

# DESERT ISLAND TIMES

*Sharing fellowship in*  
NEWPORT SE WALES U3A

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*The Old Green from Kingsway, c1968*

*A MISCELLANY OF  
CONTRIBUTIONS  
FROM OUR MEMBERS*

## **50 Mile Challenge - Penarth - Mike Brown**

We like to visit Penarth several times a year. With its elegant buildings and wide tree-lined streets, Penarth retains much of its original Victorian and Edwardian character. Sometimes we get there early to watch the Balmoral embarking on a cruise. visit - <http://www.waverleyexcursions.co.uk>

We drive through the town centre and then left at the Town Clock Roundabout and park in a side street. We walk back to the roundabout (WCs in the vicinity) then first left down Windsor Terrace towards the sea, crossing the road into Alexandra Park. There are panoramic views of the Bristol Channel as we make our way down towards the sea front past colourful ornamental gardens, leafy glades, a fishpond, aviary and the bandstand.

\*\*\*Crossing Bridgeman Road we enter Windsor Gardens with more floral displays and sea views. Bordering the park are magnificent large town houses of local blue lias stone, once the homes of sea captains, coal magnates and businessmen: some have been converted to retirement homes.

We exit onto Cliff Hill and cross the road onto Telegraph Way. This is a mile-long cliff-top path that leads to Lavernock Point. There is a plaque on the church wall to commemorate Marconi's first transmitted radio signal across open sea to the island of Flatholm, from here, on 13th May 1897.

We quickly retrace our steps eager to get an outside table at Romeo's Restaurant on the Esplanade. One can almost be on holiday in the Mediterranean whilst we enjoy a reasonably priced two course Italian meal with a sea view.

Afterwards we continue along the Esplanade with a detour through the Italian Gardens to appreciate its palm trees and exotic plants. This is a classy seaside resort with no shops or noisy slot machines and it's no wonder they call it The Garden by the Sea. If we are not too full, an ice cream on the pier completes our meal before we make our way back to Alexandra Park. Taking the left hand footpath through the Dingle we arrive at the railway station.

Nearby are art galleries at Turner House and the former Art Deco Cinema. Also of note is the Jacobean building that houses the library. It is only a stone's throw to the compact shopping centre where we can purchase some fresh produce from independent traders in the quaint Victorian, glass domed arcade before returning to base.

The walk takes approximately 2 hrs but can be shortened at any point after. \*\*\*



## **THE BLACK TOWER by Martyn Vaughan**

Yes, I remember how I took the good news to my lord as he lay there in chains in the stinking gloom of the Black Tower at Cardiff.

‘My lord,’ I had said, my voice shaking with joy, ‘It will be well! Our great king Edward has pardoned you. Why the Earl of Hereford himself has spoken up for you before his gracious majesty.’

Llywelyn – he that was known as Llywelyn Bren for his love of the woodlands of Glamorgan – had looked up at me where he lay on the pile of matted rushes that barely covered the grey stone of the dungeon. ‘All will be well you say? But this new Lord of Glamorgan, Despenser, he hates we Welsh and will not forget the insult of our brief rebellion.’

*Rebellion?* I thought, and my mind flashed back to that great day when the men of Senghenydd would take no more of the insults and injustices that daily were thrust upon us by our haughty overlords; overlords that saw us as little more than the beasts of the field to be dealt with as they wished. As one we had risen and swept down upon the great castle of Caerphilly, hideous symbol of our oppression which the mighty Marcher Lord Gilbert de Clare (may the pits of Hell find him to their liking!) had built many years prior.

We stormed the drawbridge like an incoming tide, the arrows from our longbows showering down in a rain of steel, piercing chain mail and cuirass alike. Yes, they were not so haughty then as we fired the outer curtain wall and looked down on them scurrying away; afraid to meet us like men.

Ah, if only we could have broken through the second wall and dealt out bloody justice to them as they cowered in the inner ward! But it was not to be; we could not break through that accursed bastion although we slew many men and captured William de Berkerolles himself, he who had said no Welshman would ever set foot in his castle! So, we had to be content with burning the homes of the settlers which had clustered around that monstrous pile like piglets sucking on a sow.

Ah, had you the patience to listen I could give a roll call of the nests of the oppressors which my valiant lord torched in his righteous anger. Did He who redeemed us not drive out the moneylenders from the Temple in his own seemingly wrath? Machen, Rumney, Whitchurch all fell before us and our brave men even reached Newport where they broke the sea walls and let in the hungry waves upon the astounded inhabitants!

All of this had swept through my mind as I looked down on my leader as he lay there on the rushes; rushes wet and soiled with the outflowings of his starved body. Despite all his courage and daring here he was, like garden vermin in a trap. I had been to his house once and seen the evidence of his learning: books in Latin and one even in the language of the oppressors; “Roman de la Rose” it was called, though what that means I know not, as I only speak the Language of Heaven which I learned at my mother’s breast.

But what profit does it yield to continue to rake over the cold ashes of our dreams; to torment ourselves with what might have been? How we could have joined forces with Edward Bruce in Ireland and given him entry to the western ports and how our joint forces could then have swept our enemies back over the Severn and reclaimed our ancient freedoms!

It was not to be. Our gracious King Edward raised two armies, much greater in number than our meagre forces which, like two immense fanged jaws, closed on Llywelyn. I am proud of how he faced that day and the end of his noble dreams. Knowing that we would fight on to the crack of doom if need be but would suffer terrible losses in so doing, he decided to spare us. Outside the castle at Ystrad Fellte he said these words; words that will ring in my head on the day that I am called to Judgement:

“I was the cause of the whole. I will yield myself up for the whole people. It is better that one should die than that the whole nation be banished or put to the sword.”

I was one of those men who would have died that day and I will never forget what he did for us. So, we surrendered and Llywelyn was led away in chains with his wife Lleucu's cries being swept away by the bitter wind so that none but she could hear them.

My mind was snapped back to the present by the sound of Llywelyn pulling himself up into a sitting position. He had to haul himself up using his chains to do so. A dusty ray of sunlight from the single high window fell on his face then and for a moment I was too shocked to speak. Was this still my lord? His face was deeply lined, and his cheeks had become hollow. I would not have been surprised to learn that he had been in fetters for years rather than the short time that had actually elapsed. He touched my leg with a thin hand and immediately I sat down in front of him so our eyes could meet.

'The Earl of Hereford? He has spoken to the king?' His voice was like the thin wind in the eaves of a decaying farmhouse, not the firm, strong masterful voice I had heard ring out on the walls of Caerphilly.

'Yes lord,' I said eagerly, 'And not just him – two of the Mortimers have testified in your defence as well.'

He shook his head. 'And yet, and yet. I have caused the king much grief. I slew many of his subjects at Barry and Llantrisant.'

I tried to smile even though I was not sure my features were visible in the dungeon's gloom now that the lone sunbeam had faded.

'This king is not like his father. Not like dread Longshanks – may his boiled bones be ground into powder for his tomb's plaster! He who put defenceless women into cages and hung them from castle walls! He who gave Dafydd a foul death, hitherto given only to the vilest villein! No, this is a softer king, one who has learned to sheath the sword since Bannockburn. His word is given – he will not turn to falsehood.'

Llywelyn gave a long sigh then. I knew he was not concerned for his own life – his words at Ystrad Fellte were proof of that. No, he was concerned for Lleucu and his sons; concerned that the coming punishment would be just and would fall on him alone and not his family. He was prepared to spend the rest of his life in the cold gloom of this dungeon and never see the mists lifting from the hills of Glamorgan or the sun setting in majesty on the heights of Pen y Fan. Such was the mark of this man.

I was about to kiss those fettered hands and take the news of his fortitude to Lleucu when the great door behind me creaked and then flew open. The smoky red light of flambeaux seemed to bring the fires of Hell into the dimness.

And then I heard the voice. HIS voice. Hugh Despenser's.

'Come out you stinking Welshman. A cur who turned on his gracious master, King Edward II. Come and taste the punishment meted out to traitors in this realm of England.'

I saw fear in Llywelyn's wan face then. All of us knew what the punishment for traitors was ever since Prince Dafydd's time.

I leapt to my feet to stare into Despenser's frog-like face. 'You cannot! The king!'

'Will reward me when he hears,' Despenser rasped, grinning like an ape. 'Take him!'

Two black robed guards with cowls over their heads pushed me aside as if I were made of straw. I raised my fists but was clubbed to the floor and darkness took me.

What more should I say? I awoke in time to hear the roars of approval of the crowd. I rushed out but could not force my way through the throng of baying men that was wrapped around the base of the Black Tower. And though I could hear his screams I did not see them first hang him, then cut him down and then rip his belly open with an iron hook, casting his entrails around like bloody ropes. Although he was not spared, I was.

Despenser was executed years later for many crimes, including this minor one.

And I? I still sit alone on the green hills waiting for the day when I will meet my lord again.

## If you were stranded by Alan Barrow

If you were stranded,  
what should I do  
but come and get you  
and soothe away your cares.

If you were a street hawker  
I'm the one who'd buy up all your wares.

Broke? I'd give you money  
and consider it a great thrill  
if you allowed me to pay your telephone bill.

Does that make me the strangest of blokes?  
I don't know but I know  
if you were a comedienne  
I'd laugh at all your jokes.

If you were Chinese  
I'd learn the language,  
drink specialist teas  
and wear funny clothes  
and I bet, yes I wager  
if you were a bare back Circus rider  
I'd be the sad clown with a red nose.

You are like bread the staff of life  
my love would mutter,  
how I would love to be your butter,  
how I would love for you to be my wife.

If you were my wife  
I'd be your lover  
and dedicate my life  
to you and to no other.

There is no little wonder  
that I can only ponder  
on this and this and that  
for you remain as always My Cat.



## **Famous and Infamous – the Maybrick Family**

In his article “Musical Memories” (DIT 11, page 13), Ian Lumley mentioned that one his father’s favourite songs was “The Holy City”. It is a song which I too learned as a young child, as my mother had a “78” of the song, sung by Richard Crooks. It is still a favourite of mine, but it was very much later in life when I found out what a fascinating story surrounds the life of its composer and his family.

If you have a copy of the music of this song you will see that the words were written by the Dublin Barrister Fred E. Weatherley and the music by Stephen Adams. The composer was one of the most famous of his era, his entire output being 106 songs of the Victorian Ballad genre. Without a doubt, “The Holy City” is his most famous – it is still widely sung and recorded even into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Of the remainder, “The Star of Bethlehem”, “Thora” and “Nirvana” are also powerful – and there are many gems amongst the other 102 as well!

Now this is not an article on a Victorian composer and you might be wondering just how this is of any relevance to the title. In fact, our composer’s real name was not Stephen Adams but Michael Maybrick, who was born in Liverpool on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1884. His father, William, was an engraver and was also the Parish Clerk at the Anglican parish church of Liverpool St Peter. Michael was organist at this church from 1855 to 1865 before he achieved fame as a composer.

The family were slowly climbing the social ladder. William had married Susanna Wainwright in 1834 and they had five sons who survived the perils of infancy – William (1835 – 1915), James (1838 – 1889), Michael (1841 – 1913), Thomas (1846 – 1923) and Edwin (1851 – 1928).

The eldest son, William, appears to have led a fairly ordinary existence, living across the Mersey on the Wirral peninsular for much of it. It is reported that he had little to do with the rest of the family and certainly he doesn’t seem to have acquired either their status or wealth (he didn’t even leave a will, suggesting he had little to leave). Thomas was a successful merchant who spent most of his working life in Manchester and retired to Southport. In contrast to £14436 (around £781,000 at today’s values). The youngest son, Edwin, was a cotton merchant, in partnership with his elder brother James. There was clearly some mystery regarding his life as, although he was a busy cotton merchant, making frequent trips across the Atlantic and in comfortable enough circumstances in 1911 to employ a servant, his estate at death was a mere £39, or around £2400 at today’s values!

Although I mentioned Michael briefly at the start of this article, he was, without doubt, the famous member of the family. He was appointed organist at St Peters, Liverpool, at the age of 14 - and by virtue of his musical ability rather than patronage through his father, who was Parish Clerk. He studied Music at Leipzig and Milan and embarked on a career as a singer, giving his first major public performance in London in 1869. Two years earlier the music publisher John Boosey had started the London Ballad Concerts at St James Hall, London, and his unerring talent for “signing-up” the best singers of the day made these extremely successful. His talents also extended to acquiring for his company the leading composers and in Michael Maybrick he ultimately achieved both ambitions. Initially Maybrick used the pseudonym Stephen Adams for his vocal performances but when Boosey started to publish his songs (from around 1875 - only the first 8 of his 106 compositions were not published by Boosey), he always used his real name as a performer. By all accounts he was not a particularly likeable character and was obviously someone who let his fame “go to his head”. Apart from William, he tended to dominate the family and his brothers barely made a decision without consulting him. For all his faults, he was a very popular composer and one of the few composers of Victorian and Edwardian ballads whose pseudonym at least is still known and whose works still fall into the categories from “Why don’t we hear this more often” to “I’ve known that all my life”. His success in public life can be measured by the fact that he had

both an exclusive flat near Regent's Park in London and a house at Ryde on the Isle of Wight. He was certainly generous to the island and many of its clubs and societies and was elected Mayor of Ryde on no less than five occasions. In financial terms, his estate was £23012 – now equivalent to over £2.5m. Fame and success indeed!

This leaves us only with James. Although a successful cotton broker from the early 1870s, he had initially. Moved to London in 1858 to work as a shipbroker's clerk. He also seems to have been "a bit of a lad" as there was a definite entanglement with a Sarah Ann Robertson, with whom, it is alleged, he had five children. There is no clear record of a marriage although there is evidence that she at least considered herself to be a "common law" wife and her family had similar opinions. He travelled to America frequently and, in 1874, established a branch office of Maybrick & Co, Cotton Merchants, in Norfolk, Virginia. Seven years later he visited Norfolk where he was appointed a director of its Cotton Exchange. While in America he contracted malaria, for the treatment of which he was prescribed arsenic – a common occurrence at that time – something to which he quite soon became addicted.

On a return journey across the Atlantic in 1880 he met Florence Chandler, a 17 year old who was travelling with her mother to Paris. A whirlwind romance led to their marrying in July 1881. It appears to have been a very quiet wedding, a suggestion being made subsequently that this was deliberate so that Sarah Ann should not learn of it! A son was born in 1882.

Following the marriage the couple divided their time equally between England and America until 1884 when James resigned his American directorship and the couple settled permanently in Liverpool. From 1886 their lives seemed to disintegrate quite rapidly. Although a daughter was born in that year, James was becoming something of a drug addict, regularly resorting to strychnine and arsenic, and he was also still keeping Sarah Ann Robertson as his mistress in London. Florence found out about this the following year and yet, despite the fact that the marriage already seemed to be at an effective end, in 1888 the family moved to a much larger house (Battlecrease House) in Riversdale Road, Liverpool. This was extremely well furnished and had large grounds. It was around this time that Florence met a man, Alfred Brierley, a cotton trader like James, and, whether as "tit-for-tat" or out of a genuine attraction, the two began an affair. Things seemed to come to a head on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1889, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Grand National, an event which the family attended – along with family friends including Brierley! At one point James saw Florence and Brierley holding hands – in public – and was furious. There was, to say the least, an altercation, resulting in Florence sporting a black eye on the following morning.

Just a month later James became ill. He had again gone to the races and had received a soaking from an unexpected heavy fall of rain. He had been taking "special medicine he received by post from London" – in fact it was strychnine. Over the next couple of weeks there were consultations with doctors, changes in prescriptions and quite severe ups and downs health-wise.

James died on 11<sup>th</sup> May; just a day or so earlier one of the servants had found flypapers soaking in a bowl in Florence's room. Word spread around the servants that "the mistress is poisoning the master". Only five years earlier two women had been convicted of murder using arsenic extracted from flypapers. Michael Maybrick had been summoned to the house and took charge of things. The inevitable outcome was that Florence was arrested on the charge of murdering her husband. Michael had dragged up all sorts of "evidence" from friends and an exhumation of James' body was ordered. All the medical testimony agreed that death was due to arsenical poisoning – but Michael ensured that the fact of James' addiction was suppressed as far as it possibly could. The Judge spent 12 hours rambling through a grossly distorted summing-up which was weighted heavily against Florence as a confessed adulteress but totally ignored James' misdemeanours in that respect. After only 35 minutes of deliberation the jury returned a Guilty verdict. Florence was condemned to death by hanging, but such was the public outcry about the conduct of the case that the Home Secretary was forced to advise Queen Victoria to commute the sentence to life

imprisonment. The only good thing to come out of this was the effective sacking of the Judge and two years later he was committed to the County Lunatic Asylum.

She spent 15 years in prison and returned to America on her release in 1904 She died, something of a recluse, in 1941.

This article has so far demonstrated that the title is apt – Michael was famous and James and Florence both infamous. But we must proceed with caution – it is by no means certain that Florence was guilty of her husband's murder, despite the verdict at her trial. Just over 100 years later, in the 1990s, something far more disturbing reared its head, something that would, if true, make James even more infamous.

You will remember that James and Florence moved to Battlecrease House in 1888. Although this still exists (under a different name) it has inevitably had a series of owners since and has now been converted into two flats. In April 1989 work on a new heating system was in progress in the flat which included the bedroom which had been occupied by James Maybrick. It seems that one of the electricians employed on the work discovered an old book, wrapped in brown paper, beneath one of the floorboards that he removed. Despite a somewhat hazy period of a few years when this became a case of "pass the parcel" it eventually made its way into the public eye.

What was so special about this book? It had the appearance of a Victoria scrap book from which the first 43 pages had been removed and the last 17 pages of which were blank. It is the intervening pages that took the world by storm, for they purport to be the diary (or, more accurately since no dates are given) the journal of no less a person than Jack the Ripper. The writings are quite frantic and relate to the killings of the five known Ripper victims, with mention of two further victims. Controversy has raged ever since the discovery; experts agree and disagree and it is quite obvious that, with a wide field of suspects, many who favour their own candidates are unlikely to want their theories upset by anybody else! It must be said, though, that the large amount of money that has been poured into carrying out scientific tests on the paper, ink, writing styles and content (as relating to James Maybrick's known proclivities) has meant that it cannot be simply dismissed out of hand.

A further, and slightly more recent discovery, has been a watch dating originally from the late 1840s, and which has "J. Maybrick" scratched on the inside cover, along with the words "I am Jack". It also has the initials of the five canonical Ripper victims. The watch was examined in 1993 by the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, using an electron microscope. They concluded that the engravings pre-date the vast majority of superficial surface scratch marks and that the wear apparent on the engravings, evidenced by the rounded edges of the markings and 'polishing out' in places, would indicate a substantial age. In response to a criticism that the marks could have been forged, there were examined by the Interface Analysis Centre at Bristol University. They expressed the opinion that "it is unlikely that anyone would have sufficient expertise to implant aged, brass particles into the base of the engravings".

Much has been written about James and Florence Maybrick and the possibility that James was Jack the Ripper. He certainly knew the Whitechapel area well and made frequent visits to London; the Ripper murders took place at weekends – the very times when a busy cotton merchant might have the time to make visits to the capital. The last Ripper murder took place late in 1888; James died in May 1889. Though the identity will doubtless be argued over for many years to come and is unlikely to be resolved conclusively, on the balance of probabilities James Maybrick is certainly very high on the list of probables. I personally believe the balance does tip in favour of Maybrick; and there is at least a strong possibility that Michael was involved in something of a "cover-up" by hiding the diary and suppressing facts about James' lifestyle and failings. What a tangled web we weave .....



## What We Were Doing This Week ... Angela Robins

Last year our Saturday Amblers Walking Group went on one of their weekly explorations using their bus passes to get to Risca. Their 3 - 5 mile walks are often planned to coincide with local events and include a refreshment stop at an inn or tea shop. They visited the site of the Black Vein Colliery, infamous for many deaths caused by several explosions. They then went on to the Industrial History Museum in the Grade II Listed Risca Colliers Institute; this houses the best collection of artefacts relating to the industrial heritage of the South Wales Valleys.

Afterwards they walked to Waunfawr Park in Cross Keys where the Forces Services Day was taking place. After visiting the varied stalls they had a well-earned rest and sat by the bandstand and listened to some music performed by The Regimental Band of the Royal Welsh, Cardiff Military Wives Choir and some cadet bands. They certainly know how to squeeze a quart into a pint pot!

The group photograph was taken on another walk - at Blackrock on the River Severn.



## 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.

From this week, although you have four puzzles, each gets progressively more difficult. No 1 is "Easy", No 2 is "Medium", No 3 is "Hard" and No 4 is "Evil". Good luck!

1. Easy

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

2. Medium

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

3. Hard

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

4. Evil

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

## Out of India (part 2) by Ann Anderson

Hyderabad is a city with a history that reads like a love story and with a past that sounds like a fairy tale. My daughter, Karen, on the second day of our visit, took us to one of Hyderabad's main tourist attractions, the Chowmahalla Palace. This was in the centre of the old town of Hyderabad, surrounded by all the hustle and bustle of a thriving metropolis. The Palace of the Nizams, or kings of this area of India, had been the seat of the Asaf Jahr dynasty right up until the British left. The Nizam had chosen not to join the Indian Union after it gained independence in 1947. He wanted Hyderabad to remain independent but the Indian Government launched Operation Pole, which led to the army invading and the Nizam's rule ended in 1948. The descendants of the Nizams now live in Istanbul and are still very wealthy. Their collection of jewels was valued by Sotheby's and estimated to be worth around \$US350m. The collection was bought by the Indian Government in 1995 for \$US70m but the Nizam had to settle most of his tax bill to India, so he never received much of it. They are still the owners of this beautiful palace along with the Falaknuma Palace, now a luxury Heritage Hotel. They were restored with the help of Princess Esra, the first wife of the present titular Nizam from 2005 to 2010.

The Palace, which was originally 45 acres, now measures around 12 acres. It is lavish, opulent and extravagant and was meant to impress as the main home of the king in the city of Pearis. It was built in the 188<sup>th</sup> century but not completed until the 19<sup>th</sup> and its name, Chowmahalla, means four palaces. It was, and still is, magnificent and shows the wealth and influence that the Nizams must have had in Hyderabad and its growth. As I told you in my first article in Desert Island Times (DIT 7, page 2), the Nizam of Hyderabad was said to be the richest man in the world in the 1930s and his palace showed what he and his forbears had spent a lot of their money on. Priceless chandeliers hang in vast luxurious reception rooms and vintage Rolls Royces are just part of the vintage car display there. Beautiful gardens welcomed us as we entered, but the heat must have kept the punkahwallahs very busy before air-con was invented. Visiting the Nizam's Museum a few weeks later we saw a collection of his clothes. It was said that he never wore the same thing twice and the sewing machines of the area were kept busy continuously making new clothes to keep him decent. He must have been a good provider for the local charity shops, don't you think? One of the Nizams, the infamous Osman Ali Khan who died in 1829, had 9 sons and 10 daughters. With the Goloconda mines practically sprouting jewels and hundreds of concubines and children competing for his attention, how did he find time to rule his realm?

To be fair to the Nizams, however, they did not only spend their income on home comforts. They encouraged their subjects by providing education, science and architecture. They were patrons of the arts and encouraged trade as India advanced into modern times. The third Nizam, Mir Akber Ali Khan, had inherited a successful state from his father and, in 1808, a large area north of the city was named Secunderabad and later became the largest British cantonment in India. It was essentially founded to station 5000 troops from the British Garrison. It became a twin city and locals gradually relocated to get away from the hustle of the walled city across the river Muse. I have a personal interest in these historic events because my grandfather served with the British Army in India at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He travelled there with my grandmother and my Aunt Molly who was about three years old at the time. I do not know if my grandmother and his family were stationed at any time here at Hyderabad, but my father was born in India near the border with Pakistan in 1917.

We had booked to go to Kerala for a weekend during our stay in India, but were disappointed because they had developed some cases of the Coronavirus and we had to cancel because of quarantine regulations. My daughter suggested that we visit Puducherry instead as she had enjoyed a previous visit there. I am sure some of you will have watched the recent TV series entitled The Real Marigold Hotel where eight celebrities of around U3A age visited Pondy as it is nostalgically nicknamed. This included Britt Ekland, Dame Sandra Rhodes, Duncan Bannatyne and Paul Chuckle of the Chuckle Brothers to name

just a handful. They visited India to investigate what it would be like to retire to India. Pondicherry, as it was previously named, is one of eight union territories in India and was part of former French India ceded to the French by the British. It does not have a recorded history from antiquity as its history dates only from the advent of colonial powers. It was under French jurisdiction until 1954. The old town still shows the influence the French had on both its cuisine and its colourful restaurants and palaces. We enjoyed a warm and sunny weekend here and spent most of our time in the French Old Town Quarter which was a short tuc-tuc ride away from our more modern hotel base. Because my daughter is a shopaholic we tended to spend a lot of our time shopping. This did not suit my grandchildren – or me, may I add! – especially in that Indian afternoon heat, so we returned early to our hotel poolside, my grandchildren for a dip and a little light refreshment (gin and tonic, a typical Indian pick-me-up for us Brits) for me. We did visit the local temple and went on a boat ride to an idyllic beach. It was, however, very hot and we could swim, only splash around, as the rip tides were dangerous. I was once caught in a rip tide in Australia and, although I am a very strong swimmer and once was a lifeguard at Risca Leisure Centre, I forgot that you have to swim sideways out of a rip and not try to swim forward into it. It was a little frightening to say the least. I shouted to a tall handsome gentleman who was standing in the shallows as there were very few people around, and he came to my rescue and helped me swim out of it.

My daughter wanted to visit Auroville Retreat which is 8km out of Pondy. Auroville is an international community with over 2000 people from around 50 countries. It wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries can live together in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. We hired two tuc-tucs and off we went and spent a very pleasant day looking around the Retreat. I have included a picture of the amazing golden globe that is the centre of Auroville where the volunteers go to meditate. We could only visit the perimeter of the Retreat where there is a museum which sets out all the history and aims of the retreat. There were also some very good restaurants where my family and I partook of a delicious Indian lunch.

I have lots more to tell you about Hyderabad as we visited for over a month in February, but for now here are some photographs of the Chowmenhalla Palace, Pondicherry and the Auroville Retreat.





### Wordsearches submitted by Barbara Phillips

Can you find the 12 words referring to Hamlet in the grid? (Answers on page 24)

A	C	R	E	V	E	N	G	E
M	I	V	C	L	A	O	E	S
S	T	L	U	I	T	I	R	A
E	E	L	E	S	M	T	T	P
T	S	L	O	H	R	A	R	O
R	T	H	S	A	P	R	U	I
E	G	P	G	I	C	O	D	S
A	D	E	A	I	N	H	E	O
L	D	K	C	I	R	O	Y	N
Y	S	N	U	N	N	E	R	Y
O	K	R	A	M	N	E	D	E

Can you find 13 words referring to Greece in the grid? (Answers on page 24)

D	G	M	Y	S	U	E	Z	F
A	I	P	M	Y	L	O	A	L
A	C	R	O	P	O	L	I	S
E	N	C	S	D	I	L	N	E
G	S	S	O	R	E	E	L	D
E	O	N	A	R	G	N	C	O
A	K	K	E	A	I	R	M	H
N	I	S	T	H	E	N	O	R
T	E	T	D	T	T	Z	T	R
A	I	I	E	N	U	A	S	H
P	E	L	C	O	R	F	U	T

## The Saint Stories of Leslie Charteris by Gerald Lee

The character of the Saint as an adventurer owes a little to the Richard Hannay character in 'the 39 Steps,' about whom I wrote in the last issue. The books were extremely successful in the inter war years. In the 1960's they enjoyed a fresh popularity due to the TV series featuring Roger Moore.

Leslie Charteris had a background very different from his hero Simon Templar. He was born in Singapore in 1907. His father was Chinese and a doctor. He claimed noble descent from the Shang emperors of China. His mother was English. When his parents separated he went with his mother to live in England. For a short time he studied law at Kings College. He knew he wanted to be a writer. After working at very many jobs including bus driver, barman, goldminer and professional bridge player, he managed to become a full-time writer. He changed his name by deed poll to Charteris, a name he told his daughter he found in the telephone directory.

The first Saint story 'Meet the Tiger, published in 1928, was his third novel. It does not feature in any Omnibuses for publishing reasons. Leslie Charteris regarded 'Enter the Saint' from 1930 as the first real Saint novel and tended to ignore 'Meet the Tiger.'

We know very little of the character's past. It is hinted that after a life of adventure without purpose he decided to become a modern Robin Hood. He has no obvious income beyond suggestions that when he intervenes to dispense justice to the wronged from the 'boodle' of the 'ungodly,' he takes a 10% commission. The title, the 'Saint,' is derived from his initials 'ST.'

In all Leslie Charteris wrote around 100 stories. After revision some stories written for magazines might reappear as short stories or novellas, or even as television scripts.

Simon Templar in the books is not as solitary a figure as the character in the films and TV series. He has a girlfriend, Patricia Holm. Where she appears, she is an active participant in his adventures, capable of defending herself and very much an equal. She is sometimes a bit impatient when Simon helps a damsel in distress, but never really threatens to part company with him.

They may live together. At that time an unmarried couple living together even in fiction would have been unacceptable. In other books she has her own home.

A very different collaborator also appears in some stories. Hoppy Uniatz is clearly not very bright. He appears to have a past in bootlegging, protection, and any other gangster racket as hired muscle. He thinks he can sort anyone out with his gun, which he refers to as his 'Betsy.' When Simon makes a wisecrack, he takes it literally and puzzles over it, desperately trying to make sense of it, much to Simon's amusement. Sometimes Hoppy and Patricia appear in the same story.

It would seem Simon was once involved with bootleggers and that is where he met Hoppy, either stealing from them, or possibly a bootlegger himself. Mysteriously they meet in one story after a lapse in communication, when back in London Simon traps a burglar in his flat, who just happens to be Hoppy. Hoppy's vice is any whiskey, or if desperate, any alcoholic beverage. A bottle soon disappears, as Hoppy absentmindedly helps himself, until to his surprise, there is none left.

The purpose in life for Simon is summed up in this passage from 'The High Fence':  
'For Simon Templar was the incalculable outlaw for whom the routines of criminal investigation had no precedents. He belonged to no watertight classification, followed no rules but his own, fitted into no definite category. He was the Saint: a creation of his own, comparable to nothing but himself.'

As a character he shows some charm but has no conscience. His childish wisecracks and insulting quips would hardly endear him to anyone, yet he has some loyal retainers besides Patricia and Hoppy.

In his dealings with criminals he is prepared to use methods many would find unacceptable, even in fiction.

In one book he allows a criminal to be hanged for a murder he did not commit, on the basis that he escaped justice for other killings. Similarly, when he escapes being burned to death, he leaves the criminals to be bound and allowed to die in the house fire that they intended to kill him.

In 1932 Leslie Charteris moved to USA. Being half Chinese, he had to renew his residence application every six months. The foil of Templar in the British stories, Inspector Teal, is replaced by an American detective called Fernack.

In USA Charteris wrote for the cinema and radio, but his greatest success remained the Saint stories.

He adapted Sherlock Holmes stories featuring Basil Rathbone for radio. In a bit of a gesture to the Sherlock Holmes stories, where Holmes discusses Dr Watson's chronicling of his cases, in a couple of Saint stories Simon Templar refers to the stories that 'fellow Charteris' writes about him.

In 1940 the character featured in a radio series with Vincent Price as Templar. 'Life' magazine used the Saint in a comic strip, with the author himself portraying the character.

George Sanders acted the Saint in five films, being replaced by Hugh Sinclair. A copyright dispute arose when Sanders portrayed a similar character, 'The Falcon,' which Leslie Charteris claimed was a copy of his creation.

The books sold in millions worldwide. The character was featured in radio series in Ireland and France. If the stories were not always written by Charteris himself, he always retained editorial control.

Generally, the stories are set in an indefinite time. Like William Brown, Simon Templar never ages.

Only in some stories, where in an unspecified arrangement Templar works for the FBI against Nazi saboteurs, is there a definite time period. World events never feature in the stories. The villains are usually of the same cut, corrupt policemen, greedy politicians, or just plain criminals.

In only one story I read does Science Fiction form part of the plot. 'The Man who Liked Ants' is the story of a fanatical scientist who is obsessed by ants to the extent of creating a giant killer variety. Templar kills him and allows the laboratory to be destroyed by fire, another example of his calculated readiness to kill to destroy evil.

He is quite calm the next day and feels no guilt about killing him, either towards the scientist or the niece whom he befriended.

Most of us will know the Saint from the TV series with Roger Moore, which was highly successful worldwide, second only to the 'Avengers' in US popularity.

Leslie Charteris wrote his last Saint story, 'Saint in the Sun,' in 1963. The stories however continued from the 1964 story by Harry Harrison, 'Vendetta for the Saint.' Other writers were Burt Barer and Fleming Lee. Although the stories still showed Charteris as the author, in reality, again he only exercised editorial control.



There have been other attempts to exploit the brand. 'The Return of the Saint' featuring Ian Ogilvy was fairly successful in the 1970's. Rather foolishly, expecting a second series, Ian Ogilvy did not sign a contract that gave him royalties, just his fee for one series.

The Saint was popular in France, spawning two films, 'Le Saint mene la danse' and 'Le Saint Prend l'affut.' As with his later British output, other writers such as Madeleine Mitchel-Tyl ghosted for Charteris.

Leslie Charteris died in 1993. In 1997 his estate authorized a posthumous Saint story by Burt Barer, 'Capture the Saint.' The Saint Club, a charitable society for admirers of the Saint, also endorsed the book.

The success of the character in so many areas makes it difficult for anyone to accurately record all the stories. Plots were recycled for other media. Even some non-Saint stories were rewritten for novels, radio or television. There was even a Saint magazine with short stories by various writers. One would feature the Saint, again with only a tenuous connexion to Charteris. In fact, I remember buying it once on holiday. The Saint story was only described as based on Leslie Charteris' character.

The lockdown has given me the opportunity to read my two volumes of the Saint Omnibus again. It strikes me now how so very well written they are. It has also to be said, Charteris does like the occasional obscure word, so a dictionary is useful.

Personally, I find the shorter stories, probably written for magazines, the most enjoyable. There is a liveliness and touch of humour which is lost in the longer pieces.

At various times since Charteris's death there have been new attempts to produce Saint movies, such that with Val Kilmer in 1997. Like the remake of Hitchcock's '39 Steps' with Kenneth Moore the results are at the very least embarrassing.

My own view is that it is best to return to basics and read the books. I can recommend a good Saint story for a journey on your next holiday, whenever that may be.

### **This could be of interest to our many quizzers!**

**From:** Virtual Ayr U3A <[virtualayru3a@gmail.com](mailto:virtualayru3a@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** 01 July 2020 09:01

**To:** [membershipnewportu3a@gmail.com](mailto:membershipnewportu3a@gmail.com)

**Subject:** InterU3A quiz

Dear U3A member

Last Wednesday saw the first of a series of monthly general knowledge quizzes inspired by lively conversation on the Facebook group U3A Keeping in touch. Ten teams of up to 4 players took part from across the U.K.

Do you have a quiz team or members who might like to compete? The quiz is held virtually on Zoom and streamed to YouTube for spectators. The next quiz will be held on Wed 29th July at 7pm.

For more information and/or an entry form please contact [VirtualAyrU3A@gmail.com](mailto:VirtualAyrU3A@gmail.com).

Regards

Linda Matheson Ayr U3A

## **MUSIC FOR A SUMMER'S DAY by Neil Pritchard**

We all need a "pick me up" at present, and what better way than to 'chill out' than to the sounds of summer. What follows is a journey through 800 years of music written with summer in mind, ranging from Early Music through Baroque and Classical to Pop. Let's begin in the far distant past, in the 13th century to be precise. Can you believe that a notated piece of music has survived that long! Well "Sumer is icumen in" is that piece. This song is one of the oldest songs in the English language. It comes from a miscellany that was in Oxford around 1260 (no composer has been identified).

The fact that the song has survived to the present day is incredible in itself, but there are a number of other fascinating details buried within it:

- First, there are both English lyrics and completely different Latin lyrics.
- It's the first composition known to have used six-part polyphony - six voices singing independent lines
- What do the words mean?

Academics are unsure whether the English lyrics are an innocent description of nature responding to the coming summer, or a bawdy ditty about adultery (the cuckoo is the key here – it's close in sound to the word 'cuckhold'). It's anyone's guess!

But what are those odd-sounding lyrics and what do they mean? Here's a translation by the British Library:

Summer has come in,  
Loudly sing, cuckoo!  
The seed grows and the meadow blooms  
And the wood springs anew,  
Sing, cuckoo!  
The ewe bleats after the lamb  
The cow lows after the calf.  
The bullock stirs, the goat farts,  
Merrily sing, Cuckoo!  
Cuckoo, cuckoo, well you sing, cuckoo;  
Don't ever you stop now,  
Sing cuckoo now. Sing, Cuckoo.  
Sing Cuckoo. Sing cuckoo now!

And so to this fascinating song in a grand modern setting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obPxAMiRiv4>

Ladies and Gentleman, you have just witnessed what is considered the first "artistic" performance in Olympic Ceremony history!

We move now into the 18th century, 1723 to be precise, with a very popular series of four violin concertos known as the Four Seasons, composed by the Italian composer Vivaldi. Vivaldi wrote so many concertos that, much like Haydn and his 104 symphonies, he tended to resort to nicknames rather than numbers. Each concerto of his Four Seasons corresponds to a different season – so it's easy to guess how he nicknamed this particular work.

The music is accompanied by beautiful Italian sonnets, possibly written by Vivaldi himself after he was inspired by painter Marco Ricci's paintings of the seasons. It's even customary in some concerts that a narrator reads the poems before the performance, to bring the musical story to life.

The movements are as follows:

1st Movement:

Under the harsh season's blazing sun, men and flocks languish and pines are scorched. We hear the call of the cuckoo, followed by sweet songs of the turtle dove and finch. Gentle western breezes blow until the ominous north winds suddenly sweep them away. The little shepherd sobs in fear of the violent storm and his destiny.

2nd Movement:

His tired limbs are roused from rest, frightened by the lightning bolts and roaring thunder, as flies and gnats swarm furiously.

3rd Movement:

Alas, his worst fears are realised, as huge hailstones fall from the roaring heavens, cutting the heads from the proudly standing grain. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvDt\\_KtOzbc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvDt_KtOzbc)

(Just in passing: conductors weren't around until the 19th century; the group on this performances are led from the keyboard).

My musical journey now moves into the early Romantic period with a fine example of music inspired by the joys of summer: Beethoven's 6th Symphony, the Pastoral, composed in 1808. I have reproduced here some of the notes below the video which express the scope of this great work:

Beethoven was, in many ways, an urban man, known and revered in Vienna, and central to the city's reputation within European culture at the time. And yet, as the five descriptively titled sections of this piece so amply prove he also had a love of the countryside. The work is one of the first real examples of what became known as 'programme music', that is music that tells a specific story or paints a musical picture of a particular scene. This was just one of the many ways in which Beethoven was a ground-breaking composer.

"The Pastoral" was written almost simultaneously with The 5th Symphony, but differs from it in theme. If Symphony No.5 deals with the struggle and the joy of victory, "The Pastoral" represents the expression of the love the composer had for nature. In a letter to a friend in the summer of 1808 Beethoven said " How happy I am to be able to walk among the shrubs, the trees, the woods, the grass and the rocks! For the woods, the trees and the rocks give man the resonance he needs." When he found refuge in the midst of nature, he jotted down themes inspired by the trill of birds, the trickling of creeks or the rustle of leaves. I've chosen the last two movements of the symphony.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiCjD5bXXQ>

Less than 20 years after the Pastoral Symphony Felix Mendelssohn produced an overture inspired by Shakespeare's comedy A Midsummer Night's Dream. It launched his composing career and became his most popular work. Mendelssohn was only 17 when he conceived the idea of a concert overture to Shakespeare's comedy A Midsummer Night's Dream. In July 1826, he wrote to his sister Fanny, who was traveling: "I've got into the habit of composing in our garden. ... Today or tomorrow I shall go there to dream - A Midsummer Night's Dream." This picture of Mendelssohn composing dreamily in the garden of his family's house suggests composition of this work as a fairly effortless matter, but that wasn't the case. Mendelssohn had completed a substantial portion of the score when he became dissatisfied and began over again. We can be thankful that he lavished such care on his overture as it is one the composer's most appealing works, and surely one of the most accomplished music ever produced by a teenager.

Mendelssohn's composition follows the usual form of a concert overture but introduces unmistakable "musical pictures". Each of the three themes that follow corresponds loosely to one of the three types of characters in the play. What to listen for:

- The light and rapid music at the outset represent Shakespeare's fairies rushing through the forest in the summer,
- The more warmly romantic second melody suggests the lovers lost in the wood.
- Finally, the humorous closing theme represents the rustic tradesmen. We even hear the braying of the hapless Bottom the weaver after he has been given the head of a donkey. This section concludes with the horn calls of Duke Theseus' hunting party.
- Mendelssohn develops these ideas with great imagination, and the overture closes with a repeat of the magic chords of the opening music. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=614ew5HY8vM>

Moving onto the late romantic period I managed to find a lovely work by Tchaikovsky - his "The Seasons" for piano. I must admit I was unfamiliar with it before compiling this "journey" through the music of summer. The Seasons were commissioned from Tchaikovsky by the publisher Nikolay Bernard, for publication in his music journal Nuvellist. They comprised 12 pieces with the 6th one, a Barcarolle, entitled "Summer" (Barcarolles are Venetian folk songs traditionally sung by Gondoliers). On 24 November 1875, Tchaikovsky agreed to Nikolay Bernard's proposal that he should write the cycle The Seasons: "I have received your letter. I am most grateful for your courtesy and readiness to pay me such a high fee. So long as I am spared I shall endeavour to oblige you. I shall send you the first piece shortly, and perhaps the next two or three. If the circumstances are right then they will be done quickly—at the moment I am very much in the mood for piano pieces. Yours P. Tchaikovsky.

In December 1875, Tchaikovsky sent two pieces from Moscow to Bernard. In a letter of 13 December 1875, the composer wrote to him "This evening, or possibly even tomorrow, I am sending you the first two pieces by post. It is not without some trepidation that I send them to you, for fear that you will think them too long or poor. I beg you to give me your candid opinion, so that I can keep in mind your requirements while composing the following pieces ... If the second piece is unsuitable, then write and tell me... If you want me to rewrite The Carnival, then please do not stand on ceremony, and you can be sure that by next time, i.e. by 15th January, I will have written you another". He obviously got a lot of pleasure writing these pieces and you certainly hear that in Summer the piece I have chosen.

The remaining pieces in the cycle were composed in 1876, as indicated by Tchaikovsky's letter to Bernard of 4 February 1876 from St Petersburg: "I wanted today to ask you a favour in person, but I was too embarrassed, and so I address you by letter instead. I very much need the 200 rubles, without which I am unable to leave here. If you could let me have the fee for the remaining pieces on account, then I would be extremely obliged to you; I do not linger over my pieces, and you can always fully expect them to arrive punctually". He certainly had a way with words, if not with money! Here is the Barcarolle:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMb\\_TPrqMZI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMb_TPrqMZI)

The French composer Debussy and Ravel were renowned for their depiction of nature in both their piano and orchestral music. Maurice Ravel composed a wonderfully rich and original piano piece known as Miroirs (Mirrors), it consists of 5 movements and was composed in 1903. The music comes from Ravel's empathy with things he observed: The fluttering of night moths, a flock of disturbed birds, various waves of the ocean, Spanish guitar, and a landscape of bells are all conjured up in this work. These pieces have often been called Impressionist. Both Debussy and Ravel resisted the term, probably because it was based on a misconception. It's generally accepted that Impressionism in painting is associated with a certain obscurity e.g. water lilies blurred almost to abstract colours, whereas in music it meant the representation, in sound, of specific things or movements. No blurring here!

The second movement "Une barque sur l'océan" ("A Boat on the Ocean"), recounts a boat as it sails on the waves of the ocean in the summer months, with sweeping melodies to imitate the flow of ocean currents. Ravel orchestrated the work, and it's in that form it's represented here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bk1PTAcEH4k>

With this next piece, relax, close your eyes for a while, and let the music carry you away as it captures the beauty of nature in the summer. The work is "The Lark Ascending" by Ralph Vaughan Williams (or VW as he was known). Incidentally there is an association between Vaughan Williams and Ravel. The English and the French composer spent three months together in 1908 as master (Ravel) and pupil, and the resulting friendship enriched both their lives and their music. What's wonderful about the three months that Ravel and VW spent together in 1908 is how much they tell us about the cultural differences between French and English music at the time. VW knew that he needed something else in his music, something new and different. He found in Ravel exactly what he was looking for. He was allowed to concentrate on more creative lessons in France. That meant he created a whole new instrumental sound, which for VW showed that he didn't have to follow the British-German tradition (of Brahms or Wagner) of previous British composers (Elgar and Parry for example). This allowed him to develop something more original. You can hear this in The Lark Ascending.

Just a little aside! There were non-musical sides to their friendship, however. Ravel had a love for steak and kidney puddings on Waterloo station, and in Paris he took VW off to see some "jolly tarts", in his phrase. VW returned from the experience with his honour intact, seeing the women "as extras from a Toulouse-Lautrec painting rather than as potential conquests". If the musical influence seems like one-way traffic from Ravel to VW, Ravel at least admired the Englishman's music enough to give the French premiere of his song cycle "On Wenlock Edge". He also did what he could to promote his music in the chauvinistic context of French musical life. VW's music would have been very different without Ravel's example. And without VW Ravel would have lost one of those rare things in his life, a close friend.

During World War One, VW enlisted to fight (even though he was technically too old) and he spent a difficult two years as a stretcher-bearer on the front line before being appointed as a second lieutenant in the Royal Garrison Artillery. He saw many of his comrades killed or wounded, and the horrors he experienced would go on to influence his music a great deal. He was working on The Lark Ascending in 1914, just as World War I broke out. It was inspired by a poem of the same name written by George Meredith, which tells the tale of a skylark singing an impossibly beautiful, almost heavenly, song in the heat of the summer day. This is the finest recording of the work I have ever heard. It captures the beauty of this work perfectly, and what a brilliant children's orchestra.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM50kxByH94>

When we think about songs of Summertime a particular work tends to come to mind. You've got it - Summertime by George Gershwin. Written in 1934, 'Summertime' was one of the first compositions George Gershwin worked on for his brand-new opera Porgy and Bess. The jazz-inspired song is a lullaby for Clara to sing to her child, and it is repeated several more times throughout the opera. It went on to be covered by thousands of artists, in every genre from jazz and disco to reggae. Unfortunately, Gershwin wouldn't live to see his song become the world-famous one it is today.

The storyline of the opera is about Bess who is abandoned by her violent lover. She turns to the kind crippled beggar, Porgy for support. Their new life of happiness together is brought to an abrupt halt on the return of her ex, Crown and the drug dealer Sportin' Life, who attempt to draw Bess back into old habits. Gershwin's emotionally charged stage work was the first opera to demand an all-black cast. Many people think of Porgy and Bess as a musical, when in fact it was written by Gershwin (who came from a musical theatre background) to be his very first opera. Unfortunately he died at the young age of 37, in 1937, before he could compose another opera. Although jazz-inspired, the original version of 'Summertime' was to be performed by a classically trained opera singer. To quote from the comments: "Porgy and Bess is every bit as valid an opera as anything Mozart, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Wagner, Verdi, or Puccini wrote. Its music is lush, it's emotions powerful, and it's drama grandly operatic".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7-Qa92Rzbk>

After the recent hot weather I was reminded of "Too Darn Hot" from the musical Kiss Me Kate. Low and behold I Youtubed and found the version below. The story of the musical is about a director and producer (Fred Graham) who is reunited with his ex-wife, Lilli Vanessi, when the two are forced to play opposite one another in a new production of Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew". The battle of the sexes continues onstage and off, as it becomes clear that, as much as this couple profess to hate each other, they are also still in love. Alongside their bickering liaison, the show's supporting actress, Lois Lane, supports her gambling boyfriend, Bill, as he attempts to evade the clutches of local gangsters. Throw in a number of cases of mistaken identity, the mob, and comedy routines into the mix, and you get Kiss Me, Kate - a dazzling Broadway classic that earned the very first Tony Theatre award for Best Musical in 1949. It's all set against a red hot summer background.

In the vast range of musical comedy masterpieces, "Kiss Me Kate" shines through as perhaps Broadway's most sparkling achievement, featuring music and lyrics by Cole Porter. This is Porter at his stylish, sophisticated best, with such songs as "Too Darn Hot," "So in Love," and "Always True to You in My Fashion." What better way to celebrate summer than with this great song and dance number, and also how about joining in and doing a lockdown version as part of your exercise routine - only kidding! . Enjoy this version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYBUdXav8NA>

Phew! how do they do it - that was some performance. I'll end with a nod to 70's pop in the shape of the group "Mungo Jerry" with their "In the Summertime". Led by the wildly side-burned Ray Dorset, Mungo Jerry rose to overnight fame with their debut single in 1970's "In the Summertime". It's a celebration of the carefree summer months set to a rollicking acoustic accompaniment that recalls the sounds of skiffle and jug band music in its playful approach to the blues. "In the Summertime" would become and remain their signature song, but it was also the basis for a long and successful career for Dorset, who continues to tour to this day and record under the Mungo Jerry banner half-a-century after the band made their debut. Mungo Jerry were formed in 1970 by singer/guitarist Ray Dorset, who was fascinated with early rock & roll sounds, as well as skiffle and blues. The other original members were Mike Cole on upright bass; Paul King on guitar, kazoo, and jug; Joe Rush on washboard; and Colin Earl on keyboards. They managed to create a unique sound world which caught on big time.

In May 1970, following an appearance at the Newcastle Hollywood Festival, "In the Summertime," written by Ray Dorset, was released. It was an instant hit, shooting to number one in England in only two weeks, and riding the charts for much of the summer. Concerts and television appearances followed in profusion. The song was a Top Ten hit in America, riding the charts for weeks, and was a success in practically every country in which it was released, ultimately selling 16 million copies around the world. Ray Dorset has said: "I reckon In The Summertime is probably the best-known song around the world, apart from maybe Happy Birthday and White Christmas. It does bring a lot of people together. It's a kind of celebration of life." See if you agree.

So here we go with a grand finale in the real swinging mood of summer, with this great little number which is celebrating it's 50th anniversary this year. Just dig that facial hair man!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwUQcnfwUUM>

## It's the Battle of the Bulge by Pam Cocchiara

I'm getting into quite a nervous state,  
'cause I've put on lots and lots of weight.  
The dress I bought is hanging up inside the wardrobe door,  
but when I tried it on it doesn't fit me anymore!  
So I'm giving up the Smarties  
and I'm taking up Pilates  
and I've made up my mind I'm losing weight.

The flight booked for my holiday is great,  
I just hope that they don't make me travel freight!  
When I get on the beach in Sunny Spain they'll have a shock  
when people see what's underneath as I remove my frock,  
and I don't want to make them shudder  
when they see my rolls of blubber,  
So I've really got to try to lose some weight.

It's a thing most women will appreciate,  
how the pounds pile on and just proliferate.  
So I'm jogging every morning now three times around the block  
and I've had fitted on the fridge door a combination lock,  
and to make temptation harder,  
I have to limbo into the larder,  
I'll try anything at all to lose some weight.

The trouble is I underestimate  
the amount of food that I put on my plate,  
So out go all the sausages, the burgers chips and beans.  
and I'm only eating salads, fruit and lots and lots of greens.  
It's a very boring diet  
but I suppose I've got to try it  
cause otherwise how the heck will I lose weight?

At the gym they've got an offer that's cut-rate  
for an exercise regime that they'll create;  
but rowing on that damn machine just makes my fingers sore  
and time spent on the treadmill is really such a bore.  
Running on the spot  
just makes me grumpy, tired, hot!  
I ask you, is this helping me lose weight?

I've a feeling that I've left it all too late.  
I haven't even started to deflate.  
I'm thinking now that dieting for me is an illusion.  
It's only made me miserable. Well, I've reached this conclusion.  
If the dress won't fit my figure  
I'll get one that's one size bigger.  
and my fulsome female form I'll celebrate!

## **HEADLINES FROM THE YEAR 2130 by Pat Fackrell**

Ozone created by electric cars now killing millions.

White minorities still trying to have English recognised as the UK's third language.

Children from two-parent, married, heterosexual families bullied in schools for being 'different'.  
Tolerance urged.

Manchester schoolgirl expelled for not wearing a burqa.

Britain now has ten universities of Political Correctness. Professor Goldman of LSPC says that there is still a long way to go in the fight to stop people saying what they think.

Prime Minister Mohammed Yousuf claims increased growth through more immigration, is the secret of success.

Baby conceived naturally. Scientists stumped.

Iran still isolated. Physicists estimated at least ten more years before radioactivity decreases to safe levels.

France pleads for global help after being taken over by Islamic countries. No-one responds.

Jose Manuel Rodriguez Bush says he will run for second term as US President in 2032.

Post Office raises price of stamps to £18 and reduces mail delivery to Wednesdays only.

Average weight of a British male drops to 18 stone.

Japanese scientists have created a camera with such a fast shutter speed they can now photograph a woman with her mouth shut.

Average height of professional basketball players is now nine feet seven inches.

New law requires that all nail clippers, screwdrivers, fly swatters and rolled-up newspapers must be registered by January 2035 as lethal weapons.

Inland Revenue sets lowest tax rate in decades at 75 per cent.

Bradford win FA Cup Final, beating Hindu Hornets 4-1.

## **Answers to Wordsearches (page 14)**

### **Hamlet:**

Revenge; Nunnery; Denmark; Ophelia; Laertes; Elsinor; Yorick; Poison; Ghost; Tragedy  
Horatio; Gertrude.

### **Greece:**

Suez; Olympia; Acropolis; Aegean; Corinth; Rhodes; Corfu; Pitta; Crete; Athens;  
Ouzo; Fauraki; Kos.



## My “MUST HAVES” if alone on a Desert Island by Janine Gibson

My idea of what I would want with me on a desert island isn't necessary my favourite things but those that would lift my mind with lovely memories to keep me strong. So, these are my choices.



### Tom Jones – The Boy From Nowhere

I have always enjoyed Sir Tom's music but never did I appreciate it more than when I heard him live in concert. Both music and atmosphere was electric but never more so than when he sang this number. From being an absolutely crazy atmosphere, the auditorium fell silent with just his voice filling the space - the audience was spell bound. Since then, this has remained my favourite hit of Tom's – and on the island, I would be in the middle of nowhere so would be very apt!

### Shirley Bassey – I Am What I Am

In 1993, I was at the opening night of the Cardiff International Arena, celebrated with a concert by Shirley Bassey. The night was spellbinding – her live performances are always breath-taking and you have never heard her true voice until you've heard her live. At the end of the concert, the audience trooped out of the arena – except for my husband and I who, along with a few other people, moved to the front of the stage and stood there a while – this wouldn't be allowed now! After about 10 minutes, the curtains moved and out popped Shirley Bassey herself with the words “Don't you lot want to go home?”! Of course, the answer was a resounding “No”! With that, she sat down on the edge of the stage, her legs swinging over the edge, and chatted with us about the evening, the new arena, Cardiff and what it means to her, and about us. We were seeing the real Shirley Bassey - and what a lovely, down to earth, humble person she is. Eventually, she asked, “Will you be happy to go home if I sing another song?” We couldn't believe this was happening! So, with no musical accompaniment, she stood up and let rip with “I Am What I Am”. Amazingly though, she forgot the words part way through! So we just all stepped in and continued with the song to which she started laughing uncontrollably and then joined in a few bars on. What a moment in our lives! But what clinched this moment was when Shirley said, with great sincerity in her voice, “Thank you so very much for this – it's been the best moment of the evening for me”. I often sing this song around the house as it has such great meaning to me so I know I would do the same on the desert island, although my voice may cause a few coconuts to fall!

### Jools Holland & Ruby Turner – Jumpin' In The Morning

If you want to have a rousing, feel good evening then go to the annual concert that Jools Holland performs in Cardiff every December in the week before Christmas, and always with the amazing Ruby Turner alongside. The arena is electric from the opening to the finale and is a “must” for us every year, always sitting in the front row to enable us to dance the evening away. It is now my memory for the start of our Christmas every year, and so I feel sure the memory would help me to dance around a palm tree or two on Christmas Eve on a desert island!

### Il Divo – Nights in White Satin

I have seen Il Divo a number of times and they never fail to make the spine tingle with their wonderful voices. My favourite performance of theirs though is “Nights in White Satin”, originally written by Justin Hayward of the Moody Blues and recorded by the group. To hear this sung though in Italian by this musically gifted group of men is something else! And if I was laid on a bed of palms on a desert island, I feel sure I'd be yearning for some white satin sheets!

### **Tina Turner – Simply The Best**

My husband, Chris and I made this concert of a musical legend in 2000 our “Millennium Treat”. After years of watching a star perform on television, your expectations sometimes become a little too high, but this was not the case for this artiste. At the time, Tina Turner was the age I am now – 61, and how I wish I could move like she did then! Her performance was literally out of this world with not only her singing but her dance moves to end all dance moves! So perhaps, if I was alone on a desert island, I could recall this night and try to emulate the “Simply The Best” Tina Turner, without fear of being seen!

### **Fishermen’s Friends – No Hoppers, Jokers and Rogues**

For those of you who have spent a summer’s evening at the idyllic cove of Port Isaac, you may well have been entertained by a group of Port Isaac fisherman, shop keepers, and tradesmen who came together many years ago to form a male shanty singing group. Their singing was fantastic, their sense of humour infectious, and their songs a joy, all performed for the joy of it and just had a bucket alongside them for local charity donations. Now of course, they have many recorded CDs that have been high in the charts, perform live in theatres around the country and have even had a film made about them. But they still perform in Port Isaac on a Friday evening, still have their day jobs, and still remain the lovely men we have known for so many years. It would be so appropriate to lie on the beach of a desert island whilst listening to their wonderful sea shanties.

### **Elton John – Benny & The Jets**

Of all Elton John’s hits, this was one that I never related to - until I saw him perform it live. I was lucky enough to be gifted a pair of tickets for seats only four rows from the front to see his perform. Being so near to the stage, I was able to perceive his reactions to the audience close up, and was amazed at how, after all these years of performing, he was obviously still so emotionally moved by the audience’s reactions to his songs. He also spent time in general conversation with the audience which was so informative of the person he is behind the “image”, and what especially struck me was how humble he is. He sang every number you would hope for, but when it came to “Benny & The Jets”, I became a new fan for that specific number. The way Elton John performed it live, the reaction of the audience, and how he retained control of the audience as they played their part in singing along with him was something to behold. Another energy producing memory to keep me positive on the island.

### **Kylie Minogue – On A Night Like This**

I enjoy some but not all of Kylie’s music, and I like her as a person, so when she announced she was bringing her “Showgirl” tour to Cardiff in 2005, I decided it was one to tick on my list. And I am so glad I did. Kylie was on stage for three hours, giving the most amazing, astonishing, phenomenal concert my husband and I had ever seen. It was more a stage show than a concert, and the title “Showgirl” was so apt but so understated. The staging, the dancers, and the costumes were beyond belief, especially being a travelling show – the cost would have been in millions. The finale though was an absolute spectacular, and in the fashion of the 1940s’ films starring the Hollywood synchronized swimming star, Esther Williams. In the centre of the Cardiff International Arena appeared a large shell shaped pool with dancers performing in its lit water, but dwarfed by the size of this piece of staging. To our utter amazement, emerged another slightly smaller shell shaped, lit pool of water that raised up above the first and balanced on a pedestal with more dancers performing in its water. The final surprise was a third pool rising up from the second, complete with a fountain shooting up and running over the sides, with Kylie stood singing and dancing in the fountain! This showpiece of staging was now standing thirty feet high, water everywhere and containing so many amazing dancers laying and sitting in the waters performing synchronised movements whilst Kylie stood atop this masterpiece of staging, singing “On A Night Like This”. Well, that summed up the night completely and I feel sure that I will never see another show like it. But maybe, alone on my desert island, in the moonlight, I could try my own version of synchronised swimming with some passing dolphins in memory of that night!

### **Robbie Williams – Angels**

This could have been heart-breaking but thankfully had a happy ending. Chris and I were sat watching the evening news when he suddenly said “I feel strange”, promptly fell unconscious, and stopped breathing. I managed to get him back to life whilst phoning 999 at the same time on hands free. They said they would stay on the line with me until an ambulance arrived, and during that time I lost him again but got him back. He was in hospital for two weeks but, thank God, made a full recovery. Four weeks after this terrifying event, I heard it announced that Robbie Williams was coming to Cardiff! I immediately went into action! I sent Chris a text at work saying “*Robbie Williams is coming to Cardiff. I saved your life – TWICE*”. *Love you*”. Bless him, he immediately booked two seats at the top prices (which were in three figures!), making yet another of my dreams coming true. However, at the end of the show, when I turned and thanked Chris for the millionth time, his response was, “If I ever die again, please **don’t** revive me as I can’t afford it!”!!!

### **Des O’Conner – I Can Sing A Rainbow**

So this one is a childhood memory but I don’t know if I should admit to it! I sang “I Can Sing A Rainbow” on stage with Des O’Conner! I feel sure that Morecambe and Wise would agree that this should not be one of my finest memories but when the monsoon rains hit that desert island, I may well see a rainbow and be reminded of this moment, and as a child it was a special moment!



A childhood favourite of both mine and my son’s so evokes many happy images in my mind. But a special memory to add to that is my one of being in Leicester Square on the evening of the film premiere of “Saving Mr Banks” (about the film production of Mary Poppins). The Square was filled with winding paths of cherry blossom trees - just like in the film of Mary Poppins, which the film stars and guests were walking through to the premiere, whilst the air was filled with the strains of “Come, Fly A Kite”. It was quite magical.

