up in their best bib and tucker.

Our last stop on our whirlwind tour of the deep south, or some of, was Nashville. Here again, like many other cities in the States, we were overwhelmed by places to visit. We chose the three that interested us the most. One was musical, one was of an historic basis and one was the Jack Daniels Distillery in Lynchberg, Tennessee. We belong to Newport beer and wine makers society so are interested in how they are produced. That's our excuse anyway! Lynchberg is situated in Orange County which is a dry county and you cannot buy any alcohol at the distillery or even taste it. The guide who took us around spoke like a character out of the "Beverly Hill Billies" and Michael could not understand a word he said. I spent my whole visit as an interpreter for him and all for a glass of lemonade. We did however manage to buy a Jack Daniels cake in a tin to take home from this quaint American town.

Our musical choice was the Grand Old Opry. Do they still have it on the radio today? It was situated in Opryland which was a very successful theme park, very similar to Disneyland, but it closed in 1997 and was made into a shopping mall. It was very successful and had thousands of visitors but I suppose they thought they would make more money as a mall. We booked a show, and boy was it worth it. If you are a country and western fan you will know the names of Garth Brooks, Skeeter Davis and Steamboat Willy who headed the cast that night and gave us a night to remember. Whilst in Nashville we also visited the Country Hall of Fame which was a type of museum to Country music which we have always been fans.

Our third choice was our historic one, and we visited a Native American Museum Camp. The camp was set out as it would have been over a century ago and native American guides showed us around and explained how they would have lived and the history of the tribes in that area. We flew back home the next day. I hope I have remembered everything correctly, but bear with me if I have not because I believe it was 31 years ago.

We still do the odd competition in the Sunday Times and continue to win raffle prizes, I even was a winner in the U3A draw last Christmas, but it is no longer a hobby for us. I have always been quite lucky at the at Horserace Meetings. My husband enjoys going to Chepstow and we have been to other meetings over the years. My best luck was at Royal Ascot when I visited with a group of girlfriends. I bet on nearly every winner and came home a lot richer than when I went. I am still trying to win the lottery, but so far have not been successful. You can't win them all. However, I will finish with what is always good advice. You have to be in it to win it.





Graceland Mansion in the Snow



The Famous Musical Gate of Graceland

Desert Island Challenge part 2 – Mike Brown

Part 1 of Mike Desert Island Challenge appeared in DIT 12.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) Symphony No. 8 in C minor, Op. 65.

Dimitri Shostakovich is a rare figure in modern music: a composer who, having achieved international success when still in his teens, went on to become the leading light in Russian music of the Soviet era and a mainstay of concert halls in Europe and America - championed by many international conductors and musicians. Yet this fame was to be increasingly accompanied by a constant debate between East and West over just what his music was about; an ideological battle that has only increased over the years since his death. Many of his works were written under the pressure of government-imposed standards of Soviet art. The debate was whether he was compliant or a closet dissident! When he wrote the 8th Symphony, Shostakovich was not too concerned about disguising the tone of resignation and pessimism. He may have considered that in wartime this would be acceptable to the authorities since the cause of sorrow and despair was an external agent, legitimately regarded as a wicked enemy of the Soviets. But this was not to be. The work was singled out for censure as the whole conception of it was considered to be one sided and dwelt far too much on the dark and fearful aspects of reality. In his posthumously published memoirs, however, Shostakovich claimed that the 8th Symphony was even more subversive than his critics realised. It was his Requiem, he revealed, not just for those who perished in the war, but also for his fellow countrymen killed on Stalin's orders before the war. At the end of 5 movements of frenzy and terror the tension of the symphony is not resolved, rather a kind of hypnotised stillness falls - horror remains but all emotion is spent <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1D-MNLNgNo>

Sir Granville Bantock (1868-1946) The Cyprian Goddess (Symphony No. 3) 1938/39

Despite his obvious talent for music, it was only with the greatest difficulty that Granville Bantock persuaded his father to allow him to study at the Royal Academy of Music. His father had a point: the career of a musician in Victorian England was by no means certain and certainly not a suitable profession for the son of an eminent surgeon. But the young Bantock, already a prolific composer, had his way and entered the Academy in 1889. Later, in 1908, he became Peyton Professor of Music at Birmingham University, in succession to Sir Edward Elgar. By now he had become a man of exceptionally wide culture with boundless curiosity and unlimited energy and with everything he did made a lively and indelible impression. As might be expected then, Bantock composed works that were not only on the largest scale, but also heroic and exotic in theme. His passion for languages led him to study not only Latin and Greek, but also Persian! In the 1930s, while touring overseas for Trinity College of Music, he wrote his 3rd symphony 'The Cyprian Goddess' which he subtitled 'Aphrodite in Cyprus'. Aphrodite is, of course, the Goddess of Love and in this symphony he prefaces the score with 2 Latin verses from one of Horace's Odes. The music plays continuously, but consists of a variety of contrasting sections and gives the feeling of a succession of striking images. Bantock provides us with no detailed programme, but from time to time he writes an English translation of a classical quotation above the score, thus indicating the major milestones of the symphony. This may have been a strange work to have written at the turn of 1938/39 but Bantock's dream of Aphrodite and of a happier time is vivid and gripping as he summons forth an antique world.

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) Four Sea Interludes from the opera "Peter Grimes".

Benjamin Britten was born in Lowestoft on 22nd November, a day that traditionally honours Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of music. At 14 he had written string quartets, piano sonatas, songs, a symphony and an oratorio. Early lessons with the composer Frank Bridge proved an inspiration to him and although studies at the Royal College of Music were less satisfactory, Britten ended his formal schooling in 1934 with impressive technical accomplishments. Then in 1937, in honouring his old teacher with the "Orchestral Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge", he won international acclaim at the Salzburg Festival. Britten first met the tenor Peter Pears back in 1934, but it was in 1937 that a relationship began that was to continue until Britten's death. As the uneasy decade of the 1930's drew to a close, Britten and Pears

made the decision to sail to North America, first stopping in Canada and then moving on to the USA. When the 2nd World War began, Britten and Pears turned for advice to the British Embassy in Washington and were told that they should remain in the US as artistic ambassadors. Pears wasn't keen on the idea and Britten also felt the urge to return home but accepted the Embassy's request and persuaded Pears to do the same. During the Californian Summer of 1941, Britten discovered the work of the poet George Crabbe (1755-1832) and was particularly impressed by "The Borough", with its characters from the life of his own native East Anglia. This awakened in him such longings for England that he knew he must return. He also knew that he must write an opera about the tormented fisherman Peter Grimes. Britten and Pears returned to England in April 1942. "Peter Grimes" opened in June 1945, a month after the cessation of hostilities in Europe. It was an immediate and decisive success. The North Sea was the protagonist and in these finely-imagined contrasting seascapes Britten captured its essence. In the opera their function is to set the mood for each of the phases through which the drama passes, but no knowledge of their context is necessary when they are abstracted for concert performance as a sequence of sea -pictures.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ht9mQE6X0C0>

Bela Bartok (1881-1945) "Divertimento for Strings"

The Hungarian composer Bela Bartok was born in 1881 in an area that now forms part of Romania. His father, director of an agricultural college, was a keen amateur musician, while it was from his mother that he received his early piano lessons. The death of his father in 1889 led to a less settled existence, as his mother resumed work as a teacher, eventually settling in Pozsony, now Bratislava the capital of Slovakia, where Bartok spent his early adolescence. Offered the chance of musical training in Vienna he chose instead Budapest, where he won considerable reputation as a pianist, being appointed to the teaching staff of the Academy of Music in 1907. As a composer, however, he found acceptance much more difficult, particularly in his own country, which was, in any case suffering with serious political troubles which worried him. Meanwhile, his reputation abroad grew, certainly among those with an interest in contemporary music. That external events do not always affect the nature of a composer's music is borne out by Bartok's "Divertimento for Strings" , which resulted from his friendship with Paul Sacher, who commissioned it for his famous Basle Chamber Orchestra. It is straightforward and light-hearted in mood, yet it was written during the period when he was preparing for his flight to the U.S.A. to escape the political dangers which threatened him in his native Hungary. The Divertimento was composed in a matter of 15 days in a chalet in Switzerland that Sacher had placed at Bartok's disposal. Apart from the central slow movement with its darker overtones, the music is a diversion in its gaiety and wit. Light in mood it is nevertheless structured with considerable subtlety. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrzjzHOyAEs>

