

# DESERT ISLAND TIMES

*Sharing fellowship in*

NEWPORT SE WALES U3A

No.32

10<sup>th</sup> March 2021



*"I wandered lonely as a cloud ....."*

*A MISCELLANY OF  
CONTRIBUTIONS  
FROM OUR MEMBERS*

## ...and now for the News

Just for once it is wonderful to be able to publish a good news story!


Many of you will know Derek Everett who, almost single-handedly keeps Shaftesbury Street Methodist Church running smoothly, despite being in his 80s. He and his wife Alma are a lovely couple and look after us well.

Last Monday Derek was doing the weekly shop at Sainsbury's but when he came to the check-out his card was declined. He apologised to the lady who was queuing behind him – who then surprised everybody by telling the cashier to use her credit card to pay for Derek's £80+ grocery bill as well as her own! Derek made for the ATM to see if could withdraw the cash – but by the time he had done so the Good Samaritan had disappeared.


Derek was overwhelmed by this lady's kindness and the story made headlines in the Welsh media.

## ...and now for Something Different from Jackie Morgan


### PITCHERWITS™




1a. Could be nothing, till it's a carnival place (7,4)




5a. Admit that it could be an inconvenient moment (3,4)




11a. Pop's lift described as an easy opener (4-3)




16a. What a fuss, only to end with an Indian dish, say (5-6)




14d. A bid to donate a sort of good plan (3,1,3,4)



4d. Kefir, made from elk oil, is an insurance feature (4-3-4)



6d. Chill with no radiator? Or a coil perhaps? (3-4)



8d. Met me on roundabout, as a reminder (7)

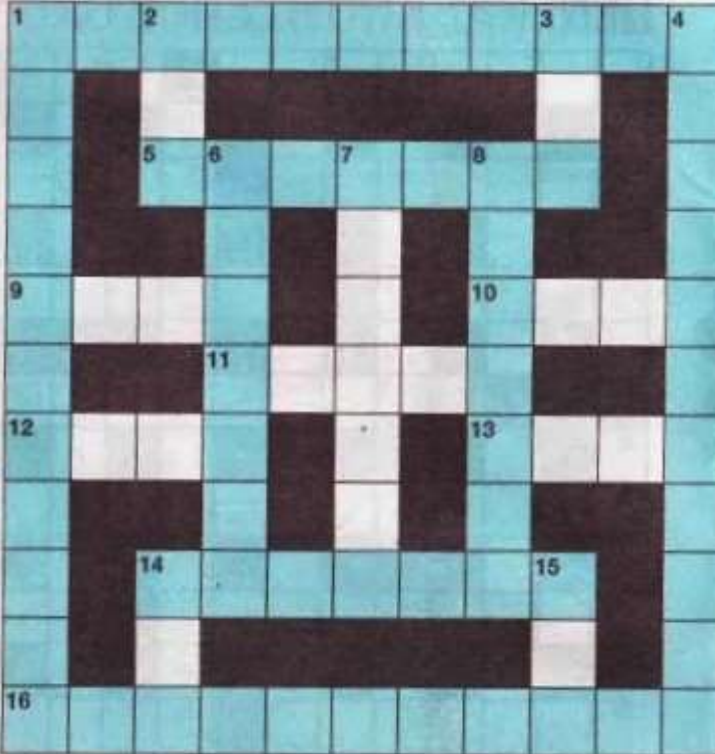
**PIT your wits against Pitcherwits – the exciting puzzle where some of the answers are in pictures! The solutions to the visual clues fit into the shaded spaces on the grid.**

**SOLUTION TOMORROW**

PITCHERWITS BOOK

Daily Mail Pitcherwits™

TO ORDER Daily Mail Pitcherwits Vol 6 by Professor Rebus for £6.29, go to [mailshop.co.uk/books](http://mailshop.co.uk/books) or call 020 3308 9193. Free p&p on orders over £15.



<p><b>ACROSS</b></p> <p>1 Picture Clue</p> <p>5 Picture Clue</p> <p>9 Bursary (say) not to have a rough edge (4)</p> <p>10 Botch the warmer (4)</p> <p>11 Recipe I lost, then rediscovered</p>	<p>for a pancake (5)</p> <p>12 Carthaginian royalty who acted with nothing (4)</p> <p>13 Earn, with roughly similar approach (4)</p> <p>14 Picture Clue</p> <p>16 Picture Clue</p>	<p><b>DOWN</b></p> <p>1 Picture Clue</p> <p>2 Object, brought up from Bath? (3)</p> <p>3 Crystals appreciated a bit back (3)</p> <p>4 Picture Clue</p> <p>6 Picture Clue</p>	<p>7 Absorbs, yet continues with the story, say (5,2)</p> <p>8 Picture Clue</p> <p>14 Full of goodness initially, but bad for visibility (3)</p> <p>15 Leaden lump of a porker! (3)</p>
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Answers are on page 24.

## **The English Language Quiz submitted by Pam Cocchiara**

English has absorbed words from different languages all over the world, words that have become part of our own language and are listed in English dictionaries.

From which languages have the following words come?

1. Plaza
2. Karaoke
3. Moccasin
4. Bungalow
5. Bossa Nova
6. Paparazzi
7. Chalet
8. Sarong
9. Delicatessen
10. Gaffe
11. Waltz
12. Patio
13. Entrepreneur
14. Tsunami
15. Sheikh
16. Tofu
17. Taekwondo
18. Renaissance
19. Macho
20. Silhouette

Answers are on page 13.

## **Some Other Laws submitted by Pam Cocchiara**

- 1 Light travels faster than sound. That is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
- 2 A fine is a tax for doing wrong. A tax is a fine for doing well.
- 3 He who laughs last, thinks slowest.
- 4 Change is inevitable except from a vending machine.
- 5 A day without sunshine is, well, night!
- 6 Nothing is foolproof to a sufficiently talented fool.
- 7 If you line up all the cars in the world end to end, some idiot will always try to overtake.
- 8 God gave you toes as a device for finding furniture in the dark.
- 9 The things that come to those who wait are generally the things left by those who got there first.
- 10 Those who live by the sword get shot by those who don't.



## Date of Expiration by Martyn Vaughan

The ship, a two kilometre bluish cube, materialised not far above the UN Building in Greater New York on that sunny afternoon late in the hectic year of 2047. A spacetime warp (although none of the astounded spectators were able to identify it as such) shot out like an unrolling chameleon tongue to terminate in phosphorescent mystery in one of the decaying streets which surrounded the great monolith. Delegates turned their heads in horrified bewilderment; generals reached for their personal radiophones in order to put NorthAm forces onto High Alert; cabbies darted back into their hover-taxis; and the hitherto somewhat bored tourists gulped in goldfish fashion (or turned and ran—depending on their assessment of the situation).

A minute passed, maybe two; perhaps three: no-one was counting; and then down that shimmering ramp of kaleidoscopic light came two entities; not quite walking; not quite gliding or crawling, but some unpleasant amalgamation of all three. They reached the end of their bizarre ramp and “flowed” off onto the chipped tarmac of the senescent street, becoming somehow suddenly more clearly defined and distinct than they had been on their first appearance. Cabman Art J. Schwartz (married; two kids; knocking off one of the waitresses at the local Drug-AX speakeasy) was the person closest to the two creatures when they left the ramp and thus was humanity’s first member to get a close-up view of these new-style tourists—not that he wanted to; he was too terrified to move.

They were two metres tall and covered in rainbow-coloured scales. They stood on two thick legs; possessed both a pair of pincer arms and a pair of constantly writhing tentacles; the whole unpleasant structure being topped by a pear-shaped, three-eyed head. The nearer creature’s trinocular gaze bored into Art, who was wondering if God was still interested in saving his soul after all these years of boozing, drugging and fornicating, and then a thin, dry prairie-wind of a voice told him: ‘We have come for payment.’ ‘Payment?’ croaked Art, in a voice several octaves higher than normal. That gaze seemed to become even more penetrant, demanding. ‘Yes. Your payment of oxygen—all the oxygen in your atmosphere.’ Art was never sure later whether it was at this point that he had started running; all that he could remember was that he came to his senses two city blocks away.

‘They can’t do this!’ the Vice-President of the North American Federation gasped weakly, ‘How the hell could they take away Christ-knows how many gazillion tonnes of oxygen from the air?’ Zimmerman was his scientific adviser; a fat, balding, bespectacled gentleman with a taste for garish sweatshirts. He stopped scratching at a pimple on one of the folds of fat that comprised his neck and replied, ‘It’s actually about 1.2 trillion tonnes, I believe. And yes—they can do it. They’ve given us the details of how they plan to take it. It all depends upon the paramagnetic properties of the Oh-Two molecule, and you just need a magnetic field flux of several quadrillion teslas...’

The Vice-President looked harassed. ‘OK, OK. I believe you, but stick to English in future—now what’s all this crap about payment? Payment for what, for Chrissake?’ ‘It seems.’ Zimmerman began, picking his words with great care, ‘that this race first visited Earth some two hundred thousand years ago when our ancestors were still chasing mammoths and hitting each other on the heads with clubs, and made an—uhh—business deal.’

The Vice-President made a strangled sound.

‘The deal,’ continued Zimmerman hurriedly, ‘was that these creatures would give those cavemen the ability to develop a technological civilisation in return for all the oxygen in our atmosphere; the payment to be collected at a much later date, which—which unfortunately for us—turns out to be now.’ ‘But this—this “contract”—can’t possibly be valid—it just can’t be!’ ‘They seem to think so.’

The Vice-President put his hands on either side of his face and pushed the loose flesh slowly up until his eyes were mere slits of ash-grey. ‘Then humanity is doomed; we’ll all perish. Suffocated.’ ‘Not necessarily,’

Zimmerman said, with that lack of emotion which the Vice-President hated so much. 'They can give us a reduction process by which we can liberate oxygen from the planet's silicate crust while they're making away with the original supply.' The Vice-President shook his head. 'I don't believe it; it sounds too pat.' 'Well,' Zimmerman said, 'I made a holorecording of their interview with me in which they outlined the finer points of the situation—as they see it.'

He motioned to a man at the rear of the room and the lights died abruptly; there was a slight humming noise and then at the other end of the room a moving hologram blossomed into full-colour life. It showed Zimmerman and one of the eldritch visitors. The Vice-President winced slightly. Zimmerman's 3D duplicate was saying. 'Do you mean to say that our present civilisation, all our achievements, all our science are entirely due to your interference?' A tentacle waved briefly like a lank of seaweed in an undersea surge. 'Of course. Such creatures as you could not possibly have reached this level of technology unaided; your nervous systems are far too primitive.'

'Yes, yes.' Zimmerman's avatar was pressing a mauve handkerchief to its shiny brow. 'But his business of a transaction: we are not bound by the—ahh—"deals" made by long dead savages!' 'Of course you are.' The isosceles triangle of glowing eyes seemed to shine more brilliantly for a second. 'If your grandparent were to bestow a fortune on you, you would not question his right to present you with riches you have not earned, so why would you deny the right of more distant progenitors to place this debt upon you?' 'But it's immoral! Dammit, it's immoral!'

The image of the alien debt-collector turned slightly, as if to end the quibbling, its many-coloured scales flashing with a strange iridescence, but it turned back and spoke again. 'You speak like the poorly-trained ape that you are. Our morality is far beyond your understanding and is amenable to quantitative treatment. "Good" is what increases the quantity of pleasure in our species; "Evil" is that which decreases it. Obtaining your oxygen is pleasurable to our species; therefore it is good. Therefore we will take it.' 'But why do you need it?' 'The root-mean-square of atomic oxygen in our atmosphere is one-fifth of the escape velocity and thus is being lost to space. Two hundred thousand years ago the situation on our world was dangerous, now it is existential.' 'But this process you described of making oxygen from silicates—why don't you do that?' 'Our crust is non-silicate, being composed of the fluorides of aluminium and silicon. It contains no oxygen.' 'Oh. But why all this rigmarole about a legal transaction; why not just come and take it?'

The voice which answered would have been almost angry if it had been human, but as it was not, its tones merely sounded sharper. 'We are at present being monitored by one of the more powerful civilisations which lie nearer the Galactic centre. It is merely temporary, but they have certain ideas about animal welfare which we must, temporarily, conform to.' Zimmerman's image sighed. So did the real Zimmerman and he motioned tiredly at the unseen cameraman and the hologram vanished instantly to be replaced by the pale, sad, green walls of the Vice-President's private quarters.

There was a long, slow silence; a silence that hung like a thick invisible smoke that refused to dissipate; a silence that then seemed to cling to the men like cold treacle. Zimmerman stared helplessly at the Vice-President; waiting for him to come up with some ingenious solution, some magic words which would dispel the danger; some brilliant escape from the trap. The minutes passed and the Vice-President remained like an Egyptian carving of a brooding minor god; motionless and seemingly lacking the promise of motion. Then he stirred. Zimmerman leaned forward so that he would be able to hear every syllable of the magical solution.

'We will refuse to pay,' the Vice-President whispered.

The refusal was delivered the next day at the General Assembly of the UN. The Debt Collectors stood like statues of beings from some obscene, pagan pantheon; only their restless tentacles showed life, twitching at irregular intervals, otherwise they were as immobile as monitor lizards under the noonday blaze. The

Secretary-General was exceedingly nervous. It was plain that he was having visions of death-rays incinerating him where he stood; or hordes of invading Hunter-Killer robots tearing him into bloody shreds. Nevertheless he did not falter but pressed on with the declaration that could spell the doom of humanity. When he finished, silence fell with the weight of a landslide; every eye was fixed on the creatures. 'We have shown you how to make oxygen,' one said. 'You can find other worlds with our type of air,' the Secretary-General replied, 'ones without intelligent life.' 'Oxygen-bearing planets depend on life to bring them into being,' the second said, 'and life is very rare.' 'But Earth is not unique,' the Secretary-General said, 'you yourselves are the proof of that.' 'The oxygen tension on our home is down to 100 mm,' the first said, 'By the time we find another world like yours it may well have fallen below the minimum necessary to sustain life. By not honouring your contract you may well be condemning us to extinction.' 'We are not responsible for transactions made by ignorant savages,' the Secretary-General said with a convincing air of finality. 'Very well,' the second said, with equal finality, 'we will leave you.'

Their shapes blurred for an instant as if seen through a heat-haze and then they were gone. Passers-by reported that the great cube ship disappeared at about the same time. A happy pandemonium broke out in the chamber, as if a terrible thundercloud had dissipated into a clear blue sky.

The air-conditioning sucked away the blue wreaths of drugarette smoke in an unending susurrations. Through the aromatic fog, strip lights gleamed on balding heads, while the drugarette butts waxed and waned like tiny, bloody moons. The President was old, but he felt older than his seventy-seven years; responsibility weighed on him with the mass of a neutron star. 'There's no reply then?' he snapped. 'None, sir,' a harassed senator answered, 'the entire West Coast has gone silent. Radio, TV, laser link—all silent. Every satellite has gone off the air. There's not a plane in the sky.'

The President turned slowly, as if the slightest motion caused him pain. Another senator stirred uneasily under his bloodshot gaze. 'All the fusion reactors have gone off-line,' he eventually said, 'the last station on Baffin Island ceased power at 13:00 hours. The entire Grid is going down.' The President nodded briefly, as if he had been expecting that. 'OK, OK,' he said, in a voice that was hardly above whisper, 'Get back to your homes while ground vehicles still work.'

The gloomy room slowly emptied until only the President and his Second-in-Command were left. In the silence that ensued only the faint whine of the air-conditioning unit was audible.

And then it stopped.

'Well,' the President said, 'They were telling the truth and they obviously believe that a deal's a deal.' 'What in God's name is going on?' the Vice-President demanded in what he had intended to be a firm voice. The Leader of the North American Federation—the most powerful man in the world—smiled grimly in the smoky gloom. 'Don't you get it? We ratted on the deal. It's like any kind of financial contract. If you don't pay your dues the goods are confiscated.'

The Vice-President ground his last drugarette into an ash tray. 'You mean—God, you mean our civilisation; the entire modern world! But how can they do it?—How!' The President shrugged. 'Does the dog know where the light goes when his master flips a switch in the kitchen? I don't know how they're doing it—but they are!' 'But where will it stop, how far will it go?' the Vice-President said slowly, fearfully. 'They will return us to where our ancestors were when they accepted the contract.' The Vice-President stiffened. 'You mean—back to the caves?'

'Exactly.'

The President stood up and turned his face away from the other man. 'MRI Scanners, genetic stabilisers, TV, cars, light, heat; one by one they'll all fail. The newest, most complex will go first. But they'll all fail. Eventually we'll forget how to use a plough; plant a seed.' 'But we'll all die—in our billions!' the other cried, in near hysteria.

'Not all of us,' the President reproved gently, 'some will survive. The hard ones, the ruthless ones, the born-survivors will pull through. Somewhere. Eventually.' 'But to what? Endless barbarity!' 'Perhaps,' mused the President, 'after all we've been shown the way; perhaps some memories will survive. Maybe we can do the long climb back up by ourselves this time. Perhaps.'

There was another long silence. The air in the room became oppressive with the failure of the air-conditioning.

When the pallid light suddenly snapped off, the two weary men slowly rose to their feet. In the darkness the President reached out and grasped the other's shoulder.

'Come on,' he said, 'let's go outside. Somehow we've got to turn our over-civilised minds to the task of rediscovering how to do things.'

'Like what?'

The President's smile was hardly visible in the hot gloom.

'Like how to make an axe out of flint.'

### **PUZZLE PAGE submitted by Angela Robins**

#### **NUMBERCRUNCH**

Follow the instructions from left to right, starting with the number given to reach an answer at the end of the row.

**80:**  $\div 5$ : -11: Squared:  $\times 3$ : -42:  $\div 11$ : +51:  $\div 6$ : -7 = ?

**77:** 5/11 of this: +123: 50% of this: -64:  $\times 5$ : +39: 5/6 of this: -89:  $\times 17$  = ?

**22:**  $\times 7$ : +142: 7/8 of this: -192:  $\times 4$ : -236: 7/8 of this: +15:  $\times 7$  = ?

#### **CONUNDRUM**

You are alone in the basement of a strange house and there are three light switches. Which is the one for the bulb in the attic?

To find out, you are only allowed one visit to the attic, and you can't see the light from the basement.

#### **ONLY CONNECT**

Your task is to sort the 16 words/phrases below into four groups of four connecting words. Some words fall into more than one category, but there is only one correct solution.

SIMS	LORDS	BRACKNELL	FUN
ASCOT	HAWTREY	HEADINGLEY	DALE
SLOUGH	JACQUES	TRENT BRIDGE	OLD TRAFFORD
WINDSOR	CARDS	EDGBASTON	MAIDENHEAD

Answers are on Page 16.

### Wordsearch – submitted by Barbara Phillips

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

Can you find the **11 WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH SHROPSHIRE** in the grid below?

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

Can you find the **11 WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH HAMPSHIRE** in the grid below?

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

Answers are on page 13



## **BANANA CAKE submitted by Mike Brown**

Too many spotty bananas in your fruit bowl? Here's the cake to make use of a couple. I like a recipe that has only a few ingredients, doesn't take all morning to prepare and doesn't use lots of utensils that create a mountain of washing-up. And this one ticks all the boxes and tastes scrummy too!

You will need :-

125g butter, 150g caster sugar, 1 tsp vanilla extract, 1 egg - beaten, 2 ripe mashed bananas, 190g SR flour and 60ml milk.

Prep: 10 min / cook: 35 to 40 min

Grease and line a 2lb loaf tin. Melt butter, sugar & vanilla in a saucepan over a medium heat. Remove from heat and add the mashed bananas, mixing well. Add the egg and again mix well. Stir in the flour and milk.

Pour into the prepared tin and sprinkle with a tablespoon of demerara sugar to give a [super] crunchy topping.

Bake at 170 C / Fan 150 C / Gas 3 for 35 to 40 minutes or until a skewer comes out clean.

My tip:- Make your own caster sugar by blitzing granulated sugar.

ENJOY!



## **The Joys of the String Quartet part 1 by Neil Pritchard**

Music for string quartet has always fascinated me. String Quartets may not have the big dramatic sounds of orchestral music, but you get a beauty of sound and intensity that is unique. The small scale has given composers an opportunity to hear their music in an intimate setting, so that the focus is on the individual instruments and the interplay between them. Since its birth around 1760, the string quartet has maintained a vital and profound hold on composers, players and listeners: it has been the vehicle par excellence for a rich array of some of the finest music composed throughout the last 250 years. Across time, nationality, and centuries of changing style, the string quartet has formed the backbone of small ensemble chamber music. Music for the string quartet consistently features lyrical beauty, complex harmony, intense passion, powerful rhythms and elegant formal design. From the most intimate personal expression to the most brilliant virtuosity, from the ancient and otherworldly to edgy grooves of the present day, the string quartet appears to be an infinitely flexible ensemble engaging great composers and performers in one of the richest living traditions of music in all of history.

The String Quartet combines four independent but coordinated players, featuring closely related instruments from the violin family: two violins, viola and cello. These were perfected in the late 17th century by master Italian luthiers, crafts-persons who built and repaired string instruments that have a neck and a sound box. A bowed string can produce a huge range of sounds brought to life by vibrato, where a rapid, slight variation in pitch producing a stronger or richer tone. The quartet of bowed instruments spans several octaves from bass (the cello) to soprano (the violin) with a range from soft to loud. Although each player is generally restricted to a single melody, the four instruments can combine. This enables them to produce the richest harmonies as a perfectly blended whole or diverge into a complex range of melodies. It's like being engaged in the give and take of a conversation, with solos, duets, trios and quartets ever changing. Perhaps less obvious, but no less crucial to its brilliance, is the remarkable rhythmic capability of a string quartet. With amazing agility in the fingers and the bow, a quartet can achieve an astonishing range of rhythms.

Let start by looking at the guy who is generally attributed with starting the string quartet as we know it today: Joseph Haydn. The string quartet was born sometime around 1760 following the Baroque Era that ended around 1750. The Austrian composer Joseph Haydn is appropriately named the father of the string quartet, but he was not the first or the only one, although he quickly became the greatest. His creative genius and lifelong dedication produced a series of outstanding quartets that defined the new form, closely linked with the emerging Classical style. While Haydn's first sets of quartets bore titles like "divertimento" and comprised five movements, by the 1770s Haydn had started using the official title "quartet" and settled on a four movement design that would dominate the string quartet for well over a century. He published his quartets in sets, and the six quartets, Op. 20, written in 1772, are universally considered the first string quartet masterpieces. Haydn composed a staggering total of 69 quartets, the last in 1799, with no less than 30 universally regarded classics. Both the new classical style and Haydn's particular approach to the string quartet were uniquely associated with Vienna. It was home to the aristocratic patrons that commissioned the music and provided the exclusive private venues for performances. It was also home to a number of outstanding composers who would join Haydn, including three that became the next masters of the Viennese classical quartet: Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert. Haydn's String Quartet Opus 62 is a fine example of quartet writing at its best. This is the slow movement:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBmCcSz6HWw>

That's a perfect example of the subtle interplay between instruments that is the hallmark of the string quartet. Yes, that was the German National Anthem. That was a surprise to me when I first heard this work many years ago. This is both the most popular and most notorious of Haydn's string quartets, all because of the second movement, a beautiful hymn that was later misappropriated by the twentieth

century's most evil regime. Back in the late eighteenth century, Napoleon was posing a serious threat to the Austrian Hapsburg empire causing Haydn to be driven to a burst of nationalism. He composed a song set to patriotic words and had an immediate hit on his hands. He determined to write all the "popularised" arrangements himself, including one for string quartet. This became the slow movement of the quartet you've just heard. Later composers incorporated it into works of their own. A few decades after the Austrian empire finally collapsed, German Nazis rather unfortunately used the melody for the song "Deutschland über alles" (Germany above all). This limited the quartet's popularity among the Allies during and immediately after World War II, but by the 1950s the quartet regained its former popularity. After World War II and the fall of Nazi Germany, only the third stanza, "Unity and Justice and Freedom" has been used as the German national anthem.

I'm moving on to a great composer who was strongly influenced by Haydn's music: Beethoven. He inherited the string-quartet tradition from his predecessors Haydn and Mozart, and shaped it into something unsurpassed in virtuosity, invention, and expressiveness. The slogan could well read: "Beethoven's quartets - the supreme form of chamber music." He wrote 16 string quartets, and they reveal his development as a composer and a man. It's all there: earthy, witty (yes, Beethoven could crack a joke), volatile temper (his fury was state of the art), and personal sorrow (he had plenty to weep about). The first six string quartets look back to Haydn and Mozart while also staking out bold new ground. His middle period saw the String Quartet in F Major, Opus 59, the "Razumovsky". Who or what was Razumovsky? He was Count Andrey Kirillovich Razumovsky, the Russian ambassador to Vienna, an amateur musician, one of Beethoven's patrons, and dedicatee of the three Op. 59 quartets. Beethoven honoured him by quoting Russian tunes in the first two quartets of the set. These final quartets from Beethoven's middle period are a bridge to his mind-bending late quartets. The "Razumovsky" string quartets are works that broke new ground, and along with the other 15 quartets pointed the string quartet form in a totally new direction. This work greatly influenced composers embarking on quartets for the rest of the century. We'll hear the 4th movement of the third quartet:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKWvryDEY3I>

Wasn't that something, it certainly needs first class players to maintain the amazing speed of this piece. I think they'll all need to put their feet up, with an appropriate liquid refreshment after that. I'm sure you'll agree this was a fantastic performance of a remarkable work.

Another composer who was "hard on the heels" of Beethoven was Franz Schubert. Despite his short lifetime, Schubert left behind a vast musical legacy, including more than 600 secular vocal works (mainly Lieder), nine symphonies, sacred music, operas, incidental music and a large body of piano and chamber music. In all he composed over 1500 works in a lifetime of only 31 years, staggering isn't it? Appreciation of Schubert's music while he was alive was limited to a relatively small circle of admirers in Vienna, but interest in his work increased greatly in the decades following his death. Felix Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann, Franz Liszt, Johannes Brahms and other 19th-century composers discovered and championed his works. Today, Schubert is ranked among the greatest composers in Western classical music and his music continues to be popular. Some of his finest works are his string quartets, of which there were 20. The most famous one is "Death and the Maiden": String Quartet No.14 in D minor. This brings together two of the composer's extraordinary talents: a natural instinct for melody and song. His Lieder (songs) and his song cycles are among the most expressive works in all music, connecting with human emotions in a deeply profound way. It's impossible to separate Schubert's music from his own experience and, for me, the "Death and the Maiden" seems to capture his essence.

The quartet was written in 1824 when his health was a cause for concern. At this time he wrote to a friend, "Imagine a man whose health will never be right again, and who, in sheer despair over this, even makes things worse instead of better. Imagine a man I say, whose most brilliant hopes have perished. "This music then, is a reflection of Schubert's state of mind. It's filled with that resignation he spoke of, as well as an

all-pervading anguish and yearning. Not only was his body sick – so was his soul. Then there's the song, the title 'Death and the Maiden' comes from one of Schubert's earlier pieces in which a terror-stricken maiden begs death to pass her by. But death consoles her saying 'I am not rough, you shall sleep gently in my arms'. It's impossible to listen to all four movements of the quartet without an awareness of death's shadow stalking Schubert and emerging in the most funeral like passages. This is a masterwork among quartets. Using the theme from his original song and building variations upon it, Schubert creates a pattern where the dark and powerful opening is met by the soft lyrical reply of the maiden. Or is it the defiance and terror of the maiden, met by the gentle subverting caress of death? It's a dialogue which continues throughout the quartet, and there's little escape from the fear and the fury in the overall sombre tone of the music. Can this possibly be music you'd want to listen to? Well I believe that sad music can make you happy. Certainly this is a deeply melancholic work - but never underestimate the power of even the saddest music to enrich our own emotions. This is the intensely moving slow movement. Note that iPlayers are to the fore in this brilliant performance:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4amAXJnBubs>

It's about time we heard from a female composer, so I'm now turning to Mendelssohn. No not Felix, his sister Fanny. Fanny Mendelssohn was a truly great composer, but she faced an almost overwhelming set of obstacles to getting her work published. Fanny Mendelssohn was born in Hamburg on 14 November 1805 and learned to play the piano when she was a child. She was such an impressive young musician that the composer Carl Friedrich Zelter said of her: "This child really is something special". But Fanny wasn't just a brilliant performer, she was also a composer like her younger brother Felix. You may have noticed that the history of classical music is dominated by male composers – and Fanny's father was a firm believer that composition wasn't a career for women. He said to his daughter: "Music will perhaps become Felix's profession, while for you it can and must be only an ornament." But Fanny was brimming with musical ideas and carried on composing regardless. While her brother was supportive, he also didn't think Fanny should publish her music. He once said: "From my knowledge of Fanny I should say that she has neither inclination nor vocation for authorship". So instead he published some of her works under his name. A short time later, Felix was invited to perform some of his music for Queen Victoria in Buckingham Palace. She made a special request – could the composer play one of her favourite songs of his? Of course he could. Which one, asked Mendelssohn? 'Italien', replied the Queen. Felix (presumably slightly awkwardly) replied that this beautiful song was actually the work of his sister Fanny.

Overall, Fanny wrote 460 pieces of music including many 'Songs without Words', a type of piano piece for which her brother later became famous. Musicologists now believe Fanny pioneered this musical form. But despite that impressive body of work, Fanny only published her first work in her own name in 1846, when she was 41. Even today works that were thought to have been written by Felix are being re-attributed to their real composer: the great Fanny Mendelssohn. When her mother died in 1842 she took over the direction of the Mendelssohn family home in Berlin, in which role she organised local concerts and occasionally appeared as a pianist. Fanny remained very close to her brother, and her death in May 1847 greatly contributed to Felix's own demise six months later. Mendelssohn's String Quartet in E flat major was written in 1834 (6 years after Beethoven's death) based on an unfinished piano sonata she wrote five years before. This extraordinary, rhapsodic work is her only mature string quartet, and, among those currently known to us, is one of the first surviving string quartets written by a woman. Mendelssohn herself reflected wonderingly how she, "not an eccentric or overly sentimental person", had come to write such music; for her this arose from having encountered the "exceedingly moving and emotional" style of Beethoven when she was a child. This is the stirring final movement:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MExAO8CFg1k>

I'd like at this point to put in a special word for the music of Fanny Mendelssohn, it's well worth exploring, you won't be disappointed.



We move on to the 1880s, to a string quartet by the Russian composer Aleksandr Borodin. Borodin was an interesting character in that he was a part-time composer - he had a day job. He was born in St. Petersburg in 1833. The name Borodin was that of attendant to Prince Gedeonov; the prince acknowledged paternity and provided the mother and the boy with a name. Borodin was raised with many of the privileges of the nobility, and his education was broad in the tradition of the European gentleman. This included musical training and preparation for a professional career in medicine. While still a young medical intern, Borodin gained entry to the "Mighty Five", partly on the strength of his keyboard ability—a defining factor of the 19th-century romantic Russian composer. His training had been that of the gifted amateur; he now came under the influence of the taskmaster of the Mighty Five group, Mili Balakirev, and subsequently under the influence of the other members of the group: Modest Mussorgsky, César Cui, and Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Of them, Borodin alone stuck by his original and primary profession, although he gave up actual medical practice for chemical research. Although his works are relatively few, Borodin's Second Symphony and his opera Prince Igor were his principal works on the large scale. Other than the symphony and the opera, his most-played works are the two String Quartets. He died in 1887, and his legacy was preserved by his friends and reappears in some of the work of Sergei Prokofiev.

Borodin's few works, like those of Mussorgsky, are disproportionately important. Borodin pursued a distinguished career as a physician and chemist, while composing only when he could, in his truly precious spare time. The String Quartet No. 2 in D Major was written in a rapid burst of activity lasting only a few months during a summer vacation. The quartet was well-received during Borodin's lifetime, but remarkably in 1953 it managed to "cross-over" into the world of musicals when at least two of its themes were used as part of the musical Kismet. Composers Robert Wright and George Forrest used several of Borodin's compositions, to accompany a story set in Persia during the period from the Arabian Nights. Two songs in particular, 'Baubles, Bangles and Beads' and 'This is My Beloved' are based directly on themes from the second and third movements respectively of Borodin's quartet. In the decade that followed his death, his use of Asian folk music, rhythms and oriental colour, brought his music to the attention of many composers especially the young Debussy, who, as a Frenchman, had an equal interest to Borodin in abandoning the German romantic influences in his music. With his contemporary Tchaikovsky, Borodin established a new form of Russian chamber music specifically for the string quartet. Both of Borodin's quartets show outstanding craftsmanship from a gifted composer placed in a unique historical position to add an elegant, new sound to European chamber music. This is a stunning performance by 4 siblings (ages 8, 11, 12, 13) known as the Stars Aligned Siblings. If you didn't know otherwise you'd think this third movement of the quartet was played by professionals with years of experience:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ahes7wQEicU>

### **The English Language Quiz (page 3) - Answers**

1. Spanish
2. Japanese
3. Native North American
4. Hindi
5. Portuguese
6. Italian
7. French
8. Malay
9. German
10. French
11. German
12. Spanish
13. French
14. Japanese
15. Arabic
16. Japanese
17. Korean
18. French
19. Spanish
20. French

### **Wordsearches (page 8) – Answers**

#### **SHROPSHIRE**

Bridgnorth Telford Oswestry Ludlow Salop Wroxeter Hills Severn Ironbridge Shrewsbury Clun

#### **HAMPSHIRE**

Romsey Portsmouth Alton Hook Fleet Havant Aldershot Gosport Southsea Beaulieu Lyndhurst

## Sudoku

Each row and each column must 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

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

2. Medium

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

3. Hard

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

4. Evil

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

**Don't forget** the Hobbies and Interests challenge – just a paragraph will do if you don't feel like writing a full-length article. I'm sure many of you have interesting and unusual pastimes – please tell us about them.



## These are a few of my Favourite Things ..... by Stephen Berry

I have just had a real shock. And it's all my fault!

When I set the most recent challenge – to write about hobbies – I had it in mind that I would probably put a short piece together on my own hobbies and interests. For the first time in my life I started thinking seriously about each of my hobbies – and that was what gave me a serious shock!

Briefly stated my hobbies are Music, Railways, History, Collecting and Reading. Having got this far I put my brain into gear and soon realised that these “umbrella” terms covered a wide range of sub-divisions. I started again – and came up with this list of current and active Hobbies:

<b>Music</b>	Performing (piano, organ, conducting)	<b>History</b>	British
	Listening		Social
	Teaching		Family
	Researching historical aspects		Local
	Composing		Railway
	Arranging		Music
<b>Railways</b>	Development		Sound recording
	Geography		Church history
	Station architecture		Research
	Ticketing	<b>Collecting</b>	Railway tickets
	Historical research		Books
	Modelling	<b>Reading</b>	British detective fiction
	Social aspects		Books on all of the above subjects

What gave me a shock was realising just how many different areas of interest I follow – pretty much simultaneously! A closer look, however, shows that there are points of overlap, particularly between History, Railways and Collecting, while Reading crosses all categories. Only Music is largely free-standing but the “listening” element of this is something I often carry out while engaged in other hobbies. In fact, my model railway was re-laid in its new home while Wagner’s Ring Cycle of four operas entertained me!

I am not, and never have been, a “casual hobbyist”. It should come as no surprise that research is an important aspect of all but my relaxation reading – British detective fiction. I started in the usual way in my teens with Agatha Christie and have worked through the major authors of this *genre*. Thankfully we have new authors appearing regularly – including our member Ian Richardson who stands with the best of them in my opinion. Although I am happy for the occasional book to be set outside the UK (Agatha Christie did this on a number of occasions and Ngaio Marsh, herself a New Zealander, set a few of her books in the country, though using her British detective to solve the cases!) I have no interest generally in “foreign” works, particularly anything set in the USA. Biased? Prejudiced? Maybe, but nobody is going to change me now!

I inherited my love of reading from my maternal grandmother and mother, both avid readers who ensured that I “knew my letters” and could read simple stories before I started school. My mother was a shorthand-typist and she also taught me to type – valuable in the days of the typewriter, invaluable when we moved over to computers. Although she achieved 200 words per minute writing shorthand it was a skill that I never acquired, largely because I never tried! In fact, by the time I would have been wanting to learn it was already becoming obsolete with the advent of Dictaphones and similar devices.

It is probably no exaggeration to say that we have around 10,000 books and magazines in our house – at least 3000 of these relate to Railways. This includes all of Gill’s knitting patterns and books on various crafts and is a fairly comprehensive collection of material to service all of our hobbies. Yes, we do use the internet but while it is fine for general information about most subjects, detailed information of the sort that I require is rarely to be found. As a result, the library continues to grow year by year!

My interest in railways started in much the same way as every other railway historian I have ever met. We were train-spotters! This was in the good old days of steam engines, of course – it was around 1957 or 1958 for me. This aspect declined as steam engine use declined, but by this time I had started at St Julian’s High School (September 1960) and it was my first Geography teacher who, himself an avid railway enthusiast, kindled my interest in the aspects of the subject listed above. It helped that the first topic we studied was the 1 inch to the mile Ordnance Survey maps and he always asked me questions on the railways that were shown. He really was an inspirational teacher – unlike the History teacher who had a knack of making any subject deadly dull and boring! Unfortunately I was “taught” by this person for four out of my first five years and my exam marks made steady progress downwards during years 1 to 3 (22% at the end of the third year) and shot up to 70% in year 4 with a more inspiring teacher and a far more interesting range of topics. I failed my GCE ‘O’ level History examination, left school two years later and then started teaching myself History – in the categories I have listed. National and political history have only ever been of mild interest to me, usually when pertaining to those areas in which I have an avid interest.

I should say that my collecting hobbies are wider than those active areas I have mentioned (railway tickets and books). This started originally with stamps, but was ramped up when the tea packaging companies started to give away free picture cards in packets of tea during the 1950s. As a family we changed our tea drinking habits frequently, according to which particular set of cards I was trying to complete at the time! There used to be a considerable playground industry at Eveswell Junior School as many of us traded our duplicate cards at playtime. My father then let me have the collection of cigarette cards that he built up during the 1920s and 1930s and I did continue that collection for a while during adulthood. I still have some beautiful sets, but the majority were disposed of when children became a drain on financial resources! We used to collect Lilliput Lane miniature buildings at the time when the brand was at its peak and before it was sold by its founder. Our original collection was greatly reduced when we moved house to downsize – we simply couldn’t accommodate the entire collection. What we have never done is try to collect as an investment. We collect because what we collect gives us ongoing pleasure.

I am not going to say anything about our latest lockdown acquisitions – another collecting hobby! – as I am hoping to put together a talk on the subject that I can deliver to our History Group at U3A. Sufficient to say that, during the last three weeks, I have spent many hours researching the subject and corresponding with those who know far more than me and that we have been giving eBay and our long-suffering postman plenty of extra work! (Note – this is financed by money that would have otherwise been paid over to Jackie Kerr for U3A holidays that have been postponed!!!)

Bored during lockdown? Not a bit of it – in fact we haven’t achieved a hundredth part of what we would like to have done, but hopefully there are many more years ahead of us to fill those gaps, COVID or not!

### **PUZZLE PAGE (page 7) - ANSWERS**

**NUMBERCRUNCH.**                    2            102            301

**CONUNDRUM.**    Turn on Switch 1 and wait a few minutes then switch it off. Then turn on Switch 2 and go to the attic. If the light is on, it is Switch 2. If it is off and the bulb is warm, it is Switch 1. If it is neither of these it is Switch 3!

**ONLY CONNECT**

' House of _____ '	Lords	Fun	Windsor	Cards.
Test Cricket Grounds	Headingley	Edgbaston	Trent Bridge	Old Trafford.
Berkshire Towns	Bracknell	Slough	Ascot	Maidenhead.
'Carry On' Actors	Joan Sims	Charles Hawtrey	Jim Dale	Hatty Jacques.

## The Village Postmistress by Monty Dart

Gwladys Pugh, Village Postmistress, Fochriw, was lonely. That would be Gwladys with a 'W' Alexandrina Pugh. Her mother had read a story about Russia, in which the name Alexandrina appeared and, in a wild flight of fancy, when registering the birth muttered 'Alexandrina' as her second name. Morgan Pugh – father of Gwladys was never aware that his daughter had an exotic name – he wouldn't have approved. However, the subject of her second name never came up in the Pugh household.

Gwladys Pugh's age was indeterminate – some said she was nearly eighty, but others scoffed and said, 'Miss Pugh, no, I remember her Dad, Morgan the Milk Pugh, she can't be much more than sixty-five. The village children, who went with their Mam's to the Post Office thought she had no legs. No one ever saw her legs, only her top half, shielded by a glass screen. A top half of twinset and pearls, grey hair wrapped tightly in a bun, a modest amount of lipstick, a faultless complexion – but unbeknownst to the customers, she was a wearer of sumptuous perfume (which didn't penetrate the glass screen), the sort of perfume that someone called Alexandrina ought to wear.

Perfume was a passion – Magie Noir, Opium, Envy, Poison, she had tried them all through the years. She had toyed with Chanel No.5, if Marilyn Monroe could wear it, so could Miss Pugh, Fochriw, but she found it rather tame and wondered what all the fuss was about.

Her other great passion was having an intimate acquaintance with everyone in the village, though perhaps that should be intimate acquaintance with their 'private business'. If truth be told, Miss Pugh had never had an intimate acquaintance with another human being. The nearest she got to that was when Daft Dai asked her to the village dance and even she wasn't that desperate.

Miss Pugh knew things; she was a keeper of secrets. She would have loved to blurt her secrets out, but she had no one to blurt them out to. She knew that Mrs. Jones at no. 7 High Street had Premium Bonds and often won more in the draw. It was obvious, she didn't need to see inside the envelope, the Glasgow address on the back gave it away. She knew that Maggie Davies, on a day trip to Lynmouth by boat, had a bit of a fling with a chap called Stefan.

It wasn't Miss Pugh's fault that the envelope from Maggie hadn't been sealed properly and the steam from her cup of tea must have melted the glue. Of course, she had to check the contents just in case anything had fallen out. And what about those dreadful magazines Mr. Crowley-Crater, the bank manager had in the post, the brown paper packaging was torn one day and she saw the words 'Big, Busty, Beautiful Babes'. Disgusting!

There was nothing like a queue in a village post office to pick up gossip. Miss Pugh had very acute hearing. She could hear a moth fart at twenty paces. She could be issuing old Miss Hodson's pension, whilst at the same time listening to Mrs Gatehouse and Mrs Flynn discussing 'the goings on at no. 43'. 'That young lady has far too many men visiting for my liking' she heard. 'I'm not prejudiced, no, not me but did you see that one-legged chap there the other day? I've never seen one in Fochriw before, where's it all going to end'?

The biggest and best secret of all was that Charlie Davies, Tunnel Terrace, was a millionaire. He'd won the lottery last Christmas and hadn't told a soul. Miss Pugh knew, he'd put it in his Post Office savings account, which had held all of £19.50 pence previously, in fact he won more than a million but what's a few thousand pounds either way?

Charlie always came in on a Wednesday, regular as clockwork at 10am, to buy one first class stamp. Miss Pugh made sure she looked her best on Wednesdays. The angora twin set, in palest blue, to match her eyes. A minute touch of mascara and a spot more lipstick. She even had a small mirror behind the counter to ensure she looked smart when he arrived. She would blush delicately when she was counting his change back into his hand.

Ah, sad Miss Pugh, setting her cap at Charlie. He was enamoured of a sailor he met, on a day trip to Lynmouth. They were planning on running away together to run a delightful guest house in the Scottish Highlands. This was one secret Miss Pugh would never know. Charlie used to go to the post office in Newport with his letters to Stefan.

### **British Prime Ministers - James Ramsay MacDonald by Gerald Lee**

Ramsay MacDonald was unique as prime minister in many ways. He was the only holder to be of truly working-class origin. Until Tony Blair and David Cameron, he was the only recent PM to have never previously held government office. He was the first Labour leader to be PM, and the only PM who had to be admitted to the Privy Council before he could take office.

MacDonald was born in Lossiemouth on 12 October 1866. He was illegitimate, although it seems his parents did intend to marry. His father was a farm labourer and his mother a housemaid. Perhaps being illegitimate made him feel an outsider. However, in this area of Scotland at that time one in six births was to unmarried parents.

There are some aspects of his early life that are familiarly Edwardian. When at 15 his formal education ended, he sought social advancement through working as a pupil teacher. Like an H G Wells type hero, he studied agriculture and sciences at Birkbeck College. Illness prevented his completion of the course.

He moved to Bristol to become assistant to a clergyman who was hoping to establish a guild for young people. His involvement in the new politics began when he joined the Social Democratic Federation. Early socialists found common ground with the New Progressive Liberals. Some foresaw the formation of a new party covering the broad left. For a time, he was secretary to a Liberal MP, after which he joined the Independent Labour Party. His wife Margaret Gladstone had some personal wealth, which supported his earnings as a pamphleteer, political organiser, lecturer for The Fabian Society, and as an MP until the position became salaried in 1911. Margaret was related to the scientist Lord Kelvin. Most biographers deny any link to the Gladstone family.

It was said of MacDonald that he was a natural for any committee. He became chairman of the Labour Representation Council. The Labour movement was now looking for independent party representation distinct from the Liberals, although at the time the main objective was working class representation in Parliament.

In his capacity as Chairman of the LRC, Macdonald negotiated a pact with the Liberal Whip, Herbert Gladstone, to allow Labour and Liberal candidates to run together in some two member constituencies. He had stood for Parliament once before as Independent Labour, coming bottom of the poll and probably costing the Liberals the seat.

In 1906 he was one of 29 MPs elected, winning Leicester with Liberal support. He could have accepted office, but probably felt insufficiently educated to accept any offers from Asquith, although John Burns had accepted the post of President of the Local Government Board. He may also have felt too close an association might affect his ambition for the Labour Party to remain distinct from the Liberals and eventually replace them.

MacDonald's position in the party was closer to the theorists and intellectuals of the ILP and Fabian Society. Although he was, for a time, MP for Aberavon, he was never at ease in an industrial constituency.

In 1911 he became the effective leader of the Parliamentary Party. His anti-war position led to hostility in the Press, most notably from Horatio Bottomley's 'John Bull.' The paper exposed his illegitimate birth and that the name on his birth certificate was James McDonald (sic) Ramsay.

His golf club expelled him. Years later when he was offered readmission he refused and framed the letter. In the Coupon Election of 1918, he lost his seat.

Politics was changing. The old boundaries were at best blurred. One young officer, when he received a telegram offering him a nomination, replied 'Which Party?' The war itself was no longer an issue. He fought a by-election in Woolwich against a holder of the Victoria Cross. Despite more press abuse he lost by only 700 votes.

In the 1922 parliament he was elected member for Aberavon and party leader. Most of all, he presented the party as moderate, broad based and progressive. Perhaps because of their mutual dislike of Lloyd George, he always had a good relationship with the Conservative Leader, Stanley Baldwin. Neither made personal attacks on the other. Baldwin helped to bring Labour into the consensus of party politics.

For reasons that suited him tactically, to keep Lloyd George out of office and eliminate the chance of a revival of the coalition, Baldwin decided to fight an election on the issue of tariff reform. A united Liberal Party suited his plans. In the next parliament there was no outright majority. Baldwin would certainly not do a deal with the Liberals. He allowed his government to be voted out of office. For the first time Britain had a Labour Government.

MacDonald and ten others were of working-class origin. Five Cabinet ministers sat in the Lords, including a former Conservative and the veteran Liberal, Lord Haldane, who accepted the post of Lord Chancellor on condition that he also had a place on the Committee of Imperial Defence.

MacDonald proved a very able PM. The government improved benefits for the unemployed. Its greatest domestic success was the Wheatley Housing Bill, under whose terms half a million subsidised homes were built. MacDonald did not play any part in it; the credit belongs solely to Wheatley as Minister of Health. One biography of MacDonald does not even mention it.

Lord Haldane preferred his style to that of Asquith, who tended to allow discussions to drift (perhaps understandable with Churchill and Lloyd George in his cabinet). Otherwise, the government's greatest successes lay in Foreign Affairs, which MacDonald handled himself, combining the posts of PM and Foreign Secretary.

In the aftermath of the war, MacDonald succeeded in persuading the French to compromise on reparations. The London Conference led to the Dawes Plan to solve the issue of reparations. He was the first PM to address the League of Nations. He hoped the Geneva Protocol would solve disputes by arbitration.

Trade treaties were signed with Germany, and the Soviet regime was recognised. Negotiations began on a trade treaty and separate settlement of British loans to Russia.

Baldwin's tactics were the same as in 1931. He preferred to wait and let the government fail.

There were scandals over the Campbell case and whether the Attorney General had intervened to drop a case of sedition against the editor of the 'Workers Weekly.' Prior to polling day, the so-called Zinoviev Letter became public. It was undoubtedly a forgery, but still damaged the party.

After the Lloyd George honours scandal it was alleged a baronetcy had been awarded to the owner of McVitie Biscuits for the loan to MacDonald of a Daimler Car and £40,000.

Although Labour lost the election and lost seats its vote increased, as that of the Liberal Party went into decline.

Looking at modern major industrial disputes, it seems strange the Labour Party did not attempt to intervene during the Coal dispute or the General Strike.

MacDonald did not play an active role in either, probably agreeing with the government response of maintaining services and pursuing negotiations at the same time. Lloyd George on the other hand produced a plan to solve the dispute, which showed sympathy for the miners. He was for a time suspended from the Liberal shadow cabinet by Asquith. The majority of Liberals supported the government against the unions.

In 1929 for the first time Labour was the largest party, but again without a majority. As in 1924, the revived Liberals kept a Labour government in office.

Unemployment was an increasing problem. MacDonald had little understanding of the subject. He appointed a committee under J H Thomas that included the Labour rising star Oswald Mosley. Finding his initiatives blocked by the Treasury under Snowden, Mosley in disgust produced his own manifesto and eventually formed his own party, which later became the British Union of Fascists.

MacDonald avoided domestic issues. Ministers found him elusive. The few domestic successes were non-party matters which the Conservatives might equally well have introduced. The Coal Mines were 'rationalised,' a favourite term of the 1930s. The London Transport Board and the first Marketing Boards were established. Further slum clearance acts were passed (the Greenwood Act). The minister who replaced Thomas on the unemployment committee found MacDonald preoccupied with India.

The main opposition came from Lloyd George's Liberals, who accused the government of not being radical enough. Plans to raise the school leaving age to 15 were abandoned.

He still preferred foreign affairs, presiding over the Imperial Conference and the Round Table Conference on India. He was the first PM to visit the United States. Lloyd George described him as 'too busy to do his job,' neglecting major domestic crises.

Unemployment became a greater issue as the figure rose to 2.75 million. The deficit was expected to hit £120 million; it reached £170 million. The government appointed the May Committee to review expenditure. It proposed economies of £96 million and a 20% reduction in Unemployment Benefit. The Labour Cabinet split. Mosley derided them as a 'Salvation Army that ran away on the Day of Judgment.'

MacDonald offered his resignation. For some time, various suggestions for a National Government had been in circulation. The King felt a government with a Labour presence might find it easier to introduce the cuts to benefits. Baldwin would have preferred an election and his own party in office.

The decision to head a National Government with a few colleagues led to MacDonald's expulsion from the party he did so much to create. It is possible MacDonald thought in terms of the war time coalition and the role of ministers such as Henderson and Clynes, who remained in the party when they served under Lloyd George. His good relationship with the King may have also influenced him. However, his fate was sealed. The parliamentary party expelled him. Only his son Malcolm was prepared to defend him. The new cabinet had four National Labour, two Liberals and six Conservatives.

Lloyd George was ill, so the Liberals were led by Herbert Samuel. At first, Lloyd George was sympathetic to the idea, then realising he had been isolated again by Baldwin, he opposed the new coalition. In the next parliament he led a separate group of four Liberals, all family members with Welsh constituencies. MacDonald's famous comment was 'now every duchess will want to kiss me.' Despite his origins he enjoyed the company of the nobility. Some speculated he was really the offspring of a Scottish lord. His closest friends were Lord and Lady Londonderry, so much so, that many thought Lady Londonderry was his mistress.

The National Government was elected with a massive majority. Their slogan, 'A Doctor's Mandate' shows they had no defined policies, although for the Conservatives any economic policy would have to include protection. A formula was agreed to accommodate the Liberals.

In effect, it was a Conservative Government with some dressing. Its original purpose to save the Pound was abandoned, quickly reversing Churchill's decision of 1926 to return to the Gold Standard.



In office, MacDonald was isolated. Churchill was excluded after comparing him to a 'boneless wonder' he once saw in a circus. The Conservatives controlled economic affairs, so MacDonald again turned to Foreign Policy. He attended the Lausanne Conference of 1932 and the Stresa Conference of 1935 to safeguard the borders of Austria. He also attended the World Economic Conference in London and the Disarmament Conference.

His major interest was India. He helped to make the Simon Report of eventual Dominion Status official policy, although he was no longer PM when The Government of India Act (1935) passed into law. However, there was also an important role played by Baldwin and the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, later Lord Halifax.

It was increasingly obvious that physically and mentally his health was in decline. His speeches were incoherent, his eyesight was failing. He and Baldwin thought of retiring together after the Jubilee. He was King George's favourite PM and could have retired at any time with an earldom. However, in June 1935, prior to the election, he changed places with Baldwin becoming Lord President of the Council. It was said he thought the new PM was Neville Chamberlain - he was so muddled. He ceased to play an active role in the government though still nominally a cabinet minister.

When the election came, he stood again in Seaham Harbour, suffering a humiliating defeat by Emmanuel Shinwell, who had once nominated him as leader. A vacancy was created for him in the Scottish Universities, which enabled him to return to parliament in 1936.

Finally, in May 1937, he left office permanently, having witnessed the Jubilee of George V and the passing of the India Act. In all he had headed three governments and served six years and 289 days as PM. He remained in parliament until his death.

On 9 November 1937, accompanied by his daughter, he died on a cruise to South America. He is buried in Moray near his home in Lossiemouth.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from MacDonald's career. Like Baldwin he had a basic Christian belief. Towards the end of his life, he was drawn towards Unitarianism. His main achievement was to make Labour electable by promoting gradualism and parliamentarism. He was reassuring as a speaker; like Baldwin he mastered the art of radio. Yet even before his mental decline it is often difficult to draw any idea from his speeches as to what he really believed.

His successes in foreign affairs are worthy of credit, but in both governments, it was an escape from tackling more pressing domestic matters such as unemployment.

The creation of a National Government is not an achievement in itself. It ceased to be a real coalition after the Samuel Liberals departed. National Labour was an increasingly meaningless term for the handful of MPs, mostly former ministers who followed MacDonald. Officially National Labour disbanded in 1945: it had ceased to mean anything anyway.

The King's view that a Labour presence would make it easier to introduce benefit cuts is unsubstantiated. Apart from the naval mutiny in Invergordon against pay cuts there were no violent protests. The Jarrow marchers attracted sympathy; it was not a rebellion.

Britain did not experience a rise in extreme factions. The British Legion did not become a political force, unlike similar ex-servicemen's groups abroad. Mosley's BUF was most popular when it was a ginger group of the Conservatives. After 1934 it was in severe decline. The Communist Party had little support.

Perhaps it is inevitable that any PM without a majority, such as James Callaghan or John Major, will seem weak compared to his contemporaries.

Opinions of his status vary. The fact that other party leaders were willing to serve under him in 1931 and that the King had a high regard for him, shows he was at the very least competent and respected as PM. To most Labour supporters he is regarded as a traitor, despite his achievement of making Labour a credible party of government. There will never be memorials to MacDonald.

Two years ago the Reading Group started a second group - out of necessity. The first group had been meeting for several years. Members order books from Newport Libraries, but because there is a limit to how many can be ordered of one title at a time, new members were having to be turned away. So both groups now meet once a month.

Titles are chosen from a variety of genres in order to appeal to differing tastes. Everyone has a chance to give their views of the latest book and award a score. Each book generates lots of discussion, immaterial of whether members enjoyed it or not. Discussions can be lively, but members all agree that being part of such a group encourages them to read titles that they would not normally consider, and increases their enjoyment of reading.

(I wonder if our members have read *City Crime* by Ian Richardson, featured here in the photo. It was written by one of our own members and Ian published a sequel last year).

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**Euan** was at Newport Library collecting some books for the U3A Reading Group when a chicken approaches the desk and says 'Book, bok, bok, book.' The librarian hands a book to the chicken and it tucks it under its wing and runs out. A few moments later Euan is astonished to see the chicken run back in, throw the book on the desk and say 'Book, bok, bok, book.' Again the librarian gives it a book and the chicken runs out with it. Five minutes later Euan is intrigued to see the chicken fly back in with the book saying 'Book, bok, bok, book.' The librarian gives the chicken a third book, but this time Euan follows the bird as it runs out, through Friars Walk and across the road to the River Usk. There, a frog is sitting on the bank and the chicken holds up the book to the frog saying 'Book, bok, bok, book' to which the frog replies 'Read-it, read-it, read-it . . .'

## Talking Points (started by Stephen Berry!) – responses to DIT 31

The first photograph was very easy for anyone who has lived in Newport for at least fifty years – but it is also possibly one of the most recognised landmarks in the town and photographs of it are common. As such, it was recognised by a number of you. Roger Lewis gave the fullest reply, though, and I quote:

“The photographs this time are somewhat easier to identify.

The first is Commercial Street and shows the original Council Offices. This is now (or was!) the site of the British Home Stores. At the junction of Corn Street opposite Barclays Bank was Boots the Chemist. Upstairs was the Boots Lending Library which closed in 1996. Wikipedia has an article about the services which Boots gave to its subscribers. It seems a bygone age!

The second photograph is at the junction of Lower Dock Street and Mellon Street. It shows the Ragged School.”

Roger is, of course, absolutely correct. The old **Ragged School** has had many uses and was, at one time, the home of the Shipping Agent Bethell Gwyn. The **Town Hall**, of which we see only the façade and clock tower, was, in fact, a very large building that extended at its back along Dock Street from Corn Street to Austin Friars and housed, at various times, most if not all of the departments that were administered by the Council before they were hived off as separate entities. The major problem that the Council faced was that the then town was expanding at quite a rate and administrative departments had to grow to keep pace with the demands placed on them. For that reason the Civic Centre was built in the 1930s and a number of departments relocated. Office space in the rear of the Town Hall building was then leased to others – in the 1950s and up until January 1965 one of Newport’s Income Tax Offices occupied the offices on the corner of Corn Street and Dock Street (another was diagonally opposite, also on the corner of Corn Street and Dock Street, and the third was in the building in Charles Street, original home of our U3A).

The Assembly Room in the main part of the building had a fairly substantial pipe organ, at least a part of which was incorporated into the rebuilt organ at St Woolos Cathedral in the early 1960s.

I have mentioned in a previous article in this series that Newport suffered two arson attacks – one on two of our churches in 1949 and another on a series of our town centre shops in the early 1960s. Boots the Chemist, as Roger says, occupied the shop on the corner of Commercial Street and Corn Street, opposite Barclays Bank, and this was one of the shops that was completely destroyed internally in this series of arson attacks.

Now to two little stories that involve my family and this immediate area. The first concerns my mother who, as a child of, I would guess, eleven or twelve, was allowed to go into town on her own with the usual conditions about being back in time for her lunch etc. So it was that she needed to keep an eye on the time and did so by looking up at the Town Hall clock. It was at the time when her eyesight deteriorated quite rapidly – she wore spectacles from the age of twelve – and she had to screw up her eyes to read the time. As she did so, passers by saw her looking up and themselves looked up to see what was happening. In no time at all a crowd had gathered – whereupon my mother slipped away and caught her bus home! Our parents were never as naughty as we were, now, were they? Indeed they were – she was so amused by the episode that she repeated it each time she visited town!



The map on the left looks ordinary enough. I had been looking at it for weeks – on the shelf of books for sale on the first floor of Boots the Chemist. At 5/6d I had to save up some of my pocket money over a few weeks to raise this sum. Finally, by forgoing the purchase of a 6d piece of sheet music I decided the time had come to make my purchase. That was on one of my regular Saturday visits to town – and I have never been so glad to have made that sacrifice as by the following Saturday Boots the Chemist was no more, having had its fire. The map would have gone up in flames; as it is it forms part of my collection of 1” maps, all of which are, of course, historic documents now.

**... and this edition's challenges!**

Plenty of activity in both of these photographs, but as always please let us have any memories you have of the buildings or the areas in which they are or were situated.



**Pitcherwits (page 2) – Answers**

**Across:** 1 Notting Hill 5 Bad Time 9 Burr 10 Muff 11 Crepe 12 Dido 13 Near 14 Flip Top 16 Argie Bargie

**Down:** 1 Not a Bad Idea 2 Tub 3 Ice 4 Like for Like 6 Air Cool 7 Takes up 8 Memento 14 Fog 16 Pig