### **Great Expectations**

One of my all-time favourite films but it has to be the 1946 production starring John Mills, Alec Guinness and Jean Simmons. I have watched it so many times on a cosy winter’s afternoon and never tire of it.

### **The Sound of Music.**

When this film premiered in 1965, I was only six and my Mum had just suffered a traumatic miscarriage. We were living in Cheshire, and when Mum was feeling up to it, Dad took us to Manchester for the day to supposedly treat her to a new dress. What Mum and I didn’t know was that he had secretly booked tickets at the grand Manchester Palace Cinema where they were showing “The Sound Of Music” in its first week of being premiered. Mum and I were so surprised when, as we were passing the theatre, Dad turned us to go up the theatre steps and we immediately realised what we were going to see. Both Mum and I were mesmerised by the film and it remains a favourite of ours to this day, with so many different emotions being tied into that day. And Mum did get the dress too!

### **Seabiscuit**

As I enjoy films based on true stories as well as having a lifelong love for horses, this film fills two criteria for me. My love of horses began when I was four years old, from when I would ride, every week, sometimes every day of the week, until I was in mid-twenties and had an injury to my back – not from horse-riding - which prevented me from sitting in a saddle from thereon in. I loved to ride cross-country and possess many winning rosettes to remind me of my riding days which I still miss dreadfully to this very day, but still enjoy being able to be around horses. So this film would help to fill my lack of contact with horses whilst marooned.

### **Gorillas In The Mist**

Again, a true story which was first shown in 1988, and showed many of us for the first time, what amazing creatures gorillas are. I love wildlife, and one of my interests is to photograph animals, so I have always truly appreciated this early film with the first ground-breaking cinematography of gorillas. Presuming that I do not share the company with any large life threatening species on the desert island, it would be good to be able to watch this and remind myself of the amazing largest living primate

### **Victoria and Abdul**

In my GCE year at school, I had to study the Victorian era, since when I have had a great interest in this period, but especially in Queen Victoria and her family. I watch any programme and read many books relating to the era, and have visited Osborne House on the Isle of Wight so many times! This film was such an interesting story of the relationship between Queen Victoria and her servant and would help to satisfy my cravings for some Victorian history whilst estranged from any form of history, which is a subject I love.

### **Gravity**

Space has always fascinated me since 1969 when I recall watching those black and white grainy pictures of man walking on the moon. Now though, it is the night sky that holds my fascination more – finding the constellations, watching the Starlink satellites move across the sky, watching for meteorites, etc. There is always something happening far above us. What an amazing sight I would have night after night on a desert island with no light pollution – and this film would help my imagination to be up there, although a little scary with what happens in the story!

### **Spectre (James Bond)**

We were lucky enough to be staying in Sydney on the night this film premiered, so on the first night of its viewing, we were sat in front of the world's biggest cinema screen in Darling Harbour's Imax cinema. The cinema was beyond impressive, and apparently, well worth what we had to pay for our seats, so my husband tells me! So perhaps a James Bond action film would be good to have alongside me on the beach, and if so then it has to be this one to serve as a reminder of an amazing five week holiday in New South Wales.

### **The King's Speech**

Again, history but this time combined with the royal family. I have been a royalist since my earliest day, having been born a Londoner, and have stood outside Buckingham Palace so many times as a child hoping for a glimpse of the Queen. I have been lucky enough to meet her, along with several other members of the Royal Family, but my biggest thrill was accompanying my husband to the Royal Garden Party in 2013. It was an amazing moment when we walked through the gates onto the Palace forecourt, and I looked back at the railings, recalling peering through them as a young child, never thinking in my wildest dreams that one day I would be the other side of them as the Queen's invited guest! I actually shed a tear at the realisation. So this film would serve as a reminder of one of the most special days of my life.

### **Mamma Mia**

My choice for this film is simple – I couldn't possibly be alone on a desert island, maybe for the rest of my life, without having this wonderful feel-good film to watch and sing along to at the top of my voice where I could offend no-one!



### **Banksy**

I love this man's artwork but what I admire most is his train of thought behind it - he fascinates me. I own one of his art books and it's proves to be so interesting every time I take a journey through it. Perhaps I could practise my own type of Banksy on the side of my self-built island shelter.

### **Andy Warhol**

This man's Pop Art was amazing and I have so enjoyed imitating it on my own canvases over the years – it's such fun to do and I hope I would be allowed to take my paints and sketch books with me so as to paint a POP ART palm tree, a coconut, another palm tree, another coconut .....!!!

### **Shyama Ruffell**

I enjoy this young English lady's botanical fine artwork in which she concentrates on patterns in the leaves, petals, etc. With the expected flora growing on the island, I could practise her style of art which is often displayed at the Chelsea Flower Show.

### **Julia Everett**

My love of the sea and my need to be close to it as often as possible, in order to feel at my best mentally, leads me to love seascape and sunset paintings, both of which I love to photograph too. This artist is a contemporary London artist who paints abstract in beautiful vibrant oils so, although I use watercolour and acrylics, I would be able to attempt her technique on my ever changing daily views of the ocean and the sunsets.

### **Monet**

There is just something so peaceful and serene about Monet's work and perhaps I may just feel like a tranquil day, lying back on the sand, and dreaming of a lovely lake back home filled with the beautiful sight of water lilies in full bloom.

### **Alan M Hunt**

My love of wildlife appears again here, for this gentleman is an amazing wildlife artist. He has been painting for over sixty years and is best known for his photorealism style of painting endangered species. I have seen an exhibition of his paintings and even when peering so closely at his work, you still find it unbelievable that the painting in front of you is not a photograph.

### **Jeremy Thomas**

Many of you will be familiar with this artist for he originates from Ebbw Vale and now has a small studio in Abergavenny. His work is based on the natural beauty of his local surroundings and is very quirky – I personally find much of his work quite mystical. A Jeremy Thomas painting would obviously be hung on a washed up shark's tooth in my shelter to remind me of home.

### **Cicely Mary Barker**

You may also be familiar with this illustrator - more the ladies among you perhaps, for she is the painter of the famous Flower Fairies. I loved my "Flower Fairies" book as a young child and still have it, but I have since bought other books of hers. These are all of such pretty flower fairies but I find her illustrations of the actual flowers so exquisite to look at and enjoy.

## Winston Churchill

On visiting Chartwell last year, I was surprised at just how talented an artist Churchill was. His art studio, set in the gardens, is such a special place to visit, and his art tools and paints a sight to behold. But his paintings hung around the rough inner walls of the building are so interesting to view. I was searching for a particular painting of Lake Garda. On a private boat tour on during one of our holidays there, we were taken to the lake edge of a secluded villa Churchill used to frequent for holidays – in the garden was a short flight of steps to a platform on the lake edge where we were told Churchill used to sit and paint at his easel – naked but smoking his cigar! So this was why I was in search of a painting from that particular sitting point with the view I would recognise. And I found it. I photographed it so I can make a print of it to take with me to the island to remind me of our beautiful visits to Lake Garda.

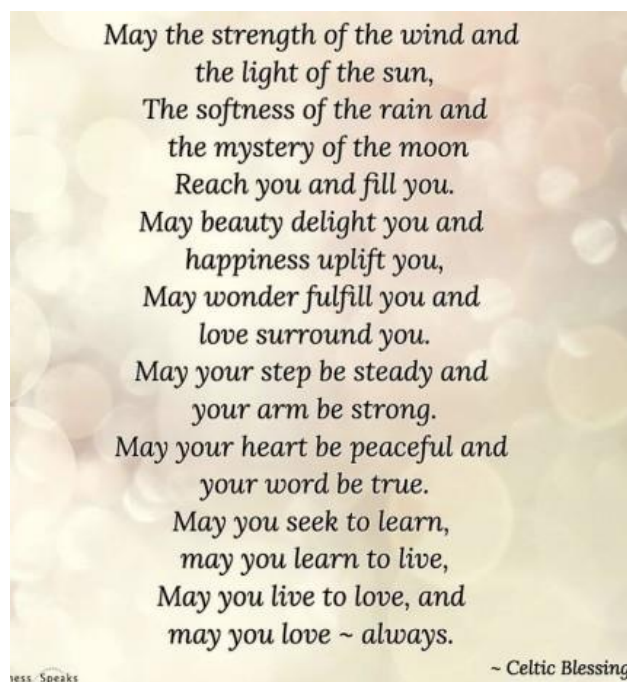
## Terence Cuneo

This last one is actually an artist that my husband favours, the reason being he is an excellent artist of steam trains. However, I have a reason for enjoying them too, for Terence Cuneo always paints a tiny mouse somewhere in his painting and I love to find him! So this would give me a little puzzle to focus my mind on days when it was a little less lucid due to my being stranded!



I hope you have been entertained for a few minutes in reading this, and also enjoyed learning a little more about me.

*Janine Gibson*



## A Reminder

**I still need more materials for future editions of DIT, please!**