Herbert Howells (1892-1983) Elegy for Solo Viola, String Quartet and String Orchestra.

Why a composer as brilliant and individual as Herbert Howells made almost no reputation as an orchestral composer in his lifetime must surely be the outcome of his own uncertainty of feeling towards his glorious orchestral music. Yet he left well over a dozen highly characteristic orchestral works including two piano concertos. Altogether, Howells wrote several hundred works and performances have now begun to be given since his death. Howells was a West-Country composer who responded to the power of landscape and to place, evoking the countryside of the River Severn in several works. He was born of a long-established local family at Lydney in Gloucestershire on the western bank of the Severn, well on the way to Tintern and the Welsh border. Not far to the north lay Gloucester with its cathedral where, at the age of sixteen he became a pupil of Herbert Brewer, cathedral organist and composer. The most profound influences on Howells were Elgar and Vaughan Williams and perhaps the most abiding impact came when he was present at the first performance of Vaughan Williams' "Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis" at the 1910 Three Choirs Festival. Howells remarked that it changed his life. It is rather strange that when Howells wrote his own note on the "Elegy for Solo Viola, String Quartet and String Orchestra" he fails to mention one obvious fact: that it is modelled in layout on - though not directly imitative of - Vaughan Williams' Fantasia! The Elegy was composed in 1917, and first performed at the Mons Memorial Concert at the Royal Albert Hall in the same year. It is inscribed to the memory of Francis Purcell Warren, a fellow student of Howells at the Royal College of Music in the years of the First World War. He was a viola scholar

and composer. This Elegy was composed soon after his death. The composer said of the work "It is not in the least 'heroic': It was entirely dominated (in my mind) by the personality of my friend". The constant adapting and developing of texture is one of the highlights of the work. From the distant viola solo opening, to using a full string orchestra and quartet, who are also split in parts to create even denser harmony. The texture is an ever-developing factor throughout.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVR12R0qs30>

Travel Mishaps by Gerald Lee

Rosalind and I have been on many holidays since we married in 1977. It would be true that we have enjoyed the majority of our trips, but this time I would like to share with you two occasions when we had less happy memories.

Our first trip as a married couple was naturally our honeymoon. We went to the island of Guernsey in February 1977. First of all, we had to fly to Jersey and then in a most peculiar plane with three engines, one in the nose and one on each wing, to Guernsey. It felt like travelling in a flying minibus as we were sat behind the pilot.

We stayed in a very pleasant hotel run by a married couple. The husband was Dutch and his wife, by coincidence, was from Northern Ireland. There were two other honeymoon couples staying in the hotel.

One morning at breakfast the proprietor told us she was hosting a social evening for some hoteliers and representatives of the Tourist Board. The speaker was a member of the tourist board and would be giving an illustrated talk on Guernsey.

There was very little in the way of entertainment, so all the guests decided to go.

The speaker introduced himself. He explained he had assembled this collection of slides over many years. It was quite extensive and whilst the hotel guests were welcome to attend, he would appreciate it if we stayed quiet throughout.

He then began to show his slides. They were terrible. Most were underexposed or out of focus.

One was almost completely black with just a shadowy figure. He said this was a picture of a eucalyptus tree. It was the most northerly tree of this type in the world. One of the guests said afterwards he knew of a tree in Scotland.

