

# DESERT ISLAND TIMES

*Sharing fellowship in*  
NEWPORT SE WALES U3A

No.17

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*High Street, c1910*

*A MISCELLANY OF  
CONTRIBUTIONS  
FROM OUR MEMBERS*

## **STAYCATION '13 by Greg Platt**

*Now that the Covid restrictions are being lifted, it seems lots of people are going to holiday here in GB*

*July, and it has just started to sprinkle with rain on this rather cold morning.*

*I was prompted to fish out the following poem from 2013*

Don't lie down on the grass, dear,  
The rain's turned it into a pool.  
And do take off granny's old swimsuit  
That knitted look's really not cool!  
I hope that's a waterproof radio  
It had better have batteries too.  
Tell you what, we'll go in and change now  
And see if it's dry at the zoo.

At least the children enjoyed it  
Much more than the monkeys I'd say.  
The poor things looked really bedraggled  
Being out in the rain every day.  
Tomorrow we'll be in the dry, dear,  
We're taking them home on the train  
And then you can take off your mac, dear,  
I've booked us a fortnight in Spain.

## **THE LOVERS' CALENDAR by Martyn Vaughan**

I kissed her lips on that frost-rimmed day  
when the lake lay still in an ice bound sleep.  
Cold were her lips but promising fire  
as the snowdrop brings hope of bright roses.

I kissed her lips on that sun swept day  
while young clouds moved slow on paths of blue.  
How soft were those lips and warmed by love  
as her face met mine in a butterfly touch.

I kissed her lips on that autumn day  
as dead leaves swept by in a dance of red.  
How sweet those lips in the chastening wind,  
stilling false fears in the day's drear dusk.

I kissed her lips in that storm's grim heart  
while ragged clouds closed the sun's pale eye.  
A swift year has passed into remembrance.  
But each stored kiss shall hasten the spring.

## **Back to the Bay by David Jenkins © 2018**

*For many years we had a caravan located on a site just outside Newquay in West Wales. We used it for weekends away and Bank Holiday breaks. During school holidays my wife would often stay over for a few days with our two sons while I returned home, and back to work while they enjoyed the area. The in-laws had their own van there, on an adjacent spot.*

*We enjoyed many family barbecues and enjoyed touring around the beautiful area. There were plenty of places to go to keep the children amused – and as time passed we revisited many of those places with grandchildren.*

*Visits to the on-site clubhouse to watch the entertainment led to us making many acquaintances, and a few friends. Inevitably as time passed so unfortunately did some of the people we had come to know. There are countless pleasant memories of the years spent there firmly lodged in my mind.*

*In 2018 the prompt for the USA Writing Competition was to write a story commencing with the words 'It was a beautiful stretch of Welsh coastline...' Thoughts of the passage of time spent in Newquay, and memories of places we had visited, changes we had seen, people we had met, came to mind and I wrote the following piece for submission.*

It was a beautiful stretch of Welsh coastline which emerged from darkness as the sun rose. Almost untouched, unaltered, even after all these years, Tom noted with satisfaction. He had settled onto a blanket as dawn broke, and now the first rays of light danced and shimmered as they caught gentle waves, the water in turn sparkling in the light. Tom opened a bottle of alcohol-free wine and poured a small amount into a glass.

'Happy birthday, Mary.'

He sipped his wine, watching the sun complete its appearance above the horizon. 'Oh, look, Mary. The dolphins have come to visit. Do they know it's your special day?'

His voice drifted softly over an otherwise empty beach. Soon it would begin to fill up but for now he had the expanse of sand and the sight of the waves all to himself. He glanced to one side, sighing softly as his eyes fell on the unoccupied half of the blanket.

For forty-odd years they had come here, enjoying the sea air, appreciating the beauty of the spot. That beauty was gentle when the weather was kind, wild and savage when there was a storm and strong waves rolled in, thundering against a rock-face off to one side of the beach. In the early years they had played games in the sand and the waves, spoken of thoughts and dreams as they shared their blanket. Sometimes they had dozed in the sun. Tom smiled wryly at the thought. The dozes had become more frequent as time, like the waves before him, rolled on. There were forty years of memories here, ingrained into the sand. It was the place they would come when they needed to talk about the challenges and triumphs of their life together. He thought of those times, smiles alternating with pangs of loss.

Tom still visited what had become their special place, though he now came alone since the loss of his beloved wife. On the special days - birthdays, anniversaries. And on other days too when he just wished to be alone with his thoughts.

After a while he got to his feet, feeling as he did so some of the aches and pains gifted by time. Blanket and wine stowed back in the car, he took a stroll around the town. The pace of change seemed to have

accelerated. Over the years various businesses had come and gone, though all had stayed in keeping with the small town. But now that pace had further quickened, and some of the character of the place was changing. What had once been a general store now sold mobile phones and vaping products. A couple of premises stood empty, their windows looking like glazed eyes which stared accusingly at the people who had deserted them and now passed by.

On the main street Tom was glad to see the cafe still in business. He and Mary had often stopped there for a snack or some lunch. He exchanged a few words with the owner while paying for a coffee and a slice of cake.

'It's good to see you still here,' he remarked.

'I've lived here all my life and worked in this cafe for most of it. I don't see that changing now.' She smiled, though he was unsure if it was a reflex action or if she vaguely recognised him as a long-time if irregular customer.

Tom lingered over his cake and coffee, then made his way back to the car and returned to his small hotel. It was the same hotel the two of them had always booked, and the room was one they had often stayed in. His mind filled with memories. He could picture Mary sitting in a chair, reading a magazine, or softly humming as she brushed her hair before the mirror. He recalled the way she would look out of the window each morning to check the weather before deciding on what to wear that day. Tom changed into a suit and tie before heading back out. He stopped to speak with the hotel manager.

'Could I settle my bill now? I'll be leaving early in the morning.'

'Yes, of course, sir. Just a moment.'

Tom watched him operate a computer keyboard and present a sheet of paper which the printer spat out. A far cry from the days of a ledger and fountain-pen, Tom thought. He paid the bill and bade the manager a good night.

It was a short drive to the pub where Tom had booked a meal. The landlady greeted him with a warm smile.

'Tom, hello. You're looking well. How are things?'

'Oh, pretty much the same as ever, Beth.'

She led him to a table. 'Here we are. Just as every year. Table laid for two, one meal ordered. And the flowers, of course.' Beth smiled again, a rather sad little smile this time. 'Mary loved flowers, didn't she?'

'Yes, she did.' Tom replied. 'Thank you for this.'

'No problem at all, not for one of our regulars. We often think of you, in between your visits. Such a shame you lost Mary. There were some good times, weren't there?'

'Yes, there certainly were.' Tom and Mary had visited the same pub for years, and become fairly friendly with Beth, who ran the place, and her husband Emrys, who looked after the kitchen.

Tom looked across to a small stage in the corner. 'Anyone playing tonight?' The pub had featured live music for many years, and Tom and Mary had always joined in. His fingers were too stiff now to strum a

guitar, his voice weaker than in the past. Now he sang only at home, and did so quietly, going over the songs they used to perform together.

'Your meal will be ready in just a moment,' she smiled. 'It's nice to have someone who arrives promptly for their booking.'

'Just good manners.' He smiled. 'Something that seems to be missing from the world lately. Things change, I suppose.'

'And, I should tell you, there's another change coming. We're selling up and retiring. I'll leave full details of the bookings you make, for the next owner. I'm sure they'll look after you.'

Tom ate his meal, reflecting on how life had altered over the past decade. Mary gone. Leaving his work, so he had a lot of time just when he had no-one with whom to share it. He had hobbies sure enough, and he looked after the garden as best he could. But he'd never had Mary's green fingers. And Beth's news seemed to signal the end of another chapter in life.

Those thoughts were still on his mind as he finished his meal, settled the bill, and made his goodbyes. He hadn't been expecting to be bidding a final farewell to people he had known most of his life. He knew well enough that such things must come to pass, just as when he'd retired. But the actual fact left him unsettled.

Memories and thoughts drifted through Tom's mind as he tried to fall to sleep. His day had been filled with what was the same, what had changed, and what would change. Beth and Emrys at the pub, and the woman who ran the cafe, all looked older than Tom remembered. But then, no doubt others would think the same of him.

He was still in a melancholy frame of mind when he woke early the following morning, but he shook it off as best he could. These were, after all, Mary's days. That was why he was here.

Just before dawn he once again made his way to the beach, to the spot which meant so much to him, the favourite place of all for the two of them. He opened out the blanket, laid it on the sand, and sat. A slight breeze blew, bearing the tang of the ocean with it. And it also carried the scent of a perfume which had been familiar for so many years.

'Thank you for my birthday, Tom. I knew you would never forget, not so long as you could come here.'

He turned and his eyes fell on Mary's smile, her eyes bright as they had ever been.

'No, love. I've always been here.'

'So have I,' she replied. 'Oh, the dolphins ...'

Tom turned to watch the creatures at play. His hand reached out to hold Mary's as he let out one final, soft sigh.

It was a beautiful stretch of Welsh coastline which greeted the rising sun. At this early hour there was one figure only. Tom was in his usual place on the blanket, his face turned to the rolling waves, his eyes - unseeing now - fixed on the rolling waves. Those who found him later might, perhaps, wonder at the smile now forever fixed on his face.

## A Performance of "The Messiah" (an anonymous report)

Many of us will be familiar with the words and music of this great oratorio, probably Handel's most famous composition, but old Bill Micklethwaite, from the little village of Golcar in the West Riding of Yorkshire, had never been to a performance. He tried to persuade a friend of his, a shepherd from the same village, to go with him to the Huddersfield Town Hall to hear the town's famous choral society. His friend flatly refused.

"Nay", he said, "that sort o' music's nowt in my line. I like a good comic song or a lively jig, but I reckon nowt to this sacred stuff as they call it. It's beyond me. An' another thing, there'll be none of our sort there. It'll be mostly chapel folk and swells done up in boiled shirts and wimmen wi' nowt much on. Nay, you go by theesens and then thee can tell me all about it after".

So, Bill went by himself and the day after the concert, when the pair met in the Packhorse pub, the following conversation took place .....

"Well, cum on ... 'ow did thee get on at Messiah? Tell us all about it, but wait till I've finished my pipe and then I can tek it in a bit better."

"Eee, well," said Bill, "it were fair champion. I wouldn't a'missed it for't world. When I got there the Town 'All were crowded. It were choc full o'folk and I 'ad a job to get a seat, but no wonder – all them singers took up 'alf the gallery".

"Any'ow I managed to squeeze in some'ow. There was a chap larkin' about on the organ, he weren't playing nowt in particular, just running 'is fingers up and down as if 'e were practising like, just like our Martha used to do when she started to learn to play the pianner. Well, after a bit a lot o' chaps came in carrying fiddles, then they brought in the Messiah. Well, that's what I took it to be, it were the biggest instrument on the platform and it were covered in a green bag. Anyroad, they took the bag off it and then a bloke rubbed its belly wi' a stick and you should 'ave 'eard the groan it give. It were summat like the last expiring moan of a dying cow".

"I were just thinking o' going when a little chap came on, all dolled up in a white waistcoat and wi' a flower in 'is button'ole and everything went dead quiet. You could 'ave 'eard a pin drop. 'E 'ad a stick in 'is 'and and 'e started waving it about and all the singers stared at 'im .... I reckon they were wondering what was the matter wi' 'im."

"Then they started to sing and they 'adn't been going long before they were fratching like cats. I reckon 'e should a' walloped one or two of 'em wi' that stick. First one side said they were King o' Glory then t'other side said they were and they at it 'ammer and tongs, but it fizzled out so I've no idea which side won."

"Now, you bein' a shepherd, would 'ave found the next bit interesting. There was a bit o' bother about some sheep that got lost. I don't know who they belonged to, but they must 'ave been champion twisters and turners, judging by the words and the fancy music. One lot o' singers must 'ave been mighty fond o' mutton 'cos they kep' singing "All we like sheep". No-one argued wi' 'em, tho' I'd 'ave thought as being in Yorkshire someone might 'ave stood up and sung "All we like beef". I said so to the bloke sat next to me but 'e looked daggers at me and said "Shhhhh!", so I shushed."

“Then a chap stood up and sang by ‘imself. They must ‘ave been ‘is sheep, ‘cos ‘e said every mountain and hill should be laid low. Well, I thought, that would ‘elp ‘im find ‘em if they did that, as well as givin’ old Bob Earnshaw a bit o’ work to do wi’ ‘is new bulldozer. Then up jumped another bloke, an’ did ‘e look mad! ‘E said they’d imagined a vain thing ... ‘e was in a right state, I can tell thee.”

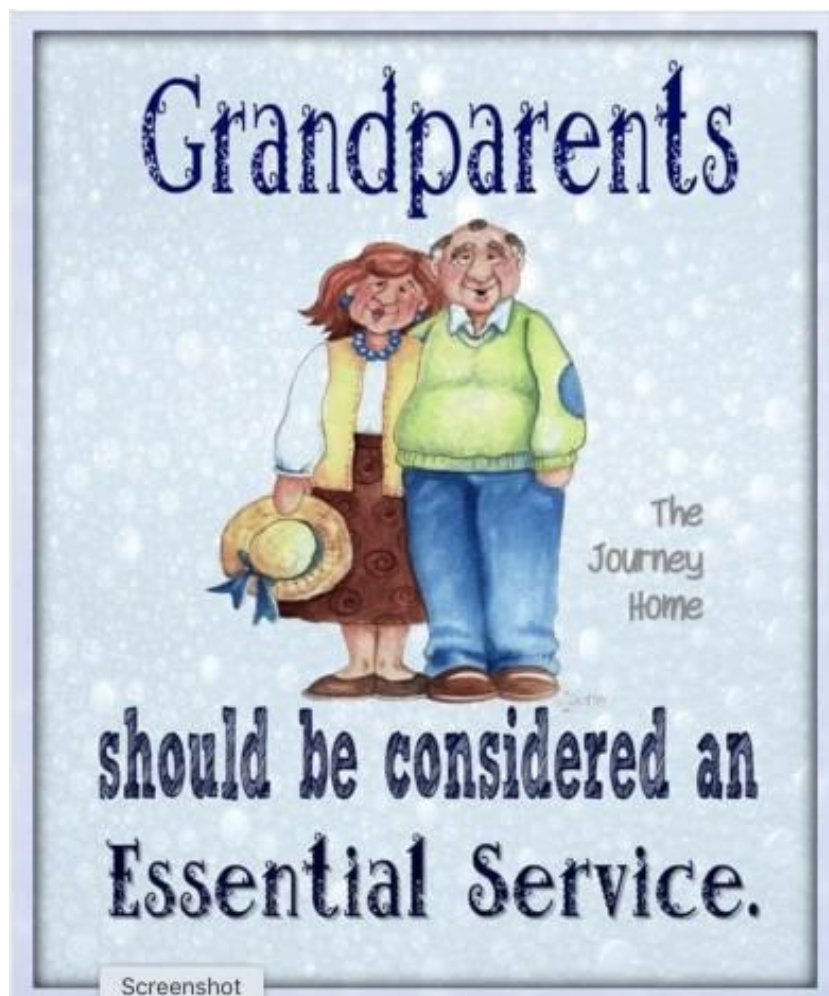
Then the organist started banging an’ stampin’ ‘is feet and the rest o’ the band was just as mad ‘cos the way they was sawin’ at them fiddles I thought they was goin’ to go through ‘em. I bet everyone was glad when that bloke sat down.”

“A lot o’ wimmen stood up after that and all of ‘em looked as if they were ... well ...gettin’ on a bit. Some of ‘em must ‘ave bin 70 if they was a day. They sang “unto us a child is born” and the chaps sang back “Wonderful”. Wonderful, I thought? It’d be a blinkin’ miracle! After that they sobered down a bit and sang about a lass called Joyce Grately. I’d never ‘eard of ‘er meself, but the chaps ‘ad and she must be a bit of a lass ‘cos they all looked mighty pleased about it.”

“Then some bloke got up and said ‘e was king o’ kings and then another said ‘e was and then, blow me down, they started an argument about *that*. I was getting’ a bit fed up when everybody stood up to see what was the matter and they suddenly shouted “Hallelujah, it’s going to rain for ever and ever”. Well, I jumped up straight away and made for the door. I ‘adn’t brought an overcoat or a broly with me!”

“Aye”, said his friend slowly, “but what ‘appened to the sheep????”

*(This account has been around for many years and I have seen a few different versions of it. I have taken the funniest parts of each and this is the result. Ed.)*





## 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.

The four puzzles get progressively more difficult.

No 1 is "Easy", No 2 is "Medium", No 3 is "Hard" and No 4 is "Evil". Good luck!

1. Easy

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

2. Medium

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

3. Hard

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

4. Evil

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



## The Games People Play by Angela Robins

As a young child, I can remember getting really excited about going to the annual Christmas party at Black Clawson International where my father worked as a fitter and turner.

My brothers and I would be toggged up in new outfits; nothing fancy but something serviceable that could be worn later to school. We found the work's canteen was not the most salubrious venue as we picked our way to it through muddy puddles, but the party food was good.

What I really looked forward to was receiving a gift from Father Christmas. I would sidle over to the stage and peep through the side of the curtains to catch the first glimpse of his sleigh piled high with presents wrapped in festive paper of all colours and designs. I then had to wait an age until my name was called (alphabetically) to go and meet Santa Claus.

I still have the last present that I was given; it was a compendium of games, but not just any old box of games. This was a 'Compendorama'. The 12 games are on a long scroll fitted inside a sturdy box beneath a transparent TV type screen. (This was the 1950s when more and more televisions were being sold). To get to the game required the "New Selector Control" is used; two knobs that turn left or right - Wow!

My brothers and I spent many a rainy hour playing with it, proving that not all our childhood summers were wall to wall sunshine.

It has come into its own again recently: some days Mike and I play cards, dice, Dominoes or Scrabble for an hour after lunch and we keep a tally of the winner for our 'Coronavirus Challenge'. So for some variety we have used the Compendorama to play Halma, Nine Men's Morris, Steeplechase and Draughts. The score is a nail-biting draw at the moment!



*We have had a number of articles on very diverse topics, a number of which must bring back some pleasant memories for many of you. By their very nature, our articles are never going to comprehensive accounts and nor should they be. They set out to present a topic and to give sufficient information to whet the appetite of anybody who would like to find out more. The usual starting place would be Wikipedia, but beware! Some topics are covered in great depth while others are superficial and, I'm afraid to say, often inaccurate.*

*There is nothing quite like a written response to an article which both comments on and adds to the original and if it can also, as Barbara's response below does, bring humour and reminiscences into the equation, then it adds to our knowledge of the subject. Who knows – we may have some new "Saint" addicts as a result!*

## **A Response to Gerald's Article on "The Saint" from Barbara Phillips**

Dear Gerald,

What a lovely wallow in nostalgia I had following your article on The Saint last week! I was an avid fan of the books until I was about 15 when Roger Moore immortalised him on TV and I fell in love all over again. It didn't last as I discovered horses then boys ... oh how fickle, indeed.

I still remember some of the "poetry":

The Duke of Fortezza  
Quite frequently gets a  
Nimpulse to go off on the wine \*  
The Duchess starts mimbling  
And wombling and wimbling  
And threatens to wallop his ducal behind"

*(\*That might be the sanitised version!)*

I remember at least two other companions, in addition to Patricia Holm and Hoppy – I hesitate to use the words "gang members" but it would probably be accurate! Roger Conway who was dark with wavy hair and Dickie Tremaine who was blond, in my memory anyway. There was a third chap, I've struggled to remember his name, killed by (Crown Prince?) Marius, arch villain and wicked European. It was something to do with a ray gun and taking over the world – common enough these days, but back in the 50s frightening and smacking of invaders from outer space. I don't think it was The Man Who Liked Ants, although I've hated ants ever since reading that one. They are far too intelligent for something with such a small brain!

I've got a couple of dozen books on the shelf, rescued from my mother's regular clean outs, some of them have the original titles, such as Thieves' Picnic which was reissued as The Saint Bids Diamonds. The oldest is priced at the princely sum of 1/3d – about 7p in today's money. I'm going to have to try and sort them into chronological order and read them all again. It will make a change from Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings, and thanks to you I will be able to lose myself in the "real" world. No doubt Tony will be relieved not to have to listen to talk of dragons, flying brooms and Elven rings.

Thanks again

*Barbara*





## **I just don't know what to do with my hair by Ann Delahaye**

Can be sung along to the tune of "I just don't know what to do with myself " by Dusty Springfield

I just don't know what to do with my hair  
It's becoming a real nightmare  
Going to a salon is completely banned  
The scissors are trembling in my hand  
To snip, cut or trim  
I don't know where to begin

I'm beginning to look like a tramp  
My whole hairstyle needs a revamp  
Looking in the mirror only makes me sad  
When did I get to look this bad  
Oh what can I do, to stop me feeling so blue

Well a curly perm, doesn't mind the rain  
I need some highlights to ease all the pain

Well eureka I know what to do  
It's so simple I don't feel so blue  
I am on the internet searching like mad  
Life isn't really so bad  
I don't give a fig  
I'm going to buy myself a WIG!!!!

## **Two Quizzes submitted by Rob Wilkinson (answers on page 18)**

### **CAPITAL CONFUSION**

The cities beneath are not with the correct countries. See if you can rearrange them correctly.

1 Khartoum	Ethiopia	6 Nairobi	Zambia
2 Tripoli	Senegal	7 Dar es Salaam	Libya
3 Harare	Morocco	8 Addis Ababa	Namibia
4 Rabat	Tanzania	9 Dakar	Sudan
5 Windhoek	Zimbabwe	10 Lusaka	Kenya

### **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

Which famous people were these dishes named after?

- 1 An English biscuit named after a 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian patriot?
- 2 A type of tea with a distinctive Bergamot tang named after a 19<sup>th</sup> century Prime Minister?
- 3 A classic pizza named after the wife of Umberto 1<sup>st</sup> in Italy in 1889?
- 4 A mix of fruit and ice cream named after a famous Australian operatic soprano?
- 5 A meringue dessert named in honour of a Russian ballerina?
- 6 A popular bread-based snack named after John Montague, an 18<sup>th</sup> century aristocrat?
- 7 A tuber developed in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, named after a British monarch crowned in 1902?
- 8 A dish of beef, pate and mushrooms in pastry, named after a famous military leader?

## **THE ORCHESTRAS OF WALES by NEIL PRITCHARD**

**BBC NATIONAL ORCHESTRA OF WALES SINFONIA CYMRU NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRA OF WALES  
WELSH NATIONAL OPERA ORCHESTRA**

I thought it would be a good idea to celebrate and pay tribute to the great contribution that orchestras make to the artistic life of Wales. These are incredibly difficult times for orchestras and uncertain times for arts and culture generally within Wales. Like most businesses, the coronavirus pandemic has been devastating for the arts. Like every other part of the Welsh economy, they've been hit hard. Theatres, venues and museums closed their doors in March and have been in a state of limbo ever since, and festivals due to take place across Wales have either been cancelled or seem unlikely to go ahead. It's to be hoped that the Government recognise the role they play in the artistic and cultural lives of our communities, and fully support them to ensure that when the time is right they can resume. Let's not forget the many billions the arts contribute every year to the economy.

A point worth noting is that orchestras play important roles in music education and in communities, reaching children and adults in education and community settings each year. This success is under threat as a result of the pandemic. With venues shut down, income from concerts, tours, recordings and commercial activity has plunged to zero. Unlike orchestras in European countries, which receive upwards of 80% of their income from public funding, the average for British orchestras is just 30%, meaning they are far more reliant on earned income to survive. It's with this in mind that I'd like to show you how four orchestras have produced wonderful music over the years (including during the lockdown), and how I hope (and I'm sure you do) that this will continue in the future.

I'll begin by looking at the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (BBC NOW). They're the only professional symphony orchestra organisation in Wales, occupying a dual role as both a broadcasting orchestra and national orchestra. Founded in 1928, BBC NOW is the BBC's longest performing orchestra. For over 90 years, it has established itself on the national and international stage. It's an integral part of the cultural landscape in Wales. The orchestra reaches audiences live in the concert hall, on BBC radio and TV, and more recently through live streamed concerts. Part of BBC Wales and supported by the Arts Council of Wales, the Orchestra is an ambassador of Welsh music, championing contemporary composers and musicians and working closely with Welsh Composer-in-Association Huw Watkins.

Alongside its busy schedule of concerts around Wales, BBC NOW performs annually at the BBC Proms in London, and bi-annually at BBC Cardiff Singer of the World. It also works closely with its resident chorus BBC National Chorus of Wales. Over the years it has recorded a wide range of music. Here's an example of their fine playing from the opening movement of Rachmaninov's symphony number 2 conducted by Tadaaki Otaka (principal conductor of the orchestra from 1987 to 1995). If you wish you can hear the full work on this video (just keep it rolling from 1/5 to 5/5).

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpzLR9mMCsl&list=PLp5jnMa3SAtzeCj9wXns\\_v1jHwaMIeIgw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpzLR9mMCsl&list=PLp5jnMa3SAtzeCj9wXns_v1jHwaMIeIgw)

BBC NOW has a busy and innovative learning programme, building on its ground-breaking work with special educational needs schools, and also for hard of hearing adults and children. They performed the first ever Relaxed Prom in 2017, which won the 2018 'Fantastic for Families Award' for Best Family Event. Recent projects have included 'Composition Wales' a scheme to encourage and develop young composers and promote new orchestral music. They're also involved with the "Listening to Language" project. Led by BBC NOW, the British Council Wales, ERW (Education through Regional Working) and University of Wales Trinity Saint David, musicians from the orchestra, alongside language specialists, have been working with teachers in schools across Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion. The idea is to develop creative approaches to learning Welsh, Spanish and English. Another venture occurred in 2015, when as part of an extensive tour in South America, the orchestra visited the Welsh colony in Patagonia, where musicians worked in schools and with the community celebrating 150 years of the Welsh settlers in this region.

