

DESERT ISLAND TIMES

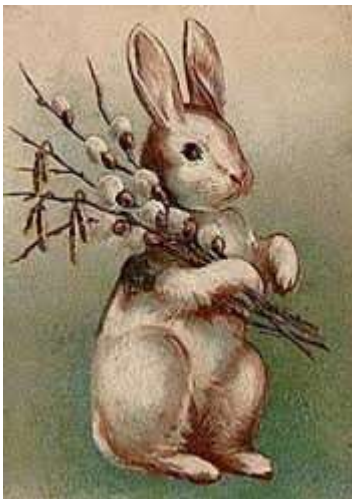
Sharing fellowship in

NEWPORT SE WALES U3A

No.33

Easter Special

1st April 2021



A Happy Easter to all U3A Members and DIT Readers

*A MISCELLANY OF
CONTRIBUTIONS
FROM OUR MEMBERS*

Where are we now?

Undoubtedly we are in a better place than we were just a few weeks ago! We have had a relaxation of restrictions which will mean that we are able to meet up with more people, though still outdoors of course, but with the added bonus of longer days and, hopefully better weather, this is going to cheer us up considerably. I played for a wedding last Saturday – the first church service I have been involved in musically for over a year, and only the second service (the first a funeral last July) that I have attended in that time. Yes, on both occasions things were very different from “normal”, but at least it felt like some progress is being made. Your Committee will be meeting shortly after the Easter weekend to further plans for our U3A for the summer and as soon as we can let you know what is proposed I will ensure that an email is sent as usual.

Some of our Craft Group members have been meeting via Zoom and were invited to join a project initiated by a group known as Prosecco and Purls. To mark the anniversary of lockdown, they decorated the railings and other street furniture around the Town Hall in Caerleon, with knitted hