

DESERT ISLAND TIMES

Sharing fellowship in

NEWPORT SE WALES U3A

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Trees in Caldicot Castle Park – by Judith Nash

*A MISCELLANY OF
CONTRIBUTIONS
FROM OUR MEMBERS*

What a difference a week can make! Two weeks ago we took the decision to close Newport SE Wales U3A. The decision was not taken lightly and there was certainly some feeling that the virus wasn't too bad at that time and that we might be lucky. The following week disabused everybody of that notion and the fact that this week has seen a virtual close-down of everything we are used to accessing freely has come as something of a shock to all of us.

I would expect that most, if not all, of our members are sticking rigidly to the directive to stay indoors (except in a small number of circumstances) and to be extremely careful when out to "keep your distance" from others. If the weather is kind, and you have a garden, it seems that it is a good place to get a breath of fresh air – in fact, we have spent two days this week working in isolation in our back garden and have still had social contact (over the fences!) with our neighbours. Distancing is no problem they are at least twice the recommended distance apart from us.

Unfortunately, it seems that, as always, there is a small number of totally unscrupulous criminals who are only too willing to cash in on anxieties and doubts and, in a glib and sophisticated way, to gain access to your bank details. If you receive a phone call from somebody you don't know, simply put the phone down. Similarly, if you receive a suspicious email, delete it. If your bank emails you (mine does to let me know that I have something of interest in my on-line banking messages), the email will always contain your name and a portion of your post code, but it will certainly NOT request any personal details and none should ever be given. Should anybody come to your door at the moment, I would think twice about answering unless you are expecting a delivery. Even then, if you have a clear view of the area outside, check to see that it is who you are expecting. Any "signed for" delivery now will be signed by the person making the delivery – you should not be asked to sign. I know this is advice you have all received many times before, but it is a fact that we are more vulnerable at the moment simply because we are isolated. Be wise – and follow the advice given in the old Yorkshire saying, "If in doubt, you'd best say nowt!"

Please continue to submit poems, stories, jokes, short articles, paintings and the like. I think that we are going to have quite a lengthy run! Don't think that your contribution has been overlooked if it doesn't appear immediately – I am trying to achieve a variety and balance in each edition.

Keep safe and keep active – and keep in touch!

Stephen Berry, Chairman

Braille and Me – a reflection by Lyn Street

I've been a member of the U3A Choir since July 2017. For a short time at the end of last year I was also a member of the creative writing group and, at some stage, I hope to return. Some U3A members are, therefore, familiar with the fact that when I read, I read braille.

A few years ago I wrote this essay for a competition whose aim was to promote the use of Braille – a cause I definitely support.

When I joined the Creative Writing group I read the essay so that people would have a better understanding of my method of written communication. So, I thought I'd submit it now, for interest.

I was born with a visual impairment but as a small child it mattered to me little. We lived on a farm in Somerset and my parents gave me a precious gift - the freedom to play, explore and learn. By the age of five I was confident, active and had learnt the print alphabet from Smartie tops.

School was something of a shock - I had to sit still and do as I was told. On my first day I was given a braillette board - a wooden board with holes in and a pile of nails. The idea was to place the nails to make Braille letters. It seemed rather pointless and uninteresting to me - surely there were fields to explore and bikes to ride? Incidentally, I dread to think what Health and Safety would make of the braillette board as a class-room activity today! Later I was given a Stainsby Braille writing machine and learned to read "The cat sat on the mat". Braille was, perhaps, my second precious gift. It has been an essential tool in my life ever since, allowing me to achieve my full potential, giving me hours of reading pleasure and generally making my life easier.

Of course, there are challenges in life as a visually impaired person but there are also times to be light-hearted. To balance the disadvantages, there must, surely, be some advantages?

Over the years I have come up with two:
I am never driving so can always have a drink.
It is never me who has snaffled the boss's pen.

But when it comes to the fun and interesting advantages of Braille over print, I can think of seven.

Let us start with the most obvious— **the ability to read in the dark.**

I was reading on the train recently and noticed that the lights had gone out. Soon afterwards we went through a tunnel and it was pitch black. The newspapers around me stopped rustling and everyone became quiet and still. It almost seemed that, without light, my fellow travellers were in suspended animation. I continued reading whilst smiling to myself. It was tempting to leap up and say, "Would you like me to read to you until the lights come back on?"

Staying on the subject of trains and other public places, **we can read whatever we like, wherever we like.** So if I choose I can read "Winnie the Pooh" (aged 58), private correspondence or a raunchy novel with little or no possibility of anyone reading over my shoulder. I will confess that there have been times, when reading a slightly naughty magazine article or the like, that I have smiled to myself thinking "If only you knew what I am reading".

We never have problems deciphering each other's writing. To an extent we each have our own style, depending on how we set things out and which of the changes to the Braille code we have incorporated into the Braille we produce. There are also little quirks such as my friend who has always confused the contraction for character with that for Christ. For many years, therefore, his Christmas card has wished me a "Happy Charactermas" instead of a "Happy Christmas". I would recognise it even if he forgot to put his name.

Now this one is somewhat technical, but stick with it.

We have a nifty way of remembering numbers and encoding passwords.

In Braille, the letters a to j preceded by a numeral sign represent the numbers 1 to 9 and 0. So, for example, the number 10 is written as *numeral sign* aj. Therefore, if I need to remember a number such as 31754 I simply convert it into the word "caged". And if it doesn't make a word I think up a sentence such as "Fred goes fishing every Friday afternoon" - 676561. This aide-memoir works particularly well if the sentence is relevant to the person. In other words, if his name really is Fred or he does indeed enjoy fishing. Conversely, it is easy to convert numbers into letters so that we can remember, or even write down passwords. There are lots of words which only use the letters a to j including ice, bead, badge, decide and, the longest I have come up with yet, cabbage. So, my head is full of seemingly random words, sentences and numbers all of which mean something specific and important to me. One of my favourites is "be good, always buy cat food" - the telephone number for the cattery of course.

We can read whilst still looking towards/making eye contact with our audience or class. In my experience this purely accidental bi-product of Braille reading has been

the envy of sighted people on several occasions. A few years ago I was reading the part of the formidable Lady Bracknell (a character in Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest") and a fellow actor said how much he would like to be able to read whilst still using his eyes and face to act. Similarly during my career as a trainer, colleagues commented how useful they would find it to be able to consult notes without looking away from their students.

We can seem to be amazing!

I was somewhat mystified recently when out of the blue, a shop assistant commented on my "fantastic memory". Then I realised how I had probably been fooling people for years. When shopping I walk on the left side of my assistant so that I can read my Braille list in my left pocket. It had never occurred to me that they would not realise I had a list, so my ability to tell them exactly what I need, more or less in the correct order, would seem almost super-human. I will confess that on that occasion I just smiled and chose to keep my little secret.

Lastly, **Braille is the only people who can truly say we have information "at our fingertips"**. When used by others this is a metaphor, but for us it's a fact – it's the way we read!

So let us celebrate Braille and its people, past, present and future. Its ingenious inventor Louis Braille, everyone who is involved in its teaching and production and, of course, us - its readers.

Braille remains an invaluable tool for our independence and enjoyment and, despite technological advances, is no less relevant today than it was 50 years ago. Long may it be produced, taught and prized!

FOOTNOTE by Stephen Berry

This fascinating reflection reminds me that my only piano teacher, Cyril Toms, who taught me for seven years from when I was just coming up to my fifth birthday, had been blind from birth. He had large Braille volumes on his lap throughout my lessons and I never really gave much thought to how was I saw on the printed page translated into Braille. If straightforward with simple pieces, it must have been a nightmare when I was learning a piece of Chopin's complex piano music!

What an amazing system, though. We are used to having aids to assist almost every situation these days, but it is amazing to think that Braille worked on his system in the period 1820-1854. Within thirty years it was in almost universal use.

Although I cannot use it, it has had a major influence on my life!

Reasons Why the English Language is so Hard to Learn – Gwyn Havard

- The bandage was wound around the wound.
- The farm was used to produce produce.
- The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
- We must polish the Polish furniture.
- The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- Since there is no time like the present, he thought it time to present the present.
- A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
- When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
- I did not object to the object.
- The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
- The two were too close to the door to close it.
- The buck does funny things when the does are present.
- A seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.
- To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
- The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
- After a number of injections my jaw got number.
- Upon seeing the tear in the painting, I shed a tear.
- I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
- How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

Let's face it, English is a crazy language. There is no egg in eggplant, nor ham in hamburger, neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England, nor French fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat.

We take English for granted. But we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig. However, one can be insolent, but not solent!

And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham?

If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth beeth? One goose, 2 geese. So one moose 2 meese? One index, 2 indices?

Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends, but not one amend.

English was invented by people, not computers and it reflects the creativity of the human race, which of course is not a race at all.

Garden Birds – Pam Cocchiara

Now that I have enforced leisure at home I can spend more time watching the birds that frequent my rear garden. It's not very big but there are plenty of shrubs and I keep the bird table well stocked with food.

Over time the number of visiting birds has fluctuated and there are some, the thrush and wren for example, that I have not seen for years. For a long while there was a blackbird, very distinctive with a white feather on one wing but he's long gone. There is a regular pair now though, a well-groomed male with his slightly more dowdy wife.

Magpies too seem to have deserted my garden. There used to be a lot, gangs of these swaggering bandits that with raucous cries commandeered the bird table. Now there is only one, on his own more subdued but just as handsome.

There are blue tits, a pair of wood pigeons, an occasional chaffinch and small flocks of cheerful chattering hedge sparrows.

And of course, most importantly in my eyes, the robin, a constant presence. He has been joined by a mate and together they are busy feeding. There must be a nest nearby and my hope is that I shall see some young robins in due course. Today, as I was sweeping the path and paved area in the lovely spring sunshine, the pair swooped down and started searching for any titbits I may have disturbed with my broom. I stood there for some time as they pecked about, right up to and around my feet. It was a magical moment. The robin is considered the nation's favourite bird, is certainly mine and was the inspiration for this poem.

Robin Redbreast – Pam Cocchiara

Redbreasted bover boy of the garden,
His cocky stance and air of arrogance,
bright agate eye alert for food
or for other birds that may intrude
upon his domain,
that he will maintain and vigorously defend.

Depicted as the gardener's friend.
A claim that's hollow, it's purely appetite leads him to follow
as in unwitting service to his needs,
we toil and turn the soil,
revealing grubs and insects on which he feeds.

But he is no fair weather friend.
When Autumn comes,
He does not leave for southern parts,
as others may but he will stay, and lift our hearts
on every grey and cheerless day,
chest like a furnace glowing as if to fuel his song all winter long.
It is that russet breast of fire we so admire, in recognition
Of that shade named after the artist Titian.

He'll take a mate come Spring,
last year's perhaps or someone new, it doesn't matter who.
Monogyny is not his thing.
But once matched, right through the breeding time,
a more devoted partner's hard to find.
He does not rest, he'll feed her each and every day,
as she prepares and fills the nest.
As each clutch hatches they will work together,
As a pair, through weather foul or fair,
to feed and raise the young.
And when that task is done,
when fledglings and mate they all depart,
well, he's done enough.
Bachelor once more, with fiery heart he struts his stuff.

Other birds frequent the garden through the year.
They too delight the eye and please the ear,
but to me it is quite clear who, in this little world, is the overseer.
If all the garden birds should disappear,
country wide from coast to coast,
it is the void left by the robin that I should mourn the most.

Global warming and a drastic change to weather patterns
affect a range of birds, song thrush, linnet, wren and jay;
they each day are further in decline,
And other creatures,
each with their own distinctive features.
The hedgehog, dragonfly and the humble bumble bee
may all too soon to us be lost, to memory consigned.

It seems a good place to put in a contribution that I received from Mick Bailey this week:

Now that old codgers like me are being confined to barracks for several months we shall need a variety of activities and interests to keep up our spirits. I am lucky in so far as my main hobby is bird-watching and, in particular, counting the birds in my garden each week as part of a nationwide survey run by the British Trust for Ornithology. This charity has been studying bird population changes in a variety of ways since its foundation in 1933 and started its Garden Bird Survey in 1995.

You do not need to be an expert to participate in this survey. To find out more, go to WWW.BTO.ORG/GBW .

Mick Bailey

Easyeasy Cryptic Crossword Clues – Angela Robins

There are twelve types of Cryptic Clues and here are some of the Reversal Type for you to have fun with.

Reversal Clues give a word, a hint to reverse that word, and a definition of the answer (as in a straight crossword).

e.g. Ward / returned / the raffle (4). The answer is Draw.

Examples of hints to reverse the given word can be - returned, reverse, hold back, coming back, turning round, spin, flip.

Have a go at these clues, they are so easy you won't need the answers given to you!

1. Reverse part that catches (4).
2. Reel loops back (5).
3. Favourites step back (4).
4. RAC reversed vehicle (3).
5. Well groomed but keels over (5).
6. Snug retreat for shooters (4).
7. Pans back for a photograph (4).
8. Figure gives net return (3).
9. Material mined in reverse order (5).
10. Putting bins out, latch on lock (4).

A 'Down Clue ' may have instructions to reverse the word upwards such as rising, coming up, going up, lifting, getting up.

1. Lift net after nine (3).
2. Tips up roasting equipment (4).
3. Tessa rising to something valuable (5).
4. Mad to stop up (3).
5. Keep up to take a look (4).
6. Deer overturned a plant (4).
7. Sore turns up God of Love (4).
8. Raps up in scuffle (4).
9. Nemo turns up in prophecy (4).
10. Sloop overturned in lakes (5).

Have a look at some Cryptic Crosswords and see if you can spot the Reversal Clues.

Don't forget that our Family History group is willing to assist with any genealogical problem or to help members start work on their family history. Just drop me an email with details of your request to me at chair.newportu3a@gmail.com and I will respond as quickly as I can.

Members have also been joining the Classical Music Appreciation group to receive fortnightly sets of notes and listening suggestions. I'm always happy to have additional members! Please email me as above if you would like to receive these free materials.

A Ciggies Last Lament – Pam Healey (late U3A member)

Hands caressing, gentle but strong
Filling me with desire
A sensuous warmth consuming me
Oh hell! My filters on fire.
The silly sod has lit the wrong end
Oh, what's a poor ciggie to do?
I'm twisting and writhing in terrible pain
And the air is turning blue.
O where, O where is the fire brigade?
Why is there such a delay?
Is the engine stuck in mud somewhere?
Has the driver gone astray?
My nub is bent, my fire is spent
But fear torments me still,
I lie in the dark – in the dust – and the ash
In the pocket of fag-ash Lil.
He really should give up the weed
It would be for the best
And let us ciggies lie in peace
In the ciggie chapel of rest.

Doing Everything Right – Pam Healey (late U3A member)

I always did everything right
Never a sin in sight
I held my head high
Never told a lie
Never did curse
Or anything worse
I always did everything right.
I never did smoke
Or tell a rude joke
I never did stink
Of the demon drink
I always did everything right.
I was offered a 'fix'
In exchange for my knicks
You promised me all
If I let them fall
But I always did everything right.
But now I am older, feeling colder
And no man, big and strong
I wish I hadn't been such a saint
I wish I'd done something wrong.

Travellers' Tale 2 related by Stephen Berry



The Crumlin railway viaduct was an iconic structure which spanned the Ebbw valley at Crumlin, carrying the Pontypool Road to Neath railway line 200 feet above the valley floor at its maximum. At a total length of 1650 feet it presented a real spectacle and was always the highest viaduct in the UK and the third highest in the world. It opened on 1st June 1857 and its fame soon spread. I have evidence that at least one special excursion was run for passengers to view the phenomenon in 1864 from Church Stretton in Shropshire – and it may well have started from Shrewsbury.

It served its purpose well and carried many millions of tons of coal from the eastern valleys of Glamorgan and the Monmouthshire valleys to the midlands and the west country. It also saw a thriving passenger service until the upsurge in car ownership in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Its fate was sealed when the line was earmarked for closure under the infamous Beeching plan.

My first trip over the viaduct was made on 2nd March 1963 (I still have the dated ticket!) when my father and I made the journey from Newport to Pontypool Road, thence through to Neath, returning home via Cardiff. The line was a blend of industrial and rural scenery and involved some extremely steep gradients. It was a steam enthusiasts' paradise!

I made several trips over the line during the following 15 months and also included trips on the branches from Nelson to Dowlais, yet another exciting journey. I am so glad that I did as the line fell victim to Beeching's "Axe", the last trains running on 13th June 1964.

With a few friends I made a day out of 13th June – and it WAS a day out! We left Newport at 8.03am bound for Pontypool Road. There we changed trains and took the 8.40am train to Neath. It was definitely fuller than trains normally were and it was obvious that a number of enthusiasts were also making their farewells to this route. We were slightly late arriving at Neath, but we were also late leaving Neath on our return journey. We were due to leave at 11.05am, but the train had to wait for the Bristol train which was late. We left at 11.10am, having picked up a large number of passengers from the connection. It didn't really matter; we were travelling only as far as Nelson, where we should have had a 20 minute wait; in fact we lost time and only had an 8 minute wait!

We then set out on the 12.49pm train for Dowlais Cae Harris, for the last time by public train. We had a 30 minute wait at Dowlais before the train returned – and, believe me, 30 minutes was quite long enough for a stay in Dowlais! Our return train ran through to Ystrad Mynach in the Rhymney valley and we made our last trip by public train over this short line as well. From there we took a train (just to the next station up the valley to Hengoed where we transferred from the low level station to the adjacent high level station, situated at the end of the magnificent stone viaduct – a structure which thankfully survives as a listed monument. After a wait of 30 minutes we set out

again for Neath, where we had a 75 minute wait for the return trip and we were able to get a cooked meal – bacon, egg and chips! – in a café not far from the station. At 5.56pm we set out for the final full journey back to Pontypool Road. We knew that we were making our final journey over the first half of the route, but sadness tinged the whole of the remainder of our day.

We were slightly late arriving at Pontypool Road but we hadn't finished the day yet. We had time for one very amusing incident (which I will relate below) and a cup of tea in the refreshment room. Then, at 8.5pm we set out for the last westward journey along the line in the last westward train to cross the Crumlin viaduct. We were able to travel only as far west as Mountain Ash, where we arrived at 10pm and crossed to the other platform to catch the 10.14pm train back to Pontypool Road, the very last to cross the viaduct. After a short wait at Pontypool Road we caught the 11.27 train to Newport where my parents provided the taxi service home.

It was, in many ways, a sad day, long and exhausting, but well worth the effort. We had covered 241 miles in total – and, by enlisting the help of my cousin who lived close to Crumlin station, I have in my possession the very last ticket to be issued from Crumlin to Hafodyrynys Halt, covering the very last journey across the viaduct.

..... and that Amusing Incident at Pontypool Road

As befitted a large station, Pontypool Road station had a large booking office with at least three resident booking clerks. Many enthusiasts at this time also collected railway tickets and it was always the aim to buy tickets bearing the pre-nationalisation title Great Western Railway – there were still quite a number on sale even 16 years after nationalisation. Now Pontypool Road had some in their ticket racks, but one of the clerks would never admit it – it was totally inexplicable as enthusiasts buying tickets was a good source of revenue for the station. As might be expected, there were quite a large number of enthusiasts at the station on this last day of the Neath line and as we got down to the booking hall one was at the window. He turned to his friend and said; "They haven't got any". I guessed that it was the miserable booking clerk – and a quick glance confirmed this. I knew that they had three that could be purchased at reasonable prices so I told the unhappy enthusiast that I could get him these if he would like them – and I admitted to myself that I could also have some fun into the bargain!

I went to the window and asked if there were any Great Western Railway tickets to be had, only to be told curtly, "No!" My reply was, "Right. Could I have a return to Crumlin, please?" A GWR ticket duly appeared. "Thank you," I said, "and a single to Treharris, please." Another GWR ticket appeared, with the comment "Think you're very clever, don't you?" "No," I said, "but I would also like a 1st class cheap return to Pontypool Clarence Street, please." This was the final straw – this ticket was what was known as a blank card – the destination had to be filled in by hand, and the details duly entered up in the register of blank card sales. I don't think I have ever seen anybody quite so close to having a heart attack! Of course, by this time word had spread amongst the other enthusiasts present and there was soon a long queue of people all primed as to what to ask for.

We had to leave before the queue was finally all served, but it seems as though everybody obtained the required tickets as there was no alternative but for reinforcement to be called for in the booking office.

I imagine that the main cause of the problem went home and promptly had a nervous breakdown! I must say, though, that attitudes of this sort were rare – most railwaymen were more than willing to sell their tickets and to help enthusiasts. I still have one of the blank cards issued that evening!

The Grandparents' Answering Machine – Jean Comfort

Good morning at present we are not at home. Please leave your message after the beep.

If you are one of our children, press 1 and then select the option 1 to 5 in order of "arrival" so that we know who it is.

If you need us to stay with the children, press 2.

If you want to borrow the car, press 3.

If you want us to wash and iron your clothes, press 4.

If you want the grandchildren to sleep here tonight, press 5.

If you want us to pick up the kids from school, press 6.

If you want us to prepare a meal for Sunday or to have it delivered to your home, press 7.

If you want to come to here, press 8.

If you need money, press 9.

If you are going to invite us to dinner, or take us to the theatre ... **start talking, we're listening!**

Some fun listening with YouTube – Neil Pritchard

Laughter is the best tonic! Use YouTube to access the following:

The Two Ronnies: The Plumstead Ladies Male Voice Choir

The Two Ronnies: Bold Sir John (the longer version with captions)

Monty Python: Always Look on the Bright Side(Sing Along)

Morecambe and Wise: Playing all the Right Notes Xmas Show 1971

The Banana Boat song

Flanders And Swann: Hippopotamus Song

Flanders And Swann: Song of Reproduction

Ian Wallace: The Warthog Song

Dudley Moore: Beethoven Sonata Parody

Moore and Peter Cook: Music Lesson

Mr Bean plays Beethoven Moonlight Sonata and Pathetique Sonata

Franz Riezenstein Concerto Populaire (video)

Hoofnung Concert: Horrortorio

Malcolm Arnold: Grand Grand Overture (Proms Concert)

Shostakovich:Tea for Two

Kombat Opera presents The Applicants

Mozart Horn Concerto on a Hosepipe

Leopoldo Mozart: Toy Symphony

And, added by your crazy editor, two of his favourite clips:

Tom and Jerry: The Hollywood Bowl (1950)

Tom and Jerry: The Cat Concerto (1947)

Memories of a Special Event in 1952 – Julie Fry

I come from Aberdare, and in the summer of 1952, I remember all the Junior Schools preparing for a massed choral concert to welcome in the reign of our new Queen, Elizabeth II. This was to be held in our local theatre The Coliseum.

We learned the songs in our separate schools and then were taken by bus into town to the Gadlys Secondary School for final rehearsals. So I learned:

Men of Harlech
Dafydd y Garreg Wen
Oes Gafr Eto

The Skye Boat Song
Danny Boy
And did those feet in ancient times

On reflection, surely this was a programme chosen to represent all of Great Britain? Only now do I wonder was I part of a wider event that covered Wales or even Britain. *[Newport certainly had a massed schools choir at this time – I have seen a photograph of it – so I guess that it was a nationwide initiative. Perhaps the programme varied slightly according to region – Ed.]*

Does anyone else remember taking part (you would need to have been 9-11 yrs. old in 1952). Are there any other “Coronation” choristers out there, or do you have a different memorable moment from your Junior School years?

..... and of one in 1953 – Stephen Berry

At the tender age of four I was aware that something special was happening when a neighbour from across Chepstow Road (Harry Stevens) arrived one afternoon with – a TELEVISION! A massive wooden cabinet with a 9” screen, it dominated the living room.

A day or so later the entire family and near neighbours arrived, the latter with their own chairs, and they sat down to watch the Coronation. It was obviously a lengthy event and I soon became bored. My great grandmother, seated right in front of the screen, loved it, though!

Then came the interesting events – street parties! Our local party was rather a field party, held in the grounds of Danygraig House on Chepstow Road, but I also attended those in Vivian Road (grandparents) and Myrtle Grove (great grandparents). There was an abundance of cakes and pop and we received commemorative china items. I think the weather must have been kind as we had races and other outdoor games to keep us entertained and to tire us out!

Some weeks later we were invited to watch the Queen inspecting the troops in front of the railway station. This was courtesy of a friend, Miss Young, who had a small business in Cambrian Chambers in Cambrian Road. There were a number of businesses in this building and it seemed that the entire workforces of each turned out for the occasion. We all watched proceedings from the flat roof, me standing on a chair to see over the parapet!

What childhood memories do you have? Please share them with us – they all add a very personal side to the history of our city.

Fun with Numbers – These will make you think!

$$\begin{aligned}1 \times 8 + 1 &= 9 \\12 \times 8 + 2 &= 98 \\123 \times 8 + 3 &= 987 \\1234 \times 8 + 4 &= 9876 \\12345 \times 8 + 5 &= 98765 \\123456 \times 8 + 6 &= 987654 \\1234567 \times 8 + 7 &= 9876543 \\12345678 \times 8 + 8 &= 98765432 \\123456789 \times 8 + 9 &= 987654321\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}1 \times 9 + 2 &= 11 \\12 \times 9 + 3 &= 111 \\123 \times 9 + 4 &= 1111 \\1234 \times 9 + 5 &= 11111 \\12345 \times 9 + 6 &= 111111 \\123456 \times 9 + 7 &= 1111111 \\1234567 \times 9 + 8 &= 11111111 \\12345678 \times 9 + 9 &= 111111111 \\123456789 \times 9 + 10 &= 1111111111\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}9 \times 9 + 7 &= 88 \\98 \times 9 + 6 &= 888 \\987 \times 9 + 5 &= 8888 \\9876 \times 9 + 4 &= 88888 \\98765 \times 9 + 3 &= 888888 \\987654 \times 9 + 2 &= 8888888 \\9876543 \times 9 + 1 &= 88888888 \\98765432 \times 9 + 0 &= 888888888\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}1 \times 1 &= 1 \\11 \times 11 &= 121 \\111 \times 111 &= 12321 \\1111 \times 1111 &= 1234321 \\11111 \times 11111 &= 123454321 \\111111 \times 111111 &= 12345654321 \\1111111 \times 1111111 &= 1234567654321 \\11111111 \times 11111111 &= 123456787654321 \\111111111 \times 111111111 &= 12345678987654321\end{aligned}$$

Contributed by Gwyn Havard

News round-up

Don't forget the challenge given by Rob Wilkinson, our business secretary. The challenge is this:

You can choose up to 10 films, 10 books, 10 works of art and the musical works of 10 composers or artistes. What or who would you include in that list and what would be your top three choices in each category? If you would like to add a sentence or two to say why something is a favourite, please do so. I hope to get a large number of responses to this suggestion and I will release them gradually, so many per edition. It may give you some inspiration to revisit works you have not thought about for years! The bible and works of Shakespeare have been removed as stock items, but what would you want in place of them if you decided you did not want them?

I hope to publish the first contributions next week.

A final reminder (for this week at least!) - please contribute something for future editions.

Keep safe – and keep in contact, particularly with those members who do not have access to the internet. A phone call will, I know, be much appreciated.