DESERT ISLAND TIMES

Sharing fellowship in

NEWPORT SE WALES U3A

No.24 23rd October 2020

A quiet Autumn day in the Lakes -
a distinct improvement on this week's weather!

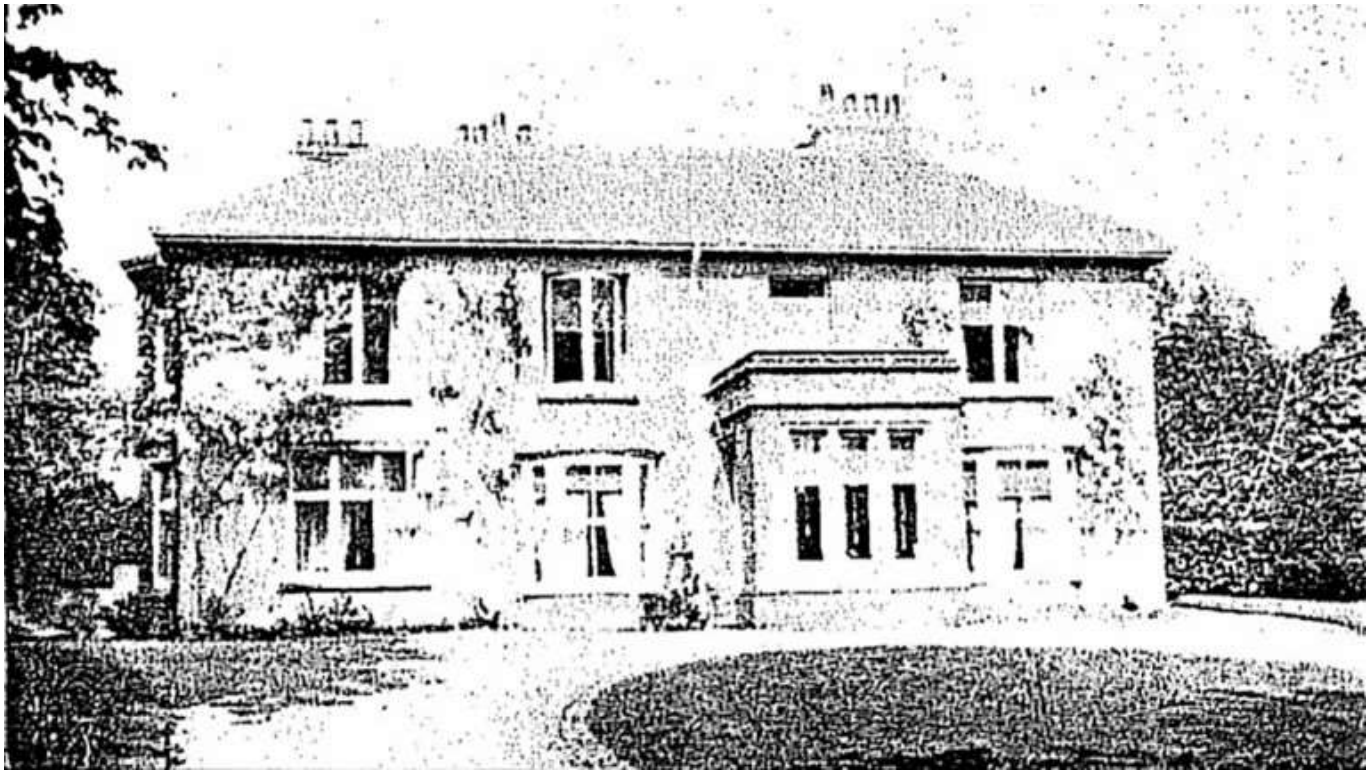
A MISCELLANY OF CONTRIBUTIONS FROM OUR MEMBERS

ALLT-YR-YN NATURE RESERVE

The Allt-yr-yn Nature Reserve was established in 1986 and encompasses an area of 32 acres. The Alltyryn House Estate, which forms the basis of the present-day reserve, was built in the middle of the 18th century. Prior to that it had been a mostly wooded area containing native trees, providing natural habitat for local wildlife species.

When built, the house and estate was bounded on the south and east side by the Tredegar Estates, and in 1796, on the north-west side by the newly constructed Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal.

ALLTYRYN HOUSE: HISTORY TIMELINE



Alltyryn House Estate was built in the middle of the 18th century and since that time the estate and its owners have been woven into the historical fabric of Newport. Existing as it did during some turbulent times, seeing Newport develop from a small town of around 1000 inhabitants through to the present City with a population in excess of 316,300.

Note: The following is a description of the estate in 1923. No doubt it had seen many improvements since the original, built around 1760. Nevertheless, it gives an idea of how grand the property was when it was first constructed.

THE ESTATE

A brochure published when the estate was prepared for auction in 1923 described it thus:

A charming Freehold Residential Property known as ALLTYRYN HOUSE.

The Residence, which is situate on a slope, 130 feet above Sea level, is approached by a winding Carriage Drive from the Main Road, lit by Electric Light, and contains:

SQUARE PORCH, with Tessellated floor and Teak ceiling.
LOUNGE OR BILLIARD ROOM, with polished Jarrah wood block floor, and fitted with white mantelpiece, anthracite stove, and ceiling lights for billiard table.
MORNING ROOM, with fitted Anthracite Stove and cupboard for Safe.
INNER HALL, with Jarrah wood block floor, Lincrusta dado, and fitted Anthracite Stove.

LAVATORY, CLOAK ROOM AND W.C., fitted with modern fittings, Lavatory Basin (h. & c.), Hot Towel Airer, and having tiled and wood block floors.
DRAWING ROOM, with Jarrah wood block floor, large Bay Window, and white enamelled Mantelpiece and Overmantel.
DINING ROOM, with Jarrah wood block floor, Marble Mantelpiece and Curb, Lincrusta dado, and with Buttery Hatch to Kitchen.
KITCHEN, with red tiled floor, fitted with Dresser and "Regal" Range.
PANTRY, with red tiled floor, glazed sink (h. & c.), wooden draining board, with two fitted China Cupboards.
BACK KITCHEN, with glazed washing-up sink (h. & c.), plate rack, etc.
SMALL BATHROOM, with fitted Bath (h. & c.).
SERVANTS' HALL, with tiled floor, supplementary Range and Ceiling Bacon Rack, and Store Cupboard with fitted Shelves.
PANTRY, with cement floor and Stone Slab and Shelves, and double windows.
DAIRY, with separate Entrance from Farm buildings, fitted with Dairy Slabs and double window.
SMALL CONSERVATORY, entered from Inner Hall and leading to cement and paved Yard, containing Outside W.C.
CELLARS, comprise four excellent Rooms, fitted with stone, wood and iron Bins and Rolling Way.

ON THE FIRST FLOOR, approached by attractive front and back Staircases, are:-
LANDING, with Lincrusta dado,
No. 1 BEDROOM, fitted with white enamelled Mantelpiece and Overmantel.
No. 2 BEDROOM, with door communicating with Door to Dressing Room.
No. 3 BEDROOM, with Oak Mantelpiece, fitted Dress Cupboard and door to Dressing Room.
No. 4 BEDROOM, with white enamelled Mantelpiece.
No. 5 BEDROOM, with fitted Dress Cupboard and Grate.
BATHROOM, with solid Porcelain Bath, white tiled walls, Lavatory Basin.
FITTED W. C.
FITTED LINEN CUPBOARD, with Hot Water Copper Cylinder and Shelves.
THE SECONDARY BEDROOMS, entirely shut off from the front of the house, include 4 Rooms, one now used as a work- shop (h. & c. Basin), and another as a workroom, with a small Housemaid's Closet.
LARGE STORAGE ROOM in the roof.

In the Yard adjoining the Kitchen is a wash house; with concrete floor, with Furnace, Boiler and Bread Oven; also Brick Yard, with coal house to hold 10 tons.
FRUIT ROOM, with cement floor and ranges of wooden shelves.
CEMENT FLOORED GARAGE, for two Cars. HARNESS ROOM.

THE FARM BUILDINGS comprise barge brick Shed, with corrugated-iron Roof, comprising:
Cow Shed to tie five, three Calf Sheds or three-stall Stable fitted with iron racks and brick partitions, and a large Hay Loft over. Bull House and Yard. Large open Shed, half with cement floor, and Salting House, with accommodation for Cattle. Shed for sick Beast, Corn Store, and a Salting House. Three Pigs' Cots. Corrugated-iron Hay Barn on brick foundations, to store 20 tons. There is also a corrugated-iron Cow Shed for Fields Nos. Pt. 24, Pt. 30 and No. 28, situate on Enclosure No. Pt. 24.

THE GARDENS AND GROUNDS are very attractive and include Kitchen Garden planted with all varieties of fruit trees and bush fruit, and with bog-edged paths. A Green House and Vinery with Heating Chamber; Wooden Potting Shed; also full-sized Croquet and Tennis Lawns and a smaller Lawn and Terraces. Rose Garden. Old walled Garden with bog-edged paths. Two excellent Orchards with a total area of about five acres, planted with Apples, Pears, Plums, Damsons, etc. Corrugated-iron Carpenter's Shop and Wooden Poultry House and Runs.

The Residence is surrounded by 28 acres of well watered Pasture Land of fine quality, and will be sold with POSSESSION on completion of the purchase.