In December 2018, BBC NOW toured four cities in China with conductor Xian Zhang, working with the British Council in China as part of their Inspiring Women in the Arts campaign. During Lockdown they are doing their bit to provide digital concerts as part of their outreach programme. BBC NOW and Age Cymru have launched 'From Home To Homes', this is specially designed for those with a relative in a care home, or family member who can't leave their house during lockdown and who love music?( Worth checking out if you have relative in that situation) The concerts feature musicians playing from their home to yours! They feature well known and much-loved orchestral music that everyone will enjoy and are a chance to connect with the orchestra players and listen to live performances that will lift the spirits. They will be running live 'Home to Homes' concerts on Tuesdays at 11:00am every two weeks from Tuesday 16th June until Tuesday 11th August. Each concert will last approximately 30 minutes. This is a great example of the way the orchestra are serving the community and reaching out to new audiences. (Details are on their website).

As an example of their innovative projects they launched fourteen special interactive music clips introduced by conductor Grant Llewellyn and Andy Pidcock (of Creative Music Workshops). This is an example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaGjQQSfMhw>

The Orchestra's home is BBC Hoddinott Hall in the Millennium Centre – one of the largest purpose-built recording studios in the world - where BBC NOW continues its award-winning soundtrack work for programmes including His Dark Materials (BBC One) and David Attenborough's Life Story (BBC One). Television performances include Rhod Gilbert's Work Experience: Classical Musician (BBC One), The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra presented by Katie Derham (BBC Four), and Tunes for Tyrants presented by Suzy Klein (BBC Four).

The Orchestra's relationship with the Welsh composer Alun Hoddinott is enshrined within what has been the most important development for the Orchestra during the current decade: the move into BBC Hoddinott Hall in January 2009. Probably one of the most sophisticated orchestral rehearsal and studio provisions in Britain, the Hall is primarily a rehearsal and recording studio, but also provides the opportunity to give concerts to audiences of around 350. The Hall also includes sophisticated facilities for outreach work in the form of the The Grace Williams Studio, named after the Welsh composer. This can hold up to 60 people, hosts workshops and rehearsals acting as a centre for the Orchestra and Chorus's acclaimed outreach work. BBC NOW's "meat and drink" is of course the concerts of orchestral and choral music that it presents in all parts of Wales, the rest of the UK, and a number of other countries. The orchestra are renowned for the high standard of their playing which you can hear in this work by Sibelius. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LG14Si5fe64>

I know that some of you (myself included) have been to monthly midday concerts at the Riverfront Theatre given by Sinfonia Cymru and have been very impressed by their enthusiasm for the music they play and for the quality of their musicianship. Sinfonia Cymru is a dynamic music organisation, whose purpose is to develop and support young professional musicians in the early stages of their careers and, through this, to provide some exceptional performances for audiences across Wales and beyond. We are very lucky to have them here in Wales. Sometimes they are an orchestra in the traditional sense – ranging from small string ensembles to full symphony orchestra scale.

At other times they work in smaller groups to provide intimate musical performances in a variety of musical styles. They present orchestral concerts, chamber concerts, and performances that cross musical boundaries. They've worked with major classical artists such as Bryn Terfel, the internationally renowned young cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason, jazz pianist Gwilym Simcock, soul-funk singer Kizzy Crawford, and world music band Kabantu.

Their website mentions that the orchestra is composed of "young players, all under 30, blessed with huge talent; but they also bring energy, commitment and unbridled enthusiasm to everything they do. Whenever and wherever they play, this adds a palpable excitement to the concert hall that's impossible to put into words". An example of their playing is illustrated in this work by Mozart.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeOM-298M\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeOM-298M_8)

The development of the next generation of orchestral musicians is central to all the orchestra's activities. This focus helps Sinfonia Cymru create projects that inspire young people and children and are enjoyed by many others, whilst also providing essential professional development opportunities for its members. Sinfonia Cymru actively develops a full programme of education workshops, children's concerts and community events to add to its main programme of work. This helps to build relationships with whole communities. In recent years these have included a free community event series across Wales, workshops for young musicians in Mold and Caernarfon, school concerts for over 1000 primary school children in Newport and Pontyberem, and a composition project in partnership with Gwent Music Support Service. The orchestra works with a range of partners to deliver educational experiences for primary and secondary students through side by side projects, workshops, school concerts and composition projects. Recent projects have been delivered in collaboration with the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Gwent Music Support Service, The Riverfront, Flintshire County Borough Council and Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias (providing instrumental and voice lessons in the Caernarfon area).

Each academic year, Sinfonia Cymru offers up to three Professional Pathway Awards to postgraduate students studying at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Each award is valued at £2,000 and helps enable the most talented young music students to continue their studies at postgraduate level whilst offering them exceptional orchestral, educational, and ensemble experiences. I think you can see from the two orchestra's I've looked at, that they are very much about community engagement. For example with Sinfonia Cymru this has extended to virtual performances online during the Lockdown as you can see in this amusing video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-SqHAsLgGQ>

I can well remember when my two daughters, in their younger days, were members of a local young musician group in Swindon, with over 600 members. That gave me a real insight into the great virtues of playing musical instruments, and the social benefits they gained from the new friends they made. It also provided opportunities, in the case of my one daughter, to ultimately play in the Wiltshire County Youth Orchestra and appear in the annual National Youth Music Festival at the Royal Festival Hall in London. It was with this in mind that I decided to include a youth orchestra in my group of four orchestras. That orchestra is the National Youth Orchestra of Wales. Founded in 1945, the orchestra has the distinction of being the first national youth orchestra in the world and is Europe's longest-standing national youth orchestra. Based in Cardiff the orchestra has an impressive history which has merited attention both within Wales and beyond.

The orchestra (abbreviation NYOW) numbers around 115 young players aged between 13 – 22 years who are auditioned and drawn from all over Wales, and who represent some of the most talented young musicians in Wales. The NYOW performs in some of the most prestigious concert halls in Europe including St David's Hall (Cardiff), the Bridgewater Hall (Manchester), the National Concert Hall (Dublin), Waterfront Hall (Belfast), Town Hall (Birmingham), Sage Gateshead, Beethovensaal (Stuttgart), the Salle Erasme (Strasbourg) the Konzerthaus am Gendarmenmarkt (Berlin) and La Mortella on the island of Ischia, off the coast of Italy. This recording of the last movement of the 2nd Symphony by Elgar is a fine example of the high standard of their playing.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9hYE75E\\_hs&list=OLAK5uy\\_ID8F5ndNNfudD7dalcDsHN7GD7YOjwGsA&index=4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9hYE75E_hs&list=OLAK5uy_ID8F5ndNNfudD7dalcDsHN7GD7YOjwGsA&index=4)



One of the great benefits of being a member of the orchestra is that successive generations of players have benefited from the guidance and tuition of internationally recognised professional musicians. Many of them are former members of the orchestra, and over the years, many well-known Welsh composers have been commissioned to write new works for the orchestra, such as Grace Williams, Daniel Jones, Arwel Hughes, former member Karl Jenkins, and founder member of the orchestra Alun Hoddinott. Unlike many youth orchestras, which perform under the baton of an annual guest conductor, the NYOW has traditionally appointed a resident Principal Conductor and Musical Director. A residential course is normally held in the summer, followed by a short tour comprising four or five concerts. Known to its members as the "NASH" the annual residency offers a valuable opportunity for talented musicians to work together with top professionals in an intensive environment, culminating in a series of concerts.

Since 2013 a Young Composers course has run alongside the orchestra's summer residency, giving composers the opportunity to have their music played by members of the orchestra. Works are composed during each residency which are then given their first performances at venues including The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Aberystwyth University, Sage and St David's Hall. Since 2001 the National Youth Orchestra of Wales and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales have worked together on projects culminating in joint concerts and recordings, giving young players the opportunity to play alongside some of the best orchestral players in Britain. Given the wide range of opportunities available to the players in the orchestra it's not surprising that the standards of playing have always been very high. I've chosen a piece by an outstanding Welsh composer, Grace Williams, to illustrate again their superb playing and their 'Welsh roots'. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GPfhszbn\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GPfhszbn_Y)

Finally, a chance to hear how one of the leading orchestras functions as part of the opera scene in Wales. The orchestra is the Welsh National Opera Orchestra, which because it's integral role in the production of opera's, tends to be overshadowed as a fully functioning orchestra. In addition to a substantial operatic remit, the WNO Orchestra has a stature and reputation as a world-class ensemble in its own right. This is demonstrated by its ongoing distinguished involvement in the St David's Hall International Concert Series and Welsh Proms in Cardiff each year, as well as its place as one of two national orchestras from Wales featured in the acclaimed Cardiff Singer of the World Competition.

In addition to this WNO Orchestra also has a well-established concert touring programme to: regional venues throughout Wales, an annual Viennese New Year tour, and a regular summer series of popular operatic concerts across all four corners of the country. It also plays a central role in our schools and family concerts. Let's hear a recent Lockdown piece. Here's a quote from below the next video:

"As a thank you to the exquisite WNO Chorus and WNO Orchestra for keeping the music alive over the last few months, let's raise a glass, be it fizzy pop or champagne, to our talented friends".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeAeTyxwhy0>

In 1943, Welsh National Opera was founded by a group of people from across south Wales including miners, teachers and doctors. They wanted to forge an opera company befitting Wales' rich reputation as the 'land of song'. The energy which drives the company today is rooted in its formation in the 1940s. Here are some of the highlights over the last 77 years:

- Conductor Idloes Owen proposes founding an opera company in 1943. At the first general meeting, Welsh National Opera was established, and subscription rates for the voluntary chorus were established at a guinea per year for company membership, plus sixpence per rehearsal.
- The first WNO concert of opera excerpts takes place in April 1944 at the Empire Theatre, Cardiff, with regular concerts thereafter. Idloes Owen, WNO Music Director, planned for the company to learn six operas in two years with the aim of staging them – but it took until 1946 to find a suitable venue. Within weeks of securing the Prince of Wales Theatre, Cardiff, as the venue for the first fully staged WNO performances, Idloes and his team hired costumes for the principal artists and production scenery. The Chorus's costumes were made from scratch.

- Monday 15 April 1946 saw the opening night of their first opera performance with two one act opera's: Cavalleria Rusticana & Pagliacci.
- In 1956 the Company began touring – firstly to Bournemouth, and then to London becoming a regular visitor to Sadler's Wells.
- In 1973 the WNO Chorus was established as a full-time professional ensemble, when members of the Voluntary Chorus auditioned, and some of them were successful, enabling them to give up their regular jobs and become professional choristers.
- In 1975 a blaze ripped through the WNO set store, destroying 30 years' worth of productions, performances continue, with borrowed sets and costumes from neighbouring UK opera companies.
- In 1986 WNO's production of Verdi's Falstaff went on tour to Tokyo, La Scala, Milan, and New York, and the Company made three tours to the prestigious Wiesbaden May festival in Germany.
- The year after, in 1987, a major recording was made with two of the world's leading soloists: Montserrat Caballé and Luciano Pavarotti, here's an excerpt.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qQCTWwMsBM>

The next few years saw WNO's international profile soar with a production of Verdi's Falstaff touring Tokyo, La Scala, Milan and New York. Their production of Wagner's massive 4 opera "Ring cycle" toured to venues including the Royal Opera House in 1986/1987. On the lighter side the internationally acclaimed conductor Charles Mackerras conducted the orchestra and company in "The Yeomen of the Guard" in 1995. This was the first ever production of Gilbert and Sullivan to be performed at the Royal Opera House. In late 2004, WNO transferred from the New Theatre Cardiff to the recently built Wales Millennium Centre. The first WNO performance at Wales Millennium Centre was La Traviata on Friday 18 February 2005. The Company continues to tour throughout England and Wales, performing regularly in Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, Llandudno, Milton Keynes, Oxford, Plymouth, Southampton and Swansea. Following decades of association with WNO, David Pountney became Artistic Director and Chief Executive in 2011. David Pountney signalled the Company's growing commitment to commissioning new opera – something which has always been a part of WNO's activity – with the British First's Season.

WNO marked its 70th Birthday with a new production, In Parenthesis, to commemorate the First World War and in 2018 they staged the first in a Verdi Trilogy, with a new production of The Force of Destiny, in collaboration with the German Opera Company Theatre Bonn. In that year, to show their commitment to new opera's last year, they marked the centenary of the first British women winning the vote with "Rhondda Rips it Up!" – an all-female opera composed by Elena Langer. Just as a footnote: WNO employs over 250 people ranging from artists, craftspeople, technicians and administrators – all based at the Wales Millennium Centre. I sincerely hope that the Company, the staff generally, and the Millennium Centre itself manages to re-emerge after these awful times relatively unscathed, so that we can again go to see their wonderful productions. We live in hope! I'd also extend those sentiments to the other three orchestra's above, and all other arts organisations out there who are struggling to make ends meet. It's worth bearing in mind, that they are likely to be the last organisations/businesses to come out of lockdown. This is what the orchestra "can-can" do at present:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F6FX2u8pkE>

*[This article brings back some fond memories! My mother took me to productions by WNO in the 1960s, including two rarities, Nabucco (Verdi) and William Tell (Rossini). I formed my first orchestra in 1967 and, in 1969, three of my players were accepted into the NYOW and I still have a commercially-produced LP of their performance in the summer of that year. While I was teaching at Rumney, Cardiff, I had the opportunity of taking a group of pupils to St David's Hall to work on a composition project with the BBC orchestra and that wonderful lady Evelyn Glennie, a percussionist with, apparently, ten arms!!! SJB]*

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

It's that time of year when Pam Cocchiara normally hosts our Summer Quiz; 9 or 10 teams representing our various interest groups vie for the much coveted plastic trophy cup! Well, as they say, it's not the winning that counts ...

Pam always compiles some interesting and humorous questions from a good variety of subjects and pitches them just right for us 'Third Agers.' There are just a few stonkers to sort the wheat from the chaff!

During the interval our catering staff serve the refreshments to fortify us for the final rounds that follow the raffle. We can always rely upon our generous members to donate an array of prizes: strangely the 'bottles' are soon whipped away! Over the years we have raised hundreds of pounds for local charities.

It is always a closely fought contest with only a point or two between the teams' results: that's a sign of an enjoyable quiz. With much competitive banter the results are announced; often the following teams jostle for the top three positions - Les Frogs, Quivering Quavers, Nine Pins, All Sorts and Brain Dead (though obviously they are not)!

Hopefully things will return to normal next term so that we can enjoy the Winter Quiz.



### **Answers to Quizzes – page 12**

#### **Capital Confusion:**

1 Sudan 2 Libya 3 Zimbabwe 4 Morocco 5 Namibia 6 Kenya 7 Tanzania 8 Ethiopia 9 Senegal 10 Zambia

#### **Food for Thought:**

1 Garibaldi 2 Earl Grey 3 Margherita 4 Peach Melba 5 Pavlova  
6 Sandwich (He was the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Sandwich ) 7 King Edward Potatoes 8 Beef Wellington

## Mishaps by Gerald Lee

A few weeks ago I wrote about some holiday mishaps. This time, I would like to share the story of some other mishaps in my life, mostly involving places I have lived.

Until 1966 my family lived in a terraced house in a working-class area of Belfast. Going back later, I was surprised how small the houses were. You had really little choice but to know your neighbours. Today it amazes me when people say they do not even know their next-door neighbours by name.

One evening I remember well goes back to the days of coal fires. The coal man used to carry the sacks of coal through the house. My mother would give him an apple when he finished. You were supposed to have your chimney swept regularly. On one occasion our chimney actually caught fire. We had pieces of burning soot falling down the chimney. We did not have a garden, so it had to be carried out to the back yard. The chimney breast was so hot you could not put your hand on it.

Outside you could see billows of smoke coming from our chimney. As if we did not have enough trouble to contend with, our neighbours kept coming to the door to ask us if we knew our chimney was on fire.

My family moved to a semi-detached house with a garden in 1966. It was a big step up for us. For me, it meant a house I could invite friends to visit. My father was one of the best DIY exponents I have ever known. He helped to support the family by doing 'wee jobs' at the weekends. The trouble was he was less careful in his own house. My mother would often return home and find in her absence he had made some 'home improvement' that did not impress her one bit.

He loved burning rubbish in the dustbin. One Saturday, as was usual, he was on his own in the back garden. We could see from the back window he was making a fire in the bin and waited to see what happened. The fire blazed out of control. My father grabbed the brush to push it down. The brush caught fire as well, so there he was with the dustbin on fire holding a burning brush. We knew it was better not to interfere, but we did have a good laugh.

One of the funniest things I remember arose from my father and the garden shed. Although my father was sociable, he was in many respects a loner. He was often to be found in the shed working away. At that time in Belfast there was a lot of redevelopment. He turned his shed into a second home with bits and pieces he collected from skips. He installed a glass roof, carpet and even hung some pictures. He kept an armchair where he could sit with the day light above him and read.

One day when all the family were at home, at dinner time my father was as usual in the shed. My mother asked me to tell him dinner was ready. I went to the shed to tell him, but then instinctively, without thinking, I pushed the bolt across and returned to the dining room to join the others for lunch. My father's meal was on the table at his usual place.

While we were eating we could hear my father banging. My mother was convinced he was still working, so she refused to heat his dinner, which stayed on the table going cold.

She became more and more irate. She was exasperated with him and, on a point of principle, refused to put his dinner back in the oven.

After a while my brother thought he had better go and if there was anything wrong. He found my father was trapped inside the shed and had been trying to attract someone's attention.

Of course, we all thought it was very amusing, except my father, who had to eat his dinner cold. What made the situation funnier was that my father did not say anything. He just sat down, mashed his dinner up, and began to eat without speaking.

In 1973 on graduating from university I left Northern Ireland to take a position as a trainee with a firm of motor factors in Canterbury. For the first few weeks I lodged with the parts manager and his wife in Sturry. It could only ever be a temporary arrangement, so I began to ask around about a place to live. Someone in a neighbouring unit said there was a place going in a block of rooms where he lived. It was really a house converted into bedsits.

I went to have a look. The lady who owned it said there would be no offense taken if I refused. It was a tiny room, but someone in a bigger flat was expected to move, so there was a likelihood that I could move to a better room in a short time.

The room really was small. It was about twelve foot long and six feet wide. In that space it had a bed, a Belling stove such as you found in bedsits, a pot stand with an electric kettle, a sink, a table and chair, and a chest of drawers/ wardrobe with a radio speaker on top.

The price included bedding and use of a TV lounge and a communal bathroom. All this cost £2.75 per week. It was not a lot of money even then, so in anticipation that it would only be temporary I accepted.

Unfortunately, the person who was due to move did not do so. I was stuck at the bottom of the heap. The building was located in Herne Bay, famous only because a famous female aviator crashed and died in the sea round there. I knew no-one until I met a couple from Belfast who were very kind. The only excitement was when a party of old age pensioners came down from the East End.

It was a miserable time, especially at the age of 23 and having just recently been part of a university campus. It ended when I was transferred to South Wales, where I have lived ever since. Many times I have repeated the story. I have since found out that parents have used it to warn their children that they cannot expect home comforts if they leave home. Whilst the prospect of having your own place seems very romantic, it often means dingy flats in rough neighbourhoods.

For a few years I lived in Cardiff. By then I was a civil servant. After training as a Tax Collector in Cardiff I was waiting for a permanent post, then we would buy a house.

Rosalind and I took a flat in Roath. When the weather turned cold, we found we were sharing the flat with mice and slugs. I remember one running across the carpet to behind the gas fire while we watched a horror movie. They could often be heard scurrying round in the cavity walls.

At the end of 1977 we had a move planned to a house in Pilton Vale. At the very last moment we found that the sellers could not move because of difficulty with their next purchase.

We spent that Christmas with Rosalind's parents. Her father and I went to check the flat one day when he heard an odd noise. A thin trickle of water was running down the wall.

We managed to contact the landlord, who found a pipe had burst in an upper flat. The situation would have been much worse if the majority of the tenants had not been away.

Because we were the only tenants to put our name on the doorbell, when someone forgot his key or wanted someone else, they rang our bell, much to our chagrin, especially at night when we were tucked up in bed.

We were glad to leave the place. In January we found the house we wanted and moved in a couple of months later. Our former landlord was in the newspaper at the time facing several charges of fraud, as a result of which the company, in reality him, was in receivership. There was a dispute as to who actually held the bonds. Eventually as a gesture of good will and having seen the state of the properties, the receiver repaid the bonds, which was the equivalent of a month's rent.

We still live in the same house in Malpas. Over the years we have added improvements. Unlike my father I have never really dabbled in DIY or attempted to work on anything mechanical. Many years ago, we were having a carpet fitted to one of the bedrooms. Rosalind noticed a loose floorboard, which I thought would be easy to remedy with a hammer and nail.

As I hammered away, I noticed tiny drops of water: I had driven the nail through a central heating pipe! Just at that moment there was a knock on the door. It was the carpet fitter with a roll of carpet over his shoulder. He seemed very understanding when we told him to comeback.

I telephoned the emergency plumber service in Yellow Pages. They were useless. After several calls it was obvious no-one was going to come. My next-door neighbour's son managed to make a temporary repair to stop the leak.

I have never attempted anything with a car, but on the advice of a friend I bought a car at an auction. It was a wreck and not at all safe. However, my friend reckoned he could make it roadworthy. He and a friend of his worked on the car and it actually passed an MOT.

My garage has an inspection pit. The car was half over the pit. I was sat in it when I felt a shake. I looked around and one of my friends had fallen down the pit. With a mixture of concern for him and laughing at the situation we lifted him out. He had damaged his knee. It looked very painful. He was expecting to be made redundant, so he was not bothered about not being able to work.

Another friend almost had a very serious accident. My friend David was working in a Cardiff office. His colleague and he were due to go to an office in Newport in the afternoon. My friend had a rather old car that he liked to work on himself. Over the weekend he had circulated the wheels. His colleague had been doing the job for a long time and with his expenses had a top of the range Ford Cortina. They agreed to meet in Newport.

Time passed and there was no sign of David. Everyone was worried. At about four o'clock he walked in, shaking and white faced. Someone gave him a coffee and he began to relate the story. He was driving over the roundabout at Tredegar House, when he felt his steering tremble. Then he saw out his window a wheel rolling along the carriageway.

He managed to steer the car to the side of the road. His wheel was in the middle of the carriageway. He managed to retrieve it and called the rescue service. The patrolman suggested taking one nut off each wheel to finish the journey. He would then have three nuts on each wheel and be safe to drive. The patrolman was able to undo most of the nuts without even using a wrench.

So, the moral of all these tales is to be careful. If you do not know what you are doing err on the side of caution and ask someone who does.

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**Please don't forget that we still need to have YOUR memories to share with everyone!**

**We are already having a range of topics covered, but you can write on whatever is memorable to you.**



## **A Good Breakfast by Pam Cocchiara**

When you wake up in the morning, as the day is gently dawning,  
As a rule some sort of sustenance you need,  
And you'll find this is applied to all folks far and wide  
And what they eat by Geography's decreed.

For those who live in Dublin on the hob there could be bubblin'  
Colcannon and some tea that's strong and black,  
Whereas some Scottish laddie might prefer a finnan haddy  
With cakes of oatmeal for an early snack.

In Paris they would get a croissant or baguette  
To dip into their hot cafe au lait,  
And in Germany no doubt, a dish of sauerkraut  
With frankfurters might help them start the day.

In America, I guess, they say a bagel would be best  
To start with and with that I would agree ,  
But the thought that makes me queasy is to have eggs over-easy  
With a hominy and grits miscellany.

In India a Punjabi might have an onion bhaji  
And a dish of spicy dahl would be just great,  
But for me when I awaken the smell of eggs and bacon  
Is the one causes me to salivate.

And as for what I drink, well it isn't what you think,  
Unlike most Brits it's not a cup of tea,  
Cause there's nothing can surpass a fragrant demi-tasse  
Of coffee, that's the breakfast drink for me.

Then, contented and replete, I sit back in my seat,  
And feel that I am set up for the day.  
There's nothing more I lack, my energy is back,  
I can tackle anything that comes my way.



**Painting by Hilary Lester**



## The Green Flash by Nigel Speedy

She sat, hunched forward on deck with her hands gripping the guardrail; her eyes fixed on that thin red wedge of sun dipping below the horizon.

At the captain's table on that first evening she'd been told that if you look carefully enough when conditions are right, you'll see a green flash. She hadn't missed a sunset since they'd sailed and was beginning to think she'd been the victim of a cruel joke.

The sun went below the horizon, and, as with all the previous sunsets, there was not even a hint of a green flash. Her hands tightened on the guardrail and her knuckles turned white. Her face remained impassive, but an observant onlooker might have detected that her features had taken on a determined set, as though she'd made an important decision.

Tatyana Ivanov was travelling alone. Her father, the Russian Ambassador, had mentioned to friends at his London club that his daughter had just come out of mourning after the death of her husband, and had become increasingly difficult to live with. They commiserated, and one suggested that she take a personal sabbatical as a guest on one of his cruise ships. The ambassador politely declined, but his friend wouldn't take no for an answer, and, unexpectedly, his daughter had agreed.

Tatyana wandered into the cruise ship's casino, and there, sitting at the blackjack table, was the **slimy toad** (she couldn't even bring herself to *think* of him by name) who had described the optical phenomenon that she'd been searching for these last 15 evenings.

He fitted in perfectly with the elegantly gowned and dinner suited gentry at the gaming table. She hadn't doubted him for a moment, but now she felt so stupid. Shouldn't she have noticed the signs, for example, his insistence on his martinis being shaken, not stirred?

How could she, of all people, have fallen for it. Some of them looked at her as she entered, and she imagined they were laughing at her, but none would be impolite enough to let it show. Well, she would teach him a lesson. She was not a fool, and she wouldn't be treated like one, as others, including her late husband, had learnt to their cost.

The plan had been gradually hatching in her mind. There'd be no reason to suspect she had anything to do with his disappearance. They paid each other little attention at dinner, though she and the Captain had graduated to a first name basis. She retired to her cabin and thought the plan through, concentrating on the "what ifs", and decided that her plan was fool-proof. She would do it tomorrow after dinner, when it was his custom to take a stroll around the decks.

As usual, during dinner she engaged the Captain in conversation, and afterwards discreetly followed **the toad** down the steps to the poop deck, and as he rounded the stern she slipped the knife from her bag and, after a quick look around, plunged it under the base of his skull into his brain.

It was instantaneous, and he landed just where she'd planned. It was just a matter of pushing his body under the lower guardrail, and his body would be lost in the swirling waters of the ship's wake. She felt a strange sense of elation. It was good to put such people in their place.

She noticed the sun was setting, and she couldn't take her eyes off it. Just before its top edge dipped below the horizon it flashed green and its upper part seemed to detach itself and move upwards, gradually disappearing into the red sky as the last part also flashed green and slipped into the sea, which was rapidly turning black.

She was mesmerised, and only vaguely became aware of the Captain's voice. "Ah there you are Tatyana. I've been looking everywhere for you. I wondered where you'd got to." Then, after the barest of pauses, he continued.

**"And what, exactly, are you planning to do with that?"**

## **The Maybricks – follow-up by Stephen Berry**

My article in last week's DIT on this somewhat dysfunctional family prompted a few responses – not, as I might have expected, on the subject of James and his possible Jack the Ripper connection but about Michael and his music. There really isn't sufficient information readily available about him to make a viable article, but since the interest was mainly in his more well-known music I can do as promised and give a list of some recordings that are available and which you might like. I will start with his most famous compositions and add a few more less known titles at the end. I would add that all of the songs were originally written for solo voice with piano accompaniment, but orchestral accompaniments were soon provided in addition. Finally the best-known have also been arranged for various types of choirs.

### **The Holy City**

You really are spoiled for choice here! If you really want to luxuriate in sound then I suggest a recording made, I think, in the Royal Albert Hall with André Rieu and the Johann Strauss Orchestra, plus three male soloists and full choir – and what's more, the audience joins in as well. It may be a bit OTT but it is impossible to deny the sheer magnificence of it. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BM9E1hEVrg>

"Solo" performances are probably not so impressive but are closer in concept to the original! Try:

Richard Crooks <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vM2Y-KdMccs>

Peter Dawson <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDa-0DtuPBO>

### **The Star of Bethlehem**

There are far fewer recordings of this song readily available. The best modern recording is of a traditional performance – voice (Stuart Burrows) and piano: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lq5Vg4bwrGM>

An older recording is that made by Webster Booth: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8XoD4EPI9M>

### **Thora**

Another traditional performance by Stuart Burrows: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRM9I7FU43o>  
and one with orchestra by Richard Crooks: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWdVOY4BZao>

### **Nirvana**

There is a slightly wider choice of recordings of this song. However, again Stuart Burrows' traditional recording is one of the best and is a modern recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKfydAJtyi4>

A historic recording (1912) is John McCormack's: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lgiX1EK\\_t8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lgiX1EK_t8)

One recording I would recommend to you (for purely selfish reasons!) is that made at a live concert in 2014. It is sung by Caldicot Male Voice Choir in the arrangement made by your Chairman only for that choir – I am also accompanying. The choir gives a powerful performance under its MD Siân Hatton. It too has the benefit of a video of the performance. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wa\\_W3krykO8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wa_W3krykO8)

**Roses:** Sung by John McCormack, 1908: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncuyUIHfC5U>

**Veteran's Song:** Sung by Peter Dawson: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aWcVIQnd-k>

This is a small selection of Stephen Adams' songs, but are those that still have varying degrees of popularity. Quite a few songs that I would like to hear never seem to have been recorded, though in many cases the lyrics are probably to blame rather than the music. Even these songs have "outdated" lyrics, though they serve to remind us of what was popular in Victorian and Edwardian times. For all that, I would still want the first four at least on a desert island with me! (I would have to have around 100 CDs, though!)

### Wordsearches submitted by Barbara Phillips

Can you find the 14 words that can precede or follow the word BOAT in this grid?

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

Can you find the 13 yellow flowers in this grid?

T	P	J	A	S	M	I	N	E
H	U	A	L	U	M	I	R	P
Y	C	L	W	J	T	C	R	D
C	R	A	I	N	T	Y	A	L
O	E	F	I	P	S	N	I	E
W	T	E	R	N	T	Y	A	L
S	T	R	A	E	O	E	G	R
L	U	P	L	F	E	G	O	O
I	B	I	F	N	M	S	E	G
P	O	A	S	O	E	T	I	B
N	D	A	H	L	I	A	E	A

Answers on page 30

## **LIFE TIME FRIENDS - PHIL PARKER**

I count myself as one of life's luckiest people.

My early years were spent in Northern Ireland during the latter part of the War followed by 4 years in Manchester immediately after it. I came to live in Newport in 1950, where I completed my education and have lived in and around the area almost continually, ever since.

When I first lived in Newport I joined the Boy Scouts - the 27th Newport Scout Troop - who met on Stow Hill. Little did I know then that I was just embarking on a life-long experience and in a sense, forming my future way of life.

I joined them as a complete stranger and was welcomed into their midst as though I had always been there. This made a lasting impression and sowed my first seeds of life-long friendships.

The camaraderie and friendship that we enjoyed together seemed incredible. In those days, just following the War, there was little or no entertainment for young people. All our fun and pleasure was what we created for ourselves. The Scouting experience opened the door to a whole new world! Apart from our weekly meetings, we used to go off on hikes around Monmouthshire. We would go camping and on Scouting exercises and all manner of activities. Life suddenly seemed exciting and new horizons had opened up.

As time moved on for us Scouts, our older members were drawn away from regular Scouting activities and life was leading them to National Service, to college, to work away, etc. etc. But our friends always returned to join us when they were able. This led those of us who were still active in Newport to realise that there was no way that we all wanted to lose contact, as our lives led us in different directions.

With this in mind and as our Scout meeting venues had been closed, we got our heads together and discussed how we could best continue our friendships. The result was that we decided, for those of us who still lived in the Newport area, to have regular periodic meetings, in each of our houses - those from afar joining us when they were able. From these first exploratory get-togethers grew the idea of having an annual camp. By this time some of our members were getting married and beginning to have families. Our initial camps comprised some of us sleeping under canvas and others in rented residential vans.

Thus commenced for us a new life style – which turned out to be very successful. It also enabled those of our group, who lived away, to come and join us, albeit more infrequently. We also commenced having an annual Xmas Dinner, which was also good for them as many still had families in and around Newport.

As the years moved on, and we grew older and softer(!), we all slowly moved on from camping under canvas to caravanning. By which time we all were married and our children joined with us at these camps. Over the advancing years we watched our children grow up together, followed in recent years by some of our grandchildren.

Over the years we have become one huge family and us older ones are known as 'uncles and aunts' to the children and grandchildren.

A few years back we enjoyed our 50th Annual Camp together, which just seems incredible to us senior members of our group, whose roots date back to Stow Hill in the early 1950's.

Both Linda and myself count ourselves as the luckiest of people! We also wonder if our group of friends are unique?

## U3A Garden Scheme - Angela Robins and Mike Brown

Come on all you gardeners - your photos have dried up along with that nice weather we had!

Here's one of our front garden; a fun art installation of our own making called Garden Room. It's a comfy bench complete with standard lamp with solar-powered fairy lights. At Christmas we swap the cushions for extravagantly wrapped Christmas presents (empty of course). One day we received a text message from our neighbour whilst at U3A - 'Someone has left two parcels on your bench, shall I take them in?' I told her Santa must have come early!



... and one of the lower deck of Stephen and Gill Berry's garden – the wonderful Bottlebrush display is over now, but has been replaced by a mass of colour just beneath it. Meanwhile the "Giant Man-eating Rhubarb continues to thrive in the corner over the pond and now covers half of the shed window!





## **Some Memorable Childhood Holidays by Stephen Berry**

Memory is a strange thing – I can quite clearly remember some incidents from early childhood, rather more clearly than events from my adult life! Holidays are quite a fruitful source of memories – read on!

I was born in February 1949 and, not surprisingly, I have no memory of any holiday during my first two years, though I was reliably informed by my parents that we did holiday in Torquay in 1950! However, I have memories of holidaying from 1951 onwards. Vague in the extreme, I can remember that we stayed for BB&EM (Bed, breakfast and evening meal) in Exeter in 1951. This holiday was memorable in that it was the first occasion on which I met my Cornish relations who lived in Redruth in the west of Cornwall. Those of you who remember my article on the Bristow family (DIT 14, page 13) might remember that John Bristow had two daughters, Harriett and Ellen, Ellen being my great grandmother. At this time Harriett was living with her daughter Minnie in Redruth and Minnie was married to Garnet Harris, a policeman who covered the eastern end of Redruth, Mount Ambrose. As a two-year-old I was the centre of attention, fussed-over by the entire family, especially Minnie and Garnet's two daughters, Pauline and Ann. Needless to say, they don't fuss over me quite as much nowadays! This did, though, create the foundations for friendships beyond the fairly distant family bonds, one which has lasted throughout my life and now extends to Pauline's daughter Ruth as well. Another highlight of this holiday was my grandfather buying me a Toby Twirl annual in Exeter - I still have it, well-worn but readable. This put me on the road to becoming an avid reader in due course. The book being well illustrated and colourful probably helped!

In 1952 we made our first visit to Barnstaple. All of these early holidays were BB&EM and we discovered a family offering this just outside the town on the road to Lynton. This year we visited the beach at Woolacombe, where I lost a 3d piece on the beach (I had insisted on holding it) whilst waiting to buy a bottle of pop – it never turned up but the stallholder gave me the bottle anyway! I think the tears helped. I do have a memory of visiting Lynton and Lynmouth, although this exists largely because the visit was just before the disastrous flood a few weeks later. We visited again in 1953 and I vividly remember looking at the remains of the hotel that stood beside the river and which had lost its side. I remembered seeing the building intact the previous year.

1953 saw us taking a holiday in Cornwall, staying in Wadebridge. The town was still decorated as it had been from the Coronation on 2<sup>nd</sup> June. Apparently the accommodation was less than acceptable – the evening meal was, I was told, often brought in from the local fish and chip shop and my father, never one to take any swindle lightly, made a huge fuss about it – and received a whole £1 refund on the week!

We set off in the other direction in 1954 for a holiday in Llandudno. Even at the age of 5 I can remember the fog and rain that we had for most of the week. We stayed with Mrs Harris, whose husband was a lifeboat man. She, incidentally, was the sister of the lady I stayed with for a night in Holyhead nine years later when I toured Wales by rail (DIT 10, page 6). We were given a tour of the lifeboat station and I had the thrill of sitting in it when it was launched – only for maintenance, though, not on a "call"!

Devon called again in 1955 and we returned to Barnstaple, taking my father's parents and one of my cousins as well. As we always took my other grandmother (my grandfather had died six months earlier), there were 5 adults and 2 children in an Austin A40 Somerset, the journey taking all day! Our luggage had been sent in advance and, after dropping off everybody at our B&B, my father took me back to the railway station (Barnstaple Junction) to collect the luggage. This was certainly the first time I remember seeing the strangely-shaped locomotives of the former Southern Railway; I was used to seeing the traditionally-shaped Great Western Railway engines! Perhaps this is where the first seeds of interest in railways took root!

Edinburgh in 1956 was a real excitement! To start with, we went for two weeks rather than one. We stayed with my great uncle and great aunt – they had a large flat at the top of a four storey tenement in Marchmont Road. It all started with my mother and me walking to the telephone kiosk near our home to put through a telephone call to great uncle (Edinburgh 55351), a process that took quite a time! It was

interesting to hear the operator tell my mother to insert 2/6d into the slot. We then heard her speaking to different exchanges as the call progressed across the country. Eventually a ringing tone started, was answered and mother pressed button A – and, as if by magic, my great aunt’s Scottish voice came through clearly! Holiday dates were agreed and I could hardly wait to start. We took with us my great aunt, the unmarried sister of great uncle in Edinburgh – she slept the night at our house before we left, as we set out at 4am! A morning drink at the Copper Kettle restaurant in Ludlow and lunch in Preston (a roast meal) broke up the journey and we arrived in Edinburgh at teatime. My great uncle was a shoe repairer, his shop being only a short walk from their flat. It was conspicuous by the large hunting boot sign which hung outside to attract custom! We visited my godfather Stephen Henry in Coatbridge (he lived in literally a one-roomed flat in a poor part of the town but was great fun); other fond memories were visiting Oban, where it poured with rain and my great aunt Olive bought me the sheet music for “The Happy Wanderer”; playing the piano for my great aunt Alice’s mother at her flat nearby. I have more memories of this holiday than of any other of this era.

1957 saw us back in Barnstaple at the same BB&EM for the last time. I can remember little about this holiday, as it was cut short by an event which blanked out other memories. While we were away my great aunt (who had come with us to Edinburgh in 1956) died as a result of cancer and we returned home early.

My parents bought their own home in 1958 and my father and grandfather spent months making it habitable – hence we had no holiday that year.

In 1959 we spent a week in London. I remember visiting the Tower, Hampton Court, the Science Museum and going to a “Whitehall” farce (Simple Spymen) at the Whitehall Theatre, starring Brian Rix. It was certainly funny, though I can’t remember a lot about it! The highlight of the holiday, though, was the purchase (for 5/-) of a model of a cast iron gents’ urinal for my model railway! It is still doing service now.

The following year (1960) took us back to Cornwall, staying at St Austell. We took one of my schoolfriends with us – both of us ardent train-spotters – and, to our great delight, the bungalow at which we were staying was next to the Plymouth to Penzance main line and it was possible to take the numbers of passing locomotives while sat at the dinner table! This was the first holiday which involved many visits to engine sheds – we covered every one in Cornwall and still managed a number of visits to various beaches. Apart from the obligatory visit to Redruth and Minnie Harris, we also called to see her brother Gerald on our way home. He lived in a house opposite Exeter Central station – one of the busiest in the West Country on a summer Saturday in 1960 – and we spent a few productive hours at the station while the family did the visiting!

In 1961 we again visited Edinburgh, taking my schoolfriend again. My abiding memories of this holiday again revolve around visits to engine sheds as, apart from using Edinburgh as a base, we also did a four day trip to John O’Groats. This offered many opportunities – all of which were taken! One odd incident is linked to this holiday. We were coming down the only road in north west Scotland, passing through Ullapool, where we were looking for somewhere to stay for the night. The town was full, but not too far beyond we saw a sign advertising B&B at a bungalow. This was approached off the very narrow road by a slope upwards; another slope from the property went in the other direction – almost a dual-carriageway arrangement. We stayed the night, returning the short distance to Ullapool for fish and chips for supper, and went on our way the next day. Two years later we made the same journey and looked for the same B&B. There was absolutely no sign of it or any trace of where it could have been! We slept that night in the car.

The final memorable holiday was in 1962 when I went with St Julian’s High School to Annecy in France. We stayed in the beautiful town and enjoyed boating on the lake and a cable car trip to the top of the mountain. It was also a good opportunity to discover that the French people could understand what we were learning in class!

Future holidays were English and Scottish camping trips – and I can’t remember any one specifically.



## Eating in the 1950s

For those of you who are old enough to remember, enjoy.  
For the rest of you, treat this as a history lesson!

It is very surprising how time and memory has taken its toll.  
Have things *really* changed this much in our time?

If you can remember eating in the UK in the 1950s (and even into the early 1960s), consider that:

- Pasta had not been invented.
- Curry was a surname.
- A takeaway was a mathematical problem.
- A pizza was something to do with a leaning tower.
- Bananas and oranges only appeared at Christmas time.
- All crisps were plain – the only choice was whether or not to put on the salt from the blue “twisty”.
- A Chinese chippy was an oriental carpenter.
- Rice was a milk pudding.
- A Big Mac was something we wore when it was raining.
- Brown bread was something only poor people ate.
- Oil was for lubricating, fat was for cooking.
- Tea was made in a teapot and spoonsful of tea leaves (one per person and one for the pot) and served in cups with saucers.
- Coffee was Camp and came in a bottle.
- Cubed sugar was considered “posh”.
- Only Heinz made baked beans.
- Fish didn’t have fingers.
- Eating raw fish was called poverty not sushi.
- None of us had heard of yoghurt.
- Healthy food consisted of anything edible.
- People who didn’t peel potatoes were regarded as lazy.
- Indian restaurants were only found in India.
- Cooking outside was called camping.
- Kebab was not even a word, never mind a food.
- Sugar was good and was regarded as “white gold”.
- Prunes were medicinal.
- Muesli was readily available. It was called cattle feed.
- Pineapples came in chunks in a tin.
- Water came from a tap or a well; only a fool would think of *selling* it in bottles.

### Wordsearches (page 25) - answers

#### **BOAT:**

House, Pleasure, Mail, Motor, Slow, Life, Sail, Fishing, Sauce, Paddle, River, Steam, Ferry, Speed.

#### **YELLOW FLOWERS:**

Jasmine, Primula, Cowslip, Dahlia, Gorse, Buttercup, Dandelion, Pansy, Freesia, Tulip, Begonia, Rose, Daffodil.