Another picture was of a crowd with just rows of heads visible. This, he said, was an exhibition of folk dancing. Unfortunately, just at the point when he was about to take the photograph someone had knocked his elbow.

Another picture showed a lightly out of focus image of a girl with her arm in a sling, sitting in the back of a cart. This was his daughter. He then launched into a really boring story about his daughter falling off a horse. She had broken her arm. Rather improbably he said the doctor had interrupted his evening meal to tend to her and then returned to finish it.

Of course, no-one could say very much at the time, but really it was quite embarrassing as clearly, he thought it had been a great achievement to put the talk together.

Another memory was our trip to the Island of Sark. It was rather bleak without motor cars. The public telephone had a wooden box and the telephone number was Sark 6.

The weather was very mild in Guernsey. It was an attractive place to visit, although we have never thought of going back.

In my previous article I mentioned how an interest in languages could be useful.

We both love Majorca and have been there several times. There are some interesting trips. We decided to go on day trip to Soler in the west of the island, which had connections to Chopin.

It was a beautiful sunny day. We stopped for lunch and went to a nearby restaurant for a meal.

When we came to look for our bus we could not remember where we had to meet. The whole of the town was just rows and rows of identical cafes and white buildings. We found a bus park, but could not recognise the bus that had brought us.

In the heat and lack of any Spanish we began to panic. We knew part of the trip was a train journey, so we made our way to the railway station. The only groups we saw were German.

Rosalind and I were sat on a bench wondering what to do. We made room for an elderly German lady, who, by chance, spoke a little English. She described her group representative as 'sehr elegant'

She asked her son to fetch her. She spoke very good English. With my German we managed to explain our predicament. She was very sympathetic. Their final hotel was not far from ours, so she invited us to travel back with her party.

The Germans must have wondered who this strange couple were. There were enough seats in their carriage for us to travel on the train again and then sit at the back on their bus.

Having a knowledge of German, I could tell the commentary was the same as that of the English guides, even the same joke as we passed the prison, that it was the best accommodation in the island.

Eventually, tired and very much relieved we arrived at the German party's hotel. It was only a short taxi journey to our hotel. The German rep had been extremely helpful.

We met someone who had been on the same trip a couple of days later. He said the guide had been extremely angry. After many years as a guide it was the first time he had lost anyone.

This is the proof that a knowledge of languages can help in the most unexpected situations.

If I can give any advice always try to make a note of where you have to meet, the street name, and any landmarks. A knowledge of the language is helpful too.

Maybe soon we can begin our travels again, hopefully without too many mishaps.

The Towpath by Rosalind Lee



Down on the towpath, where it's very narrow
I saw a lovely sight of pretty meadow yarrow
The moor hens were skittish, darting in the reeds
Along the bank the dandelions shed their seeds

The buttercups, all faces open in the sunny light
And the kingcups large and yellow, what a sight.
The hedgerows and ivy with the clovers in between
While above the squirrels were heard but not seen

Sometimes, if you're lucky, a kingfisher flashes along
A quick dart of electric blue and then he is gone
The old lock keeper's cottage is lived in and still there
The lock still works, for barges at the barges fair.

Further on, the swan's nest built out of branches
You cannot help but look at it, with admiring glances.
The cygnets look so pretty as they paddle down the stream
But not far behind, watching, the pen and cob are seen.

Opposite the towpath is the marsh and reeds.
Where wild irises grow amongst the weeds
The boardwalk stretches bleached, over the wet ponds.
Flies and water boatmen skitter amongst the fronds.

This is the towpath with all that it holds to see
You can walk along there and feel calm and free
In all different seasons sunny or full of snow
You can still go there and watch the water flow.

Can I please remind you to send in some of your memories or "favourites"? Dave Woolven has started us well and Gerald Lee's article on Travel Mishaps reminds us that not all trips are as pleasant as we might wish! It would be great to have your view of things in the past – and we really want you to share them with us. Don't forget – these are only suggestions. Articles and stories on any subject are welcome, as are quizzes, jokes – and, indeed, anything I have left off this list!