THE LODGE at the Entrance Gate is well built with slate roof, and contains six Rooms, Pantry and Coal House, and has Town Water laid on.

The piece of Land hatched Red on the plan is rented from Lord Tredegar upon an Annual Tenancy at a rental of £1 a year, and the Purchaser shall take over the said tenancy subject to the consent of Lord Tredegar.

The Vendor is liable for 25 per cent of the cost of the repair of the road between the points marked "C" and "D" on the plan.

The sum of £1 is received annually from the Postmaster in respect of telegraph poles and wires passing over the property.

There is a Post Office Telephone at the Residence which is connected by a private wire to the Lodge, and the Purchaser shall take these over with the consent of the Postmaster General.

Commuted Tithe Rent Charge apportioned £5 6s. 4d. Land Tax is redeemed.

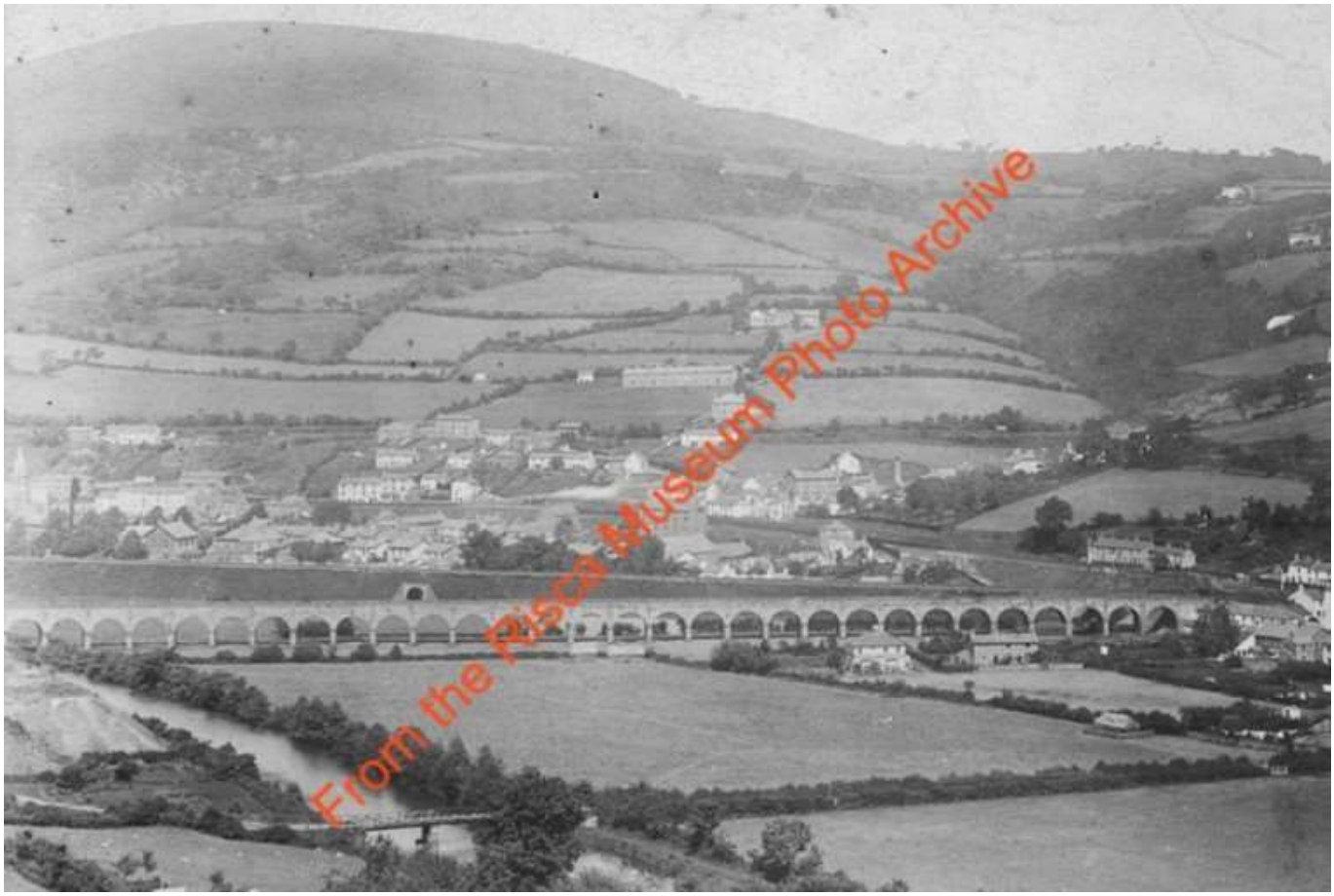
GENERAL REMARKS: ALLTYRYN HOUSE is an extremely well-built Freehold Country A Residence, surrounded by Pasture Land of Park-like formation, and situate within 1.3 miles from Newport Railway Station. The House is beautifully appointed and equipped with all modern conveniences. The gardens and grounds are very attractive and the Farm Buildings are up-to-date and ample for the requirements of the property. There is septic tank drainage. Electric Light is fitted everywhere with meters for heating and lighting, and the whole of the estate including the Lodge at the Entrance Gates, will be sold with Possession on completion of the purchase. A considerable portion of the property fronts good roads and should be in demand for building purposes, while a portion of it contains valuable clay for brick making, and to which there is a frontage to the Canal. The Vendor reserves the right of holding a Sale by Auction on the premises at any time previous to the date fixed for the completion of the purchase.

ESTATE OWNERS:

First owner, circa 1760, was John Hodgkinson the Elder, who passed it onto his son. *[This does not seem to be borne out by the records as the second owner (see below) was the son of William and Anne Hodgkinson of Torworth, Nottinghamshire; however, William's father was a John Hodgkinson – Ed.]*

Second Owner, John Hodgkinson the Younger, was a well-known civil engineer who played major role in the building of tram roads and bridges during the period of his tenure. As a young man, born as he was in 1773, he probably watched and had taken a keen interest in construction of the Monmouthshire Brecon Canal and fourteen locks, located as it was along the boundary of the Alltyryn Estate. Research on the internet demonstrates just how important his role as a civil engineer was. In 1802 the Canal Company endeavoured to pay for stone used. Proceedings at the Hundred and Fifty Fourth Meeting of the Committee of the Company of Proprietors of the Monmouthshire Canal Navigation held over Navigation Office in Newport on Tuesday the 1st day of February 1803 pursuant to Adjournment. 'Ordered that Mr Rudder and MR HODGKINSON be requested to wait on Mr Phillips of Risca to endeavour to settle with him about the Stones taken from his Quarry.'

RISCA LONG BRIDGE was a fine masonry viaduct with thirty-two arches that was built in 1805 to carry the tram road across the Ebbw Valley flood plain. It was constructed from red pennant sandstone by the engineer of the Sirhowy Tram road, John Hodgkinson. The bridge was redundant by 1859 and demolished in 1902. Local houses have been built from its stone and the east abutment is the only remaining fragment. The viaduct was 48 ft high (14.6m) and had 32 arches. It was designed so that housing could be constructed below the arches.



Risca Long Bridge

He also built a bridge for the BRIDGEND RAILWAY, a horse-drawn railway built between 1827 and 1830, which ran between Bridgend and the Dyffryn Llynfi and Porthcawl Railway, which in turn linked the area with the harbour at Porthcawl. The engineer for the railway was John Hodgkinson, who began as principal assistant to Benjamin Outram and became a leading early railway engineer in his own right, responsible for several important lines in South Wales and the Midlands. Hodgkinson's design was built in 1829 by Morgan Thomas of Laleston. The railway opened in 1830 and was absorbed into the South Wales Railway in 1861 but abandoned by 1864. It is now a road bridge.

1802 Advertisement: 'SIRHOWY TRAM-ROAD. WANTED, CONTRACTORS for forming, laying, and completing, the Monmouthshire Canal Company's part of the said Road, which is now marked out. Any Person or Persons inclined to contract for the same, or any part or parts thereof, may receive the necessary information as to the mode of executing the work, by applying to Mr. John Hodgkinson, the Engineer, at the King's Head Inn, in the town of Newport.

1807 Advertisement: 'WANTED, an Experienced WORKMAN, as an Agent to superintend the Erection of a new Forge and Rolling Mill. He will be required to understand the construction and putting together of the Machinery; and to be complete master of the different processes practised in South Wales for Manufacturing wrought Iron. References as to character and abilities required. Apply by letter to Mr. John Hodgkinson, Engineer, Newport, Monmouthshire, stating terms.

Grosmont Railway: Opening in 1818/9; this 7 mile plateway was engineered by JOHN HODGKINSON on a gauge of 3ft.6ins. Grosmont Railway was an early horse-drawn railway line in Monmouthshire completed in 1819.

Haie Hill Tunnel in the Forest of Dean: Originally built for the Bullo Pill Railway (tramway) by the civil engineer JOHN HODGKINSON and contractor Robert Tippings. At 1083 yards, it is said to have been the world's longest when opened in 1810. The line was taken over by the South Wales Railway in 1851.

Enlarged by I K BRUNEL to take broad gauge track in 1854. Changed to standard gauge in 1872. Closed in 1967.

Tipping was also subcontracted under Mr John Hodgkinson when Hodgkinson built the new bridge over the Usk in Caerleon in 1805.

The early railways were built with primitive technologies. Most modern readers would probably not recognise a horse-drawn waggon-way as a true railway. They had limited functions and only served the private purposes of their builders. All this changed in the nineteenth century due, in no small part, to the introduction of steam powered locomotives. In many instances the old tramways were adapted and forms the framework for present day railways.

John Hodgkinson lived in the house until his death in 1861 aged 88yrs.

Third Owner: John Clarke, a wealthy Newport businessman (he owned several companies in Newport), purchased the house in 1862 and lived there until 1882.

Fourth owner: no information on his tenure.

Fifth owner: Charles Gaskill, who lost a lot of money and emigrated to Canada in 1902

Sixth owner: George Sibbering. He was connected with the construction of the Taff Vale Railway. He spent a lot of money on the estate but become bankrupt in 1917.

Seventh owner: Dr O'Sullivan. He lost most of his money in the Wall Street Crash in 1929. In the 1930s he decided to defray the heavy expenses of running the estate by constructing a swimming pool, which he opened to the public in 1934. The lido was unusual in its design, the changing boxes were housed in a circular building leaving the baths open to the parkland and woods behind rather than being enclosed by them. Unfortunately Dr O'Sullivan was knocked down and killed by a taxi during the blackout in 1941.

Eighth owner: Mrs Newman, Dr O'Sullivan's adopted daughter, continued to occupy the house until 1957 when she was forced to sell because the financial burden of running the estate became too great. Consequently the lido closed in 1957 and was subsequently demolished.

The next owner died before taking up residency.

A consortium of 6 then invested in the estate hoping to turn it into a country club, but objections were made to this project. Nothing much was done to progress this initiative and the house and grounds remained unattended. Over the years Alltyryn House, once described as "a jewel in such wonderful settings", fell into disrepair, and in 1971, was subject to an arson attack by vandals and burnt to the ground. The house was then robbed of everything - all the stone fabric, even the tiled floors were taken.

Finally Newport City Council purchased the estate/land in 1983. 1986 saw the estate turned into a nature park. It wasn't until 1994, that the park was granted its Local Nature Reserve status due to its important species and habitats. Currently, the Council's countryside wardens, Marc Benson and Liz Birkinshaw, with a weekly team of volunteers, manage the reserve. The reserve encompasses a wonderful natural grassland and wildflower meadow which supports a large variety of important fauna and floral species, including the common spotted orchid. They also look after the other habitats including the pond corridor and various woodland compartments. They are presently re-invigorating an ancient hedgerow and the estate's old orchard, which is where our tree planting initiative comes into play.

NOTE: Information re: Alltyryn House and Estate was sourced from the internet; a book entitled "The Clarkes of Alltyryn" author Derrick Cyril Vaughan a descendant of one of the owners of the house; Liz Birkinshaw, the Deputy countryside Warden and Rita Horton, a member of our gardening and wildlife group. The book is lodged in Newport Reference Library. In establishing a nature reserve where the estate once stood, it could be said that it has, in effect, been re-wilded, since, with a few exceptions, it is now being restored to how it once was prior to the estate being established in 1760.

What We Were Doing . . . - Angela Robins

. . . three years ago, several members of our U3A assisted at Newport City Council's 'Walk the Port' Skyline Challenge. This offered Newport's residents guided walks amongst the attractive surroundings of its countryside, whilst raising money for the Alzheimer's Society.

Mike Brown and Angela Robins had attended several steering meetings and recruited five U3A members to assist on the day as Walk Leaders. To act as leaders, they needed to attend a training course from which they gained valuable knowledge that has benefited our Walking Groups.

Eddie Hodges led the 16 mile walk, Alun McCarthy and Roger Williams the 9 mile walk, and Vanessa Mason and Karen Lansdown the 4.5 mile walk. Mike and Angela manned the goody bag and T-shirt stand, and the U3A promotion stand, whilst several other members joined the walks.

The weather was kinder than the previous year and all participants returned in high spirits and with a great sense of achievement.

The photos show the walkers and leaders preparing for the off. Also Angela, Roger, Alun, Eddie and Mike.

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A leader was checking his route in preparation for Newport's 'Walk the Port Skyline Challenge' when he came to a narrow stretch of the River Usk. Seeing **Euan** on the other bank, he called out "Hey! How do I get to the other side?"
Euan looked along the bank to the left, then along the bank to the right, thought a bit, then called back "You are on the other side!"

Wordsearches submitted by Barbara Phillips

Words can run forwards, backwards, diagonally or vertically, but always in a straight line.

No. 1 Can you find 14 words associated with a computer keyboard in this grid?

E	S	T	E	K	C	A	R	B
H	D	N	E	A	A	U	F	T
P	A	W	Q	M	R	N	L	A
O	E	S	M	E	H	R	M	B
R	S	O	T	O	C	P	O	E
T	C	T	M	E	E	A	U	W
S	A	E	F	R	R	Q	P	I
O	P	N	S	I	I	I	L	S
P	E	A	I	L	H	N	S	U
A	N	I	B	L	N	S	C	K
D	F	O	D	E	L	E	T	E

No. 2 Can you find 14 botanical terms/words in this grid?

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

Answers are on page 11

Four Sides to a Triangle by Martyn Vaughan

‘And what exactly are you planning to do with that?’ Janet asked her husband Edward as he stood over her while she fought her way up from a deep well of drugged unconsciousness.

The “that” in question was an automatic pistol grasped very firmly in Edward’s hand and pointed very firmly at her head.

He gave a grimace of exasperation.

‘Always with the stupid questions, Janet. I should have known you were too stupid a woman for me. I could get along with your dull, plain face and the shapelessness of whatever passes for your figure – but stupidity – I really can’t deal with that.’

She stared angrily up at him. He saw the anger but was a little puzzled to realise that he wasn’t seeing any fear.

‘You haven’t answered my question,’ she said in a calm, clear voice.

‘Why to kill you of course,’ he replied testily. The lack of fear on her part was really spoiling things. He took another sip of his whisky and then placed the tumbler on the bedside table.

‘It’ll be easy enough to convince the authorities that you’d had a fit of remorse over your affair with Jack and decided to end it all. You’ve noticed the gloves I’m wearing, of course. And then off I go with young, beautiful Mercedes with all your wonderful, lovely money. The Caribbean - I’ve always wanted to settle there; sun, sand, sea and, of course, lots and lots of sex. What a life!’

She gazed stonily up at him, still unmoved.

‘And you think I didn’t know about Mercedes,’ she hissed, ‘that I haven’t tracked your sordid little soirees with that trollop? I even know how many times she’s been in this house.’

He waved the gun in her face. ‘Now, now. Jealously is very unbecoming my dear. Just face up to the fact that these are the last few minutes of your life and let’s have done with it.

‘Have done with it’, she repeated, ‘yes I think I’ve done that. I’ve certainly done for you.’

‘What do you mean by that?’ he snapped, suddenly alarmed.

But he had no time to pursue the matter for his wife suddenly erupted from the bed, with clawed fingers reaching for the gun. Taken completely by surprise he fell back and for a few minutes the two figures crashed back and forth in the bedroom until there was a sudden loud report from the pistol. Janet stiffened and then fell back on the bed, a red stain spreading slowly over her chest.

Edward looked down in consternation. How was he going to make this look like suicide?

He sat down heavily by his wife’s corpse and reached for the whisky and poured himself another large measure. The whirl of his desperate thoughts made him oblivious to the strange under-taste of the whisky; so much so that he had another. And then another while his mind swirled with half-formed plans and schemes to get himself out of this mess.

And then the thoughts began to run together into a confused mass of meaningless images as he felt a strange malaise begin to creep through his limbs.

The room seemed to be getting darker. *What is happening?* he thought.

It was his last thought. He stood up unsteadily, reached out for the curtain to steady himself when suddenly his legs buckled and he crashed heavily to the floor, bringing the curtain down on top of him as a shroud.

Half an hour later the front door opened, and two people came in.

One was a slim, young woman with flowing blond hair, flawless features and moving with the grace of a catwalk model.

The other was a large, well-built man, with craggy features now moulded into a beaming grin.

They swiftly ascended to the bedroom and surveyed the now motionless figures.

The large man turned to the blond young woman, his smile becoming even broader.

'Worked like a dream, Mercedes. You were very clever to give him that doped whisky. Very clever.'

The woman shrugged. 'Jack, it was so simple,' she said, in a melodious voice which carried a hint of a French accent, 'why are men so predictable? It was obvious he would turn to the bottle to steady his nerves. I made sure that the bottle I gave him was the only one in the house. But are you certain that Janet has made all her money over to you, my love?'

Jack nodded and turned back to look down at the two still figures.

'Absolutely water-tight. She really believed I loved her, and she said she'd do anything for me.'

'Yes, I know that, poor sad bitch. But the money that you put into our joint holdings – that's all there was?'

Jack picked up the whisky bottle and looked at it. There were still a few amber drops left in the bottom.

'Yes, my darling. We've got the whole bloody lot.'

'Tres bien,' Mercedes said softly, and then in a sudden sharp, firm voice she added, 'That's all I need to know.'

Jack heard the strange tone and whirled back to meet her.

He stopped when he saw that in her small, white hand with its delicate pink nails, there was a pistol pointed straight at him.

He grinned again.

'And what exactly are you planning to do with that?'

Quiz about Newport - submitted by Lesley Davies

How well do you know Newport? Although not a large city by UK standards it has a rich and varied history, much of which is possibly not known even to those who have lived here all their lives!

1 Why was the Newport Transporter Bridge built?
2 Name the poem by Newport born poet W H Davies that starts "What is this life if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare".
3 What spirit is associated with Tredegar House?
4 What was the Celtic Manor's original name?
5 When were the Brynglas Tunnels opened?
6 How long in metres are the Tunnels?
7 When did Newport become a city?
8 According to the 2011 census, what is the population of Newport City?
9 In what year was the Newport Rising [Chartist riots]?
10 When the Chartists, John Frost, William Jones and Zephania Williams were found guilty of high Treason, were they (a) hung (b) transported (c) jailed for life?
11 Which of these famous persons was born in Newport?
(a) Tommy Cooper (b) Michael Sheen (c) Ryan Giggs?
12 Which Newport house was built by George Fothergill, a tobacconist, in 1877, and sold to Newport Council in 1900? What was it subsequently used for?

Quiz - "Morning, Noon and Night" – submitted by Pam Cocchiara

1 'Daylight come and I wanna go home,' is a line from which song?
2 Which singer had a hit in 1972 with 'Morning Has Broken'?
3 'Noon' is an example of what sort of word?
4 Which historic event is said to have caused *darkness at noon*?
5 Which activity is celebrated in Hemingway's novel 'Death in the Afternoon'?
6 'Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun' was written by which composer?
7 What colour are the flowers of the evening primrose?
8 'Some Enchanted Evening' is a song from which musical?
9 Which British poet wrote the words to 'Night Mail', a celebrated documentary about the Post Office?
10 When it is midnight in Montreal, what time is it in New York?

Answers to both quizzes are on page 21

Wordsearches (page 8) - Answers

Keyboard:

Apostrophe	Brackets	End	Escape	Comma	Ampersand	Delete
Home	Shift	Space	Asterisk	Tab	Oblique	Arrow

Botanical terms:

Rhizome	Bulb	Shoot	Petal	Stem	Corm	Seedling
Fruit	Bud	Stamen	Thorn	Root	Sap	Leaf

The Falling Leaves – Music for Autumn (part 1) by Neil Pritchard

Autumn, with its golden leaves and misty mornings, is here. To keep you company as the nights draw in, I'm presenting some of the best music inspired by the season. This will include classical, jazz and popular pieces. What seasonal playlist could fail to include Vivaldi, and in particular his Four Seasons concerto which is unmistakably his most famous work. Outside of the concert hall you may, if you're a movie lover, have heard movements of the Four Seasons in movies like 'A View to Kill', 'What Lies Beneath', 'Saved!', 'Pacific Heights' and 'The Other Sister' just to name a few. If you stop and listen, chances are it's playing on the silver screen, within a television show, or in an advertisement somewhere nearby. It's probably the most popular classical piece ever written. It was inspired by landscape paintings by Italian artist Marco Ricci. Vivaldi composed the Four Seasons between 1720 and 1723, and published them in Amsterdam in 1725, in a set of twelve concertos entitled "The Test of Harmony and Invention". The Four Seasons consists of four concertos (Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter), each one in a distinct form containing three movements.

Since its publication, music experts consider Vivaldi's Four Seasons to be among the boldest programme music ever written during the Baroque period. (When composers write a musical narrative set to a line of text, a poem, or any other form of writing, that is said to be programme music). Programme music wasn't a technique that was typically employed during the Baroque period (in fact, the term wasn't invented until the romantic period), so Vivaldi's work is quite unique. It is believed that Antonio Vivaldi himself wrote the twelve individual sonnets to go along with each movement of the Four Seasons. The Autumn Sonnet is typical. I'm always amazed at how accurately Vivaldi portrays musically each sonnet without losing the overall quality and balance of the work. Take this sonnet as an example: from the harvest celebrations in 'Autumn', Vivaldi's programmatic music transports us to the somewhat less vibrant morning after, where slow moving music comes as close to a musical hangover as anything you've ever heard. In the stately final Allegro,'The Hunt', a violin solo represents the hunter's chasing quarry, which they eventually catch and kill. Not much fun for the quarry, but a jolly old time for all the hunters. Let's hit the road then with Vivaldi's Autumnal musical colours. To accompany the music for "Autumn" here's the sonnet:

I.
The peasants celebrate with dance and song,
The joy of a rich harvest.
And, full of Bacchus's liquor,
They finish their celebration with sleep.
2.
Each peasant ceases his dance and song.
The mild air gives pleasure,
And the season invites many
To enjoy a sweet slumber.
3.
The hunters, at the break of dawn, go to the hunt.
With horns, guns, and dogs they are off,
The beast flees, and they follow its trail.
Already fearful and exhausted by the great noise,
Of guns and dogs, and wounded,
The exhausted beast tries to flee, but dies.

And so to the music: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmaZ0A5z5-o

Following the lead of Vivaldi, as we've already seen, composers have been attracted to music inspired by the natural world. Throughout history, when you think about it, some composers have tried to have the best of both worlds. Living in cities for the proximity to the venues where their music can get an airing, but escaping to the country for peace and quiet. This is often the perfect recipe for composing, away from distractions and literally in tune with nature, which they find an inspiration for their work. Obviously not all composers fit this image, but many do, and I'll be looking at some of them. In the meantime to show how influential Vivaldi's Seasons has been, here's a Jazz take on "Autumn". There have been hundreds of versions of the Vivaldi Four Seasons including improvised jazz numbers, one such is by pianist Jacques Loussier. He certainly had an unusual career, much of it spent performing jazz interpretations of Bach's music. While his original works have been noteworthy, Loussier's most famous projects have been his transformations of Bach's music. In 1997 he tackled the Four Seasons and recorded them with his trio. As with Bach's pieces, Loussier pays respect to Vivaldi's melodies and the development of the works, while swinging the music. He divides each of the concertos into three parts, improvises tastefully while keeping the themes in mind, and leads his trio through some uncharted territory. Due to Loussier's impressive technique, his respect for both idioms, and his well thought-out concept, this unique set is a superb example of the best in jazz.

Jacques Loussier was classically trained, but he had dabbled in jazz improvisation for years when he formed the Jacques Loussier Trio in 1959. The trio played recognisable Bach melodies or pieces, like “Air on a G String”. They quickly found a devoted audience and released a popular series of albums on Decca under the overall title “Play Bach” beginning in the early 1960s. Many critics criticised the idea of jazzing up the work of Bach. John Rockwell of The New York Times wrote: “actively appalled by the very notion of ‘popularising’ Bach — or any classical composer, for that matter.” How pompous can you get! In 2002, Loussier told The Independent newspaper that such criticism did not bother him. “Bach himself,” he noted, “was improvising on these pieces for many years. He showed flair and intelligence, and even when poor old Bach was left far behind, Mr Loussier’s volatile piano playing was never less than compelling.”

Loussier was born on Oct. 26, 1934, in Angers, in western France, to René Loussier, who worked in a bank, and Marguerite (Duvat) Loussier, a housewife. He started playing the piano at 10, and later said that his distinctive approach to Bach developed while he practised the Prelude in G Minor. “I played it 100 times or so,” he said. “Then one day I started to change the melody, then the left-hand harmonies. It was a natural instinct.” He studied for a time at the National Conservatory of Paris. “My fellow students would always ask me to play some Bach with my improvisations,” he said. “At that time, the Modern Jazz Quartet was doing this already: I heard them, and that gave me the idea to transform it with bass and drums.”Early in his career, Loussier was an accompanist for the singers Frank Alamo and Charles Aznavour. In 1959, he formed the Jacques Loussier Trio with string bass player Pierre Michelot—who had played with Django Reinhardt and the Quintette du Hot Club de France—and percussionist Christian Garros. They used Bach's compositions as a base for jazz improvisation and made many live appearances, tours, and concerts, as well as a number of recordings. The trio sold over six million albums in 15 years. Their best known recording is "Air on the G String", which was used to advertise the Hamlet brand of cigar in the UK for over 30 years.

The Jacques Loussier Trio broke up in the late 1970s, and Loussier went on to compose original works, including music for French films and television.

In 1985, the 300th anniversary of Bach’s birth, Mr. Loussier rebuilt the trio. The new trio embraced other composers in its jazz adaptations, including Satie, Debussy, Ravel, Vivaldi and Beethoven, and released more albums. His last new release, was a version of Schumann’s song “Kinderszenen,” in 2011. He continued to perform to large audiences until July 2011 when he suffered a stroke during a performance at a large music festival in Germany, and retired from the stage. He died on 5 March 2019 at the age of 84. Here's an example of his superb playing in the Vivaldi Autumn from the Four Seasons:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYgA-c6MKRo

It's difficult during these times to paint a positive picture within our society, but the joys of nature are still out there to be enjoyed. Autumn is a time of the year with something special to offer. It marks the end of warm summer days and the approach of winter's chill. No surprise that the season has inspired composers to capture the moods and colours of this transitional time. It's a time of year when photographers aim their cameras (or iPhones) at the breathtaking sight of trees cloaked in yellow, red, gold and brown. The season has inspired poets to capture those increasingly brisk days and cool evenings. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, for instance: "Go, sit upon the lofty hill," she wrote, "and turn your eyes around, where waving woods and waters wild do hymn an autumn sound." As we'll see composers have found ways to translate Autumn into music.

Joseph Haydn was no exception. Following the phenomenal success of The Creation, his patron Gottfried van Swieten urged Haydn to compose another oratorio, to be based on “The Seasons” by Scottish poet James Thomson, which van Swieten had translated loosely into German. Haydn was 69 years old when he completed The Seasons and complained that the project was an exhausting one. Some of the difficulty he had with its composition was perhaps due to artistic disagreements with van Swieten, who apparently wanted Haydn to include more specific and whimsical word painting than Haydn felt comfortable with, including the croaking of frogs, which Haydn scorned as “Frenchified trash." Despite this grumbling Haydn’s agile inventive spirit is evident in each of the four parts of The Seasons, which portray not only the cycles of nature but also the cycles of human life in scenes presented by the trio of soloists — the peasant characters of Simon, Hanne, and Lukas — and a chorus of country folk. The piece is full of evocative and witty word painting. The Seasons was first performed on April 24, 1801, at the palace of Prince Schwarzenberg (Charles Philip, Prince of Schwarzenberg was an Austrian army field marshal).

On May 29, Haydn conducted the first public performance. The oratorio was an immediate popular success. A correspondent of the local newspaper described the public reaction thus: “Silent reverence, amazement, and loud enthusiasm alternated, for the powerful appearance of colossal visions, the immeasurable abundance of splendid ideas surprised and overwhelmed the boldest expectations.” Autumn from the Seasons is a particularly striking section. The hunting scenes in particular, are portrayed with relish by Haydn, an enthusiastic huntsman himself in earlier days. After the bird shoot, recounted in a Baroque-style bass aria, and the hare-coursing, comes the most spectacular of all hunting choruses, based on traditional hunting calls. Yet Haydn manages to cap even this thrilling scene in the increasingly riotous wine harvest. The music's given a raw and earthy quality by the use of horns (and other brass instruments) without valves. These were in widespread use in the 18th century before modern horns were invented. Let's hear part 4 of Autumn - the Wild Hunt and Wine Feast. (You can check out the notes below the video for the translation from the German): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyczpE0ShHY

What wonderfully bright and open air music. Although the work has always attracted far less attention than The Creation, it nonetheless has been strongly appreciated by critics. Charles Rosen calls both oratorios "among the greatest works of the 19th century". Whether you agree with that or not, both oratorios certainly were huge landmarks in the history of choral music.

To move on to the world of popular music. Many songs and poems about autumn are really a metaphor for the seasons of life and love, and convey those emotions in a very direct and memorable way. As an example of this I've chosen two towering figures in the history of jazz - Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong with their version of one of the most popular songs about Autumn - "Autumn Leaves". “Autumn Leaves” was originally a popular French song, written after World War 2, and originally recorded in 1945 as “Les Feuilles Mortes” literally meaning “the dead leaves”. The English version of “Les Feuilles Mortes” was written by American song writer Johnny Mercer in 1947 with the title “Autumn Leaves“. The song was introduced in America by popular big band singer Jo Stafford. On Christmas Eve 1950, Édith Piaf sang the French and English versions of the song on the radio program The Big Show, hosted by Tallulah Bankhead, which was heard across America. The song really took off in 1956 when Nat King Cole sang “Autumn

Leaves" in the title sequence of a film of the same name staring Joan Crawford. The English lyrics and Cole's delivery were somewhat lighter in nature than the original French version.
The collaborations between Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong have attracted much attention over the years. The artists were both widely known icons, not just in the areas of big band, jazz, and swing music but across 20th century popular music in general. The two musicians produced three official releases together in Ella and Louis (1956), Ella and Louis Again (1957), and Porgy and Bess (1959). Each release earned both commercial and critical success. The duo's music proved popular with live audiences. Two live tracks from those 1956 concerts would end up being released as album bonus material in the 1990s.
Ella Fitzgerald (April 25, 1917 – June 15, 1996) was an African-American jazz vocalist often referred to by nicknames such as the "First Lady of Song" and the "Queen of Jazz". "Lady Ella" attracted notoriety for her purity of tone, impeccable diction and lyrical phrasing. In the 1950s, the depth and scope of her many releases had already attracted major attention. Many critics of the time regarded her as one of the best female vocalists making music.

Louis Armstrong (August 4, 1901 – July 6, 1971) was an African-American jazz singer and trumpeter as well as a composer. He ended up being one of the most pivotal and influential figures, in not just jazz-related styles, but across popular music. His career spanned five decades, from the 1920s to the 1960s, and different eras both musically and also in terms of U.S. culture. Coming to prominence first as an inventive player, Armstrong attracted notice for shifting the focus in his records from collective improvisations to turn-by-turn solo performances. Like Fitzgerald, Armstrong picked up popular nicknames, in his case "Pops" and "Satchmo", that stuck, and critics praised him by the 1950s as a sort of elder statesmen of popular music. Here's their brilliant version of Autumn in New York:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OI7Cl0zVG1Q

Still on the popular music theme, we move to the 1960s and Simon and Garfunkel for another picture of Autumn. Simon and Garfunkel met in elementary school in Queens, New York, in 1953, where they learned to harmonise together and began writing material. By 1957, under the name Tom & Jerry, the teenagers had their first minor success with "Hey Schoolgirl", a song imitating their idols the Everly Brothers. In 1963, aware of a growing public interest in folk music, they regrouped and were signed to Columbia Records as Simon & Garfunkel. Their debut, Wednesday Morning 3am, sold poorly, and they once again disbanded; Simon returned to a solo career, this time in England. The duo reunited to release a second studio album, Sounds of Silence, and tour colleges nationwide. On their third release, Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme in 1966, the duo assumed more creative control. Their music was featured in the 1967 film The Graduate, giving them further exposure. Their next album Bookends (1968) topped the US Top 200 chart and included the number-one single "Mrs. Robinson" from the film.

The duo's often rocky relationship led to artistic disagreements and their breakup in 1970. Their final studio album, Bridge over Troubled Water, was released that year and became their most successful, becoming one of the world's best-selling albums. After their breakup, Simon released a number of acclaimed albums, including 1986's Graceland. Garfunkel released solo hits such as "All I Know" and briefly pursued an acting career, with leading roles in two Mike Nichols films: Catch-22 and Carnal Knowledge, and in Nicolas Roeg's 1980 Bad Timing. The duo have reunited several times, most famously in 1981 for "The Concert in Central Park", which attracted more than 500,000 people, one of the largest concert attendances in history. Simon & Garfunkel won 10 Grammy Awards and were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1990. (The Grammy Award, or Grammy, is an award presented by the US Recording Academy to recognise achievements in the music industry). The pop music critic Richie Unterberger described them as "the most successful folk-rock duo of the 1960s" and one of the most popular artists from the decade. They are among the best-selling music artists, having sold more than 100 million records. They are still popular to this day and there is an excellent Tribute Band (which I've seen in St David's Hall), who are continuing to keep their wonderful music alive and really pulling in the crowds. One of the loveliest of their songs is "April Come She Will". This is an allegory for the growth, life, and death of a brief love affair, expressed through the months from spring to autumn, when the climate is cold, since autumn

winds are blowing chilly and cold in August. As with so many popular songs about the seasons, the links to personal relationships is a key factor: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITXBjDTXS90

And now for somebody steeped in folk music - Ralph Vaughan Williams. Throughout his life he was close to nature, and as his musical style developed, he sought inspiration from the folk music traditions of his native land. Many of these traditions were dying out by the beginning of the 20th century due to increased industrialisation and the growth in urban society that went with it. He and his friend Gustav Holst realised that a long tradition of folk music was fast disappearing, so they set out to collect folk songs. Ralph Vaughan Williams was one of the musicians who participated in the first English Folk Song revival, as well as using folk song tunes in his compositions. He collected his first song, "Bushes and Briars", from Mr Charles Pottipher, a seventy-year-old labourer from Ingrave, Essex in 1903, and went on to collect over 800 songs, as well as some singing games and dance tunes.

For 10 years he devoted up to 30 days a year to collecting folk songs from singers in 21 English counties, though Essex, Norfolk, Herefordshire and Sussex account for over two thirds of the songs in his collection. He recorded a small number of songs using a phonograph but the vast majority were notated by hand. He was a regular contributor to the Folk Song Society's Journal, a member of the society's committee from 1904 to 1946, and when in that year the society amalgamated with the English Folk Dance Society, he became president of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, a position he held until his death. A large part of his collection has never been published. In his final decade, Vaughan Williams revisited the folk-song with two large-scale choral anthologies: the 1949 Folk Songs of the Four Seasons, and The First Nowell in 1958.

On the whole, Vaughan Williams was more interested in the song than the singer, in the melody rather than the message. He often failed to record the texts of songs, and when he did write down texts, often recorded only the first verse. The text of one song, The Long Whip, seems to have been lost completely as a result. Vaughan Williams knew that the texts of many of the songs he was preserving had been printed and he sometimes used texts to fill out his songs for publication. He did not bowdlerise the material he collected for publication, as some other collectors did, but he was, as much as they were, forced to recognise the constraints of the time, when it came to publishing "unsuitable" material. But all in all he and Holst, along with Cecil Sharp, managed by their efforts to keep folk music alive. His Folk Songs of the Four Seasons is a fine example of how he used folk melodies to compose a 50 minute choral work depicting the seasons.

This cantata for Women's Voices brought together two vital elements in Vaughan Williams' musical character: his strong support for amateur music-making and his life-long love for English folksongs and folk-carols. The work was commissioned by the National Federation of Women's Institutes for their first Singing Festival in 1950. It was the first time the National Federation had commissioned a work for a special occasion and Vaughan Williams was their preferred choice of composer. The work brings together two of Vaughan Williams' personal loves: his championing of amateur music-making and his life-long fascination for English folk-songs. I was in two minds as to whether to include the Autumn movement of the piece, as the lyrics to the first two songs are rather grim and mournful. But because the music and singing are so bewitching I decided to go with it.

So let's hear the three parts that comprise the Autumn movement:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWetJEGQlU4

PART 2 of this article will appear in the next edition of DIT.

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

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

2. Medium

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

3. Hard

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

4. Evil

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

Life in Belfast before the Troubles by Gerald Lee

It is a misconception that life in Northern Ireland was always dangerous. I have many fond memories of growing up in Belfast. Sometimes looking back, I feel some of the institutions had too much influence over the lives of individuals. Free choices were denied because of an exaggerated sense of deference.

My family lived on Belfast's Shankill Road, a Protestant area in West Belfast. My first school was in Beverley Street, not far from where we lived. Teachers were very strict and rarely challenged. I can, however, remember my mother once going to see a teacher because she thought I had been wrongly punished for something. The headmistress was the formidable Miss Erskine. We used to parade mid-morning round the desks while she rang a bell, I cannot recall why.

Her jurisdiction was so extensive that if she found there had been an incident outside school, she would summon those involved for an interrogation and maybe extra punishment. My brother remembered a friend of his being beaten for allegedly hitting another boy, who identified him in a parade like in a police station. My brother remains convinced it was not him. People, including children, tended to be territorial and they lived in opposite directions from the school.

I do not know if I showed any early promise. My next-door neighbour's daughter, Florence, and I used to do extra homework. I think I was luckier than most in that my mother took an interest in our education. Although she had probably left school very young, there is no doubt that had she received an education, she could have been a teacher, or an accountant like my brother. Even today I feel angry at people who do not realize how hard life was. I credit myself as being a literate sort of person. My mother was an orphan and her guardian was her aunt. My mother had a sister Minnie, a couple of years younger than her, so we called the aunt 'Big Aunt Minnie.' Recently Rosalind and I looked at the census. One question concerned literacy. Her name was recorded by a cross and a witness signing 'her mark'. She could read but had no writing skill. Writing and reading are a joy to me. At university my professor used to read my essays to other groups, yet just one generation back, my mother's parents' generation lacked such basic knowledge.

We knew my mother's father had been in the army before World War One. To avoid the risk of mutiny very often Irish Regiments served in India. He wrote a journal with some short stories and poems. I suspect because of financial hardship his medals were sold. The journal is now in the possession of my brother.

Although Protestantism is diverse, everyone had a religious affiliation. My family was Church of Ireland, the Anglican Church. We all went to church on a Sunday and we were expected to attend Sunday School as well. I think I reacted to being forced to attend church, especially as a child at the Sunday evening service which was dreary and boring for me. I cannot remember a single sermon. I more or less stopped attending at university. Another factor was that I attended a grammar school, whereas most of those I knew did not even sit the Eleven Plus, so I never had any friends in the church. I did become a confirmed member in my teens and perhaps still feel an affiliation, but I doubt if, like my parents and my sister, I would ever be an active member. Confirmation should have been preparation for adult life. Instead we had to learn collects and passages of the Prayer Book. Again, it was a case of no-one feeling able to challenge a minister. The class dwindled from around thirty to barely a dozen.

Beverley Street school closed when I was about six or seven. My mother did not want us to go with the rest to a bigger primary school nearby, so my brother and I went to Woodvale Primary, a short bus ride away.

Florence next door also went there. She had a cousin called Peter who was in the same year. Florence later became a teacher, so perhaps a teacher noticed we both showed promise in Beverley Street School and gave us the extra homework.

I have written about Miss McCandless, who terrified us all into joining the library, through which I came to read the 'William Stories' of Richmal Crompton and became an avid reader. Perhaps at the end of the current crisis over the virus, the history group can arrange a session with readings of a couple of stories and a summary of the life of Richmal Crompton? The stories were written for magazines. Martin Jarvis' reading of a story is usually about twelve minutes long.

My memories of the Woodvale School are mostly good. Every year was just one class, so it was quite small. For some reason Miss McCandless stayed with us for three years. She was a bullying terrifying woman, and as I said, a teacher would not be challenged. One boy, Tony, probably had learning difficulties, if awareness of the condition had existed then.

One day she decided she had had enough of him. She called the headmaster into her room and began to poke Tony very roughly with her stick. She told him in front of the class he was to be expelled. She wrote a highly critical assessment of him on his leaving card, after which he was further humiliated by being forced to read it to the rest of the class. Even then I felt it was wrong to abuse someone like that. She then forced him into asking to stay. It was real bullying and cruelty, akin to Dickens.

Once she gave an evaluation of the class and named those who she reckoned were the best three or four pupils. I was not one of them!! When someone suggested I should be included, she said I was just outside the top few. She was very wrong. I was in the top class in grammar school and went to university with two others, also outside her elite.

Life changed when we came to sit the Eleven Plus. We had a different teacher, Mr Glass, a much more likeable person. Another boy called Samuel and I were top of the class, virtually on alternate weeks. Mr Glass used to read books to us such as 'The Thirty Nine Steps' and the 'Big Fisherman,' a fictionalised life of St Peter.

The day began with a short religious service and hymn. My friend Denis Nelson, like Stephen, a musical prodigy, was called upon to play the piano. We lost touch many years ago. From the Internet I learned he made a career in music on the London stage.

Years ago, when Simon Dee was presenter of Radio 2 'Sounds of the Sixties,' another of his failed comebacks, he asked listeners to write with their memories of the 'Sixties. He read part of my letter. One section referred to my trip to Germany in 1968, when a German friend showed us the Star Club where the Beatles played. The other section concerned calling at Denis' house on the way home from school. The house was empty, so we would have a cup of tea and a sly biscuit whilst listening to Connie Francis records on his Dansette record player. Recently in the Alcan Club there was a wonderful female singer. I told her about this while she waited to do her second piece. She sang 'Where the Boys Are' as a result of our chat. It was easy to feel I was back in Battenberg Street with Denis.

Once a year we would have a scripture exam. Local clergy would visit the school and ask questions about the Bible. We had to dress as we would for Sunday Church.

One year the subject was St Mark's gospel. Miss McCandless saw this as a personal challenge. It was certainly not very Christian, how we were bullied, and on occasion, beaten to ensure no-one gave a wrong answer.

It was a day of Hell preparing for the visits, with only a short break for a story, just to show we knew the path to Heaven. As a reward we were allowed home early.

One aspect of it all that did benefit me was that we had to learn by heart passages from the Bible.

I can still remember one passage was 'no man can serve two masters.' Later when I studied English and History, I realised the impact the New English Bible had on the development of spoken and written English. It is found in the poetry of John Donne and the Metaphysical poets, whom I studied for A Level English.

Teachers used to read poetry to us, as did some pupils who were doing elocution classes. We had a favourite poem, that years later I would discover at university was written by one of the greatest English poets. 'Macavity the Mystery Cat' with its subtle humour was written by T S Eliot and formed part of the musical 'Cats.' The words still come to me: how he was called 'the hidden paw', 'the master criminal who can defy the law,' who 'has broken every human law,' 'he breaks the law of gravity.'

I still have some photographs of our class and can remember every name. Our education led to the Eleven Plus Examination. This would determine if you went to a grammar or secondary school.

A few months before the exam I broke my arm crossing the road. It did not occur to me to go back home or ask to be sent home. A quarter of an hour before lunch Mr Glass asked me to give out the exercise books. I lifted them and immediately dropped them. He realized it was more serious so sent me home.

My mother worked in a shop where I went for lunch. She had plenty of experience of broken arms; my sister had broken hers at least twice. She managed to arrange cover and took me to the hospital. The doctor thought I should have gas while he set the arm. As I had eaten, we had to return later. I can still smell the rubber, hear the gas, and feel the nausea.

Not everyone had a television in those days. My brother and I used to watch Children's Hour in a neighbour's house. 'Sir Lancelot' and 'William Tell' were favourites, by chance now back on Talking Pictures TV.

It was not so unusual to have maiden aunts, one effect of the First World War. My father had three unmarried sisters, whom we described collectively as 'the aunts.' They had a television, so as a treat on a Saturday evening we went to their house. They were rather fuddy-duddy characters, in a nice way. Sometimes if we arrived early, we would catch the end of 'Six Five Special.' One singer was in a veritable frenzy. My aunts exclaimed; He's drunk, he's drunk.' The next programme was 'Wells Fargo.' I am sure the musicians used to run across the studio and wave their instruments in front of the image of Jim Hardy. He had a special drawl, 'My name's Jim Hardy, special agent for Wells Fargo.'

As a general rule temperance was a valued ideal. My father and mother did not drink. Many Orange Lodges were either temperance or abstinence. It is still an argument whether restricting drinking causes more problems. The public houses shut at ten with a half hour 'drinking up time.' On a Sunday everything was closed.

Of course, there was a surge in drinking at last orders at 9.50, with the result that the crowds spilled out onto the street at 10.30. It was not pleasant for us to walk home and see all this. The police, just as in Glasgow and some other major cities where drinking was a problem, wore steel helmets on a Saturday night.

As we did not have a television in our own home, I loved to watch it at any opportunity. One of our neighbours, Mima, was a family friend. She let me watch my favourite programme, 'Bootsie and Snudge.'

Recently an author of a book on the period suggested it had sexual overtones. Really? I thought it was just a gentle comedy continuing the story of two ex-soldiers from the 'Army Game.'

My mother and I were in Mima's house when the first episode of 'Steptoe and Son' was broadcast. My mother and I roared with laughter. Mima waved the newspaper and said, 'Do you think that's funny? I do not know what you are laughing at.' It made us laugh even more.

One sad effect of the Eleven Plus was that most of us were scattered into different schools. It was the age before catchment areas, so your parents made their first choice and you hoped you were accepted.

My brother was already a pupil at Methodist College on the Malone Road in South Belfast, generally regarded as one of the 'posh' areas of Belfast. It even had its own accent without the rough edges of East or West Belfast. From this a new chapter began.

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This fascinating account of Gerald's early life in Belfast made me realise just how many similarities there are between his upbringing there and mine in Newport – and, indeed, just how many differences! This sort of subject is, I know from feedback received, popular amongst our readers, so why not have a go yourself? It need be no more than a paragraph and can be on any area of your life that you will forever remember – home, school, place of work, entertainment etc – please share these memories with us. Ed.

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Quizzes (page 11) - Answers

Newport Quiz

1. To take Lysaghts steel workers across the river from their homes on the west bank. Opened in 1906 construction started in 1904, architect Ferniand Arnodin, French Engineer and Industrialist. Closed in 1985 and after a £3 million refurbishment opened again in 2010
2. Leisure
3. Rum, Captain Morgans, Henry Morgan, who's family owed the house and grounds from 1402 to 1951, was the original Pirate of the Caribbean.
4. Built in 1860 the manor belonged to Thomas Powell [coal and iron] and was originally called Coldra House. In 1940 John Beynon gave the house to the local Authority when it was renamed the Lydia Beynon maternity hospital in memory of his mother. Over the next 35 years, 60,000 babies were born there before it closed in 1975 and boarded up for 5 years.
5. 1967
6. 360m
7. 2002
8. 145,700
9. 1839
10. Transported
11. Michael Sheen, he later moved back to his parents' home town of Baglan. Tommy Cooper was born in Caerphilly, Ryan Giggs in Cardiff.
12. Beechwood House, in Beechwood Park. The house and its extensive grounds became a "public amenity" in 1900 and have remained so ever since.

Morning, Noon and Night

1. Banana Boat Song
2. Cat Stevens
3. Palindrome
4. The Crucifixion
5. Bullfighting
6. Claude Debussy
7. Yellow
8. South Pacific
9. W H Auden
10. Midnight

A little brain teaser – submitted by Stephen Berry

This is a railway ticket from my collection, one which I bought on 13th June 1964 at around 10.50pm! What makes it so special?

Extract from The Gwent Village Book submitted by Angela Robins

This interesting book was compiled by W.I.s throughout Gwent and is one of The Villages of Britain Series published in 1994.

Fourteen Locks, Newport

The rising ground here has a flight of 14 locks that seems insignificant today, but at the end of the 18th century their construction was a major engineering triumph. The top pond has been dredged and refilled and the still water reflects the trees giving a feeling of peace and tranquility. It has not always been so, for barges carrying coal, timber and stone queued here awaiting their turn to enter the lock system.

A walk through the site can fire the imagination of life here in times past. Imagine a wintry scene here during January 1861. The waterway had been frozen hard and closed to traffic for a month. No trade means no money; winters then did seem to be much harder than now. At last the ice-boat with its iron bow and strong towing horses forces it's way through. The ice-boat was needed practically every year to keep the Canal open. It often had four horses pulling it as well as plenty of men standing at the boat's bar to rock it. In 1855 eight horses were needed to pull the ice-boat through because in that year the ice was so strong that it cut holes right through two of the barges.

By the early 20th Century there was much less barge traffic and one day we find Messrs Jones & Roberts cleaning and scrubbing their barges so that they can be used as pleasure craft. Bethesda Sunday School has paid £5/10/0 to hire four boats for their annual Whit Monday outing - a cruise to Risca and back which was always eagerly awaited.

200 men, women and children lined up on the canal bank at the Cefn. They were all dressed in their best clothes. Ladies wore dresses and straw hats, the men donned suits and caps and the children looked like miniature adults. Up to 60 people crowded on to each barge and although it was standing room only, for many it was the treat of the year. After the boat trip everyone went back to the chapel for tea with games and races in the field.

The last picture is of a clean well-maintained canal in 1913. The waterway is now of little economic importance and the local boys have made it their swimming pool during the summer holidays. Their favourite place is the wall at the end of the top lock, for this makes an ideal diving platform. The storyteller's father was one of those boys; he dived well and was more adventurous than most. Unfortunately, on one occasion he landed too near to the overflow weir and was sucked into the culvert. 'I can just imagine how frightened he was as the force of the water carried him through the narrow culvert and out into the side pond some considerable distance away. As I walk around the now dry, but still elaborate, interconnecting culverts, channels and side ponds at Fourteen Locks, I realise how lucky my father was to live to tell me the tale' she wrote.

▯ HALLOWE'EN CRYTOGRAMS ▯ submitted by Mike Brown

Solve the two fiendish cryptograms for some spooky jokes. Answers are on page 28.

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A  B  C  D  E  F  G  H  I  J  K  L  M  N  O  P  Q  R  S  T  U  V  W  X  Y  Z
1                                       9                       21

 _  _   A  _  /  _  O /  _  _  _  /  _  _  _  /  W  _  _  _ /  _  _  _ /
21 19  1  24 /  15  9 /  18  9  4 /  17  22  24 /  21 19  22  6 /  18  9  4 /

 _  _  _  _  _  / _ /  _  _  _  _  _  _  _  /  _  _  _ / _ /  _  _  _  _  _  _  _ ?
23 10 9 25 25 /  1 /  16 1 26  5 11 10 22 /  1  6 15 / 1 /  25 6  9  21 26 1  6 ?

                                                                Answer:  _   _.  _  _  _  _  _   _  _  !
                                                                        20  10   9  25 24 13 11  24 22 !

                                  ▯   ▯   ▯   ▯   ▯   ▯   ▯   ▯   ▯   ▯   ▯
A   B  C  D   E  F  G  H  I  J  K  L  M  N   O  P  Q  R  S  T  U  V  W  X  Y  Z
26          23                          11

_  _  _  /  _  A  _ /  _  _  E  /  _  _  _  _  _  _  O  _  /  _  _  _  _  _  _ /
2 13  20 /  2  26 15 /  1 13 23 /  15  8  23  9  23  1 11  22  /  15  7  26  4  23 19 /

 _ _  /  _  _  _  _  _ /  _  _  _ /  _  _  _  _ ?
1 11 /  7  4  11 15 15 /  1  13 23 /  4  11 26 19?

                                Answer:  _   _   _   _  _   _  _ / _  _  /  _  _  _ /  _  _ / _  _  _  _  !
                                        18  23  7   26  3  15 23 / 13 23 /  13 26 19 / 22 11 / 6  3  1  15 !
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A Volunteer on the West Somerset Railway by Dave Woolven

When I was made redundant, a workmate asked me to lend a hand patching his car up – patching wasn't the word for it – it was a collection of holes joined together with rust. Whoever MOT'd it must have been blind as all that was holding the two front wings, steering and suspension together was the radiator which only had 2 of the 4 small bolts remaining – the main front panel had completely gone. The car was more fibreglass than metal. As a thank-you, he gave me a 12 month subscription to the West Somerset Railway for which I received 4 quarterly journals. I've always felt compelled to put something into any group that I'm a member of, so I became a volunteer on the WSR.

It didn't get off to a good start. There was an induction meeting for all volunteers after which we were to be given a tour of the railway, shown what was what, including accommodation for the overnighters. There was no tour and we were told to sort ourselves out. My pal and I heard that there were old carriages at Blue Anchor – these were disgusting. We said that if they didn't come up with something better, we were off home. Someone said that there was accommodation at Williton which is where the loco shed was. Again an old 1930s GWR carriage that had been converted into a camping coach (very popular in the 1950s), it had a kitchen, sitting area and 3 double sleeping berths. It had electricity, water and through flow ventilation – the wind blew up through where the floor had been – even the mice were wearing safety harnesses, but it was reasonable provided you put your food in the non-working fridge so the rodents didn't get at it. I worked regularly on 6412, a 1930s GWR tank loco. The GWR had thousands of this type of loco, ideal for light work. Many will remember these busy little engines pulling one or two carriages. In 1996 the WSR Association (the volunteer side) bought 34046 Braunton, a Southern Railway light express loco. This loco had languished in Woodham's scrapyard in Barry for many years getting covered in rusting salt air. While there, others restoring the same type of loco were pinching bits, some with spanners, some with the gas axe. Then a group from Braunton on the north Devon coast bought their namesake where it stayed, untouched and again in the salt air for years. Then a group from Eastleigh in Hampshire – where the loco was built – bought it and the same thing happened. By the time it came to the WSR it was in a very sorry state. I was there when it was unloaded from the lorry at Bishops Lydeard where it was quickly noticed that one of the main wheel bearings was missing. Gareth, our engineer (great chap to work with) got a lump of wood, hacked out a 'bearing', smothered it in grease and pushed that into place. All the experts said that it wouldn't last 5 yards – when we were towed to Williton, 12 miles away, the oil in the other 5 bearings was boiling, the wooden 'bearing' was as good as new and stone cold. Once the boiler cladding and lagging were removed we could see the boiler – horror – badly corroded. It was touch and go as to whether the insurance inspector would pass it – he did. It was around this point that multi-millionaire Jeremy Hoskins bought the loco from us to add to his fleet of restored locos. He gave us the job of restoring the engine and threw £¼ million into the pot. He wanted the loco back on the tracks in 3 years – it took 13 years. Most of the work was done by volunteers who could only come when they could. I could only be there about once every 2 months and it was a 100 mile journey. There was one major set-back. Following the official drawings, the wrong lubricators were fitted to the main axle bearings. Taking the loco out for a short run, the bearings overheated and one melted, causing the axle to turn blue. For safety, the axle was ultra–sound tested and a crack discovered. A 'new' axle and wheels were sourced but the wheels were slightly too big, so were sent away to be machined – alas – too much was cut off, so the other two axles and wheels had to go away for machining to match. Changing a loco wheel isn't like changing a car wheel!

The tank loco 6412 had seen better days. The side water tanks were past their sell-by date, they had the dreaded rust worm. New tanks were bought, these came complete with handrails which were pushed through holes in the tank and sealed on the inside with a big nut and rubber washer. The tanks were sent away for hot galvo dipping – which destroyed the rubber washers, meaning that the tanks would leak like a sieve. Someone had to get inside the tanks – who better than 'Muggins.' The only way in was via a very

small filler hole on the top of the tank – a 5 gallon oil drum was dropped in to stand on, one arm down, one arm up to tilt the shoulders, then drop down inside the tank. To strengthen the tanks and stop the water sloshing about, baffle plates were fitted, these had small holes in them through which I had to crawl in pitch blackness. As it was, I couldn't remove a single nut as the galvo had welded the nuts to the threads and we didn't have anything that would do the job. I spent 2 days in these tanks. As I was leaving to go home, they admitted that they asked me because everyone else was claustrophobic! 6412 now lives on the South Devon Railway.

I stopped going to the WSR when I lost my wife. Since then there has been in-fighting between the WSR Association (volunteers) and the WSR plc (the business side). Not nice, it's all one railway.

Having worked all my life in power stations, I was used to moving heavy lumps of metal that didn't want to be moved and working with superheated steam, all of use on a steam loco. Was this my experience? No – I was using the experience of the people I learned from, all I had to do was remember all the fiddles, wangles, dodges and short-cuts I'd been taught during my working life.

The photos:

(1) Braunton at Dai Woodham's scrapyard, Barry. Dirty, neglected.

(2) Braunton – still at Barry, now in a very sorry state. People say that Dai Woodham was the saviour of the preserved loco movement. He was a businessman through and through. He secured hundreds of steam locos but before he could start serious cutting, he then secured British Railways old goods wagons, thousands of them. To safely move these wagons over the rail network, they had to have new phosphor bronze bearings fitted. Dai had to get his men salvaging the valuable bronze, then burn the wooden bodies, then cut the steel frames. As fast as he cut, more wagons came in. During this time, preservationists started visiting his yard and putting whatever they raised as a deposit to secure a loco. Dai realised that this was a money maker, so to gee-up sales, he got his men to begin cutting locos which caused panic – buy before the loco is lost forever.

[Our eldest daughter was born in 1975; she made her first visit to Woodham's at Barry when she was still a babe in arms – and regularly after that! As a child she used to love going to see the engines – and still loves visiting and travelling on our wonderful Heritage railways. Ed.]

(3) Braunton alongside Boscastle. These are both the same class of loco.

(4) Our 'boss' Gareth at the official unveiling by the Mayor of the town of Braunton. Typical Gareth – natty blue suit and oil stained work boots.

(5) What a difference 13 years have made. Gareth in the window in the orange overalls.

(6) 6412 off to the South Devon Railway. The tanks only extend to the line of the 4 bolts alongside the smokebox – it was tight, very tight working in there

(7) 21 July 1962. I love this picture – steam to the rescue. The prestigious Paddington express pulled out of the mire by a pair of scruffy tank locos. Can you recognise the station?

1.

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7.

Talking Points (started by Stephen Berry!) – responses to DIT 23

DIT 23's easier photograph showed the central part of Skinner Street, looking from just above its crossing with Dock Street. This is one of the few old photographs of a Newport street which can easily be recognised still, although the shop fronts have of course altered over the years! The nearest shop to the photographer is next door to Arnold's electrics – a shop that was there when the photograph was taken, probably around 1939/40 and is still there today.

Dave Woolven comments "I may be rocking the boat a little. Arnold's states 'since 1808' but Arthur George Arnold was born in the 1850s and he wasn't a Newport man, he was a Sherborne, Dorset man. None of his family were in business - certainly not as ironmongers. When he came to Newport, he set up his first shop in Market Street before moving to Godfrey Road. He married one of the Mullock daughters. Those cars - useless brakes, if you parked on a hill. You chocked the wheels with a block of wood. All these cars have starting handles, you had to know how to use them otherwise a kick-back would break your thumb. These cars were easy to steal (NO - I never did), no bonnet lock, open the bonnet, move one of the fuses in the CAV and you could start the engine, a thin screwdriver in the quarterlight - hand in and open the door."

The fourth shop up was Harold Williams' music shop, one which principally sold musical instruments. What a choice musicians had until the 1960s – Stanley Jones for sheet music, Davies for pianos and records, Boyds for pianos and Williams for other instruments and requirements more leaning towards the pop music of the day.

DIT 23's harder photograph also showed a scene that has not changed much to this day, although it is a location which is rather more "off the beaten track". It shows Woodland Road, looking from its junction with Victoria Avenue. The first house on the right – detached, stone-built and rather gloomy looking – could easily have been so described until fairly recently. When my children delivered the local free newspaper back in the 1990s, it was occupied by an elderly person and had clearly not been modernised in any way, In the winter, opening the letterbox meant one was met by the smell of an Aladdin paraffin heater (remember those? – Plenty of smell but not much heat!). The main difference now and then, though, is the absence of Gaerwood House, the white building set in the trees towards the top of the photograph.

Dave Woolven says "This (picture) shows Gaerwood, 34 Kensington Place, the home of Alfred Searle, a solicitor with an office in Borough Chambers, Skinner St (Searle & Burge) [*situated above Arnold's shop – see above]*. He was killed along with his housekeeper in 1941 when a German bomber, being chased by RAF fighters, jettisoned its bombs - also killing people in Archibald St. After the bombing, there was a terrible smell in one of the Archibald St houses. Eventually they found a human leg in the attic. The blast that blew someone to bits - lifted the slates, the leg flew in and the slates fell back into position." I mentioned in this section of DIT23 that I had a story connected with Bastick's shop in Maindee and my father, who was their errand boy. The housekeeper at Gaerwood was a most offensive character and she had informed the shop that on no account was the errand boy to use the front entrance to the property; he had to use the back entrance. Now the front entrance, from Kensington Place, was a relatively gentle slope whereas to access the back entrance it was necessary to make a journey of at least half a mile more by way of an extremely steep hill – Eveswell Park Road. Additionally, it was her habit to ring the shop at around 9.55pm on a Saturday evening (5 minutes before closing time) to demand that a scrubbing brush, bar of soap or some other trivial item be delivered immediately. The article was received with nothing other than a criticism of how long it took in delivery!

Dave has mentioned the bombing on 1st July 1941 when Gaerwood received a direct hit. My teacher in the third and fourth years of my education at Eveswell Junior School was Arthur Ley, who told us an interesting story about that evening. He and some friends had been attending an event at one of the local chapels – possibly Summerhill Baptist – and although he lived in Norfolk Road, they took a longer route home because they spotted a light showing from Gaerwood after blackout. They made the lengthy walk to the house to advise the housekeeper of this. She was in no way grateful and refused to listen to them

or accept that there was a light showing. Unfortunately, it was the attic window (she clearly didn't fancy a treck all the way up to check) – one which would be seen first by any enemy aircraft. Though it could never be proved, it is possible that this indicator was enough for the rapid jettisoning of the bombs, leading to the loss of life and property across the town.

Talking Points (started by Stephen Berry!) – new challenges for DIT 24

The first picture this week is a well-known Newport building, still with us. It has a long history and has had at least three fairly distinctive uses, although all three are certainly linked.
The original building was opened in 1837 but it was enlarged and at least partially rebuilt as demand required. I think it is highly unlikely that any reader will have had experience of its original use, or indeed its second use. However, many of you might have visited it or had other experience of it in its third use.
Who can identify the building and say what its distinct uses were?

Now for a rather harder one. The detail is good, but there are few landmarks to help you!

Answers to Hallowe'en Cryptograms (page 23)

1. What do you get when you cross a vampire and a snowman? Frostbite!
2. Why was the skeleton scared to cross the road? Because he had no guts!

Finally, as we enter our second lockdown, a few cartoons which sum up the current situation and will, I hope, raise a few smiles!

"... and Brian, down there, is just here to even out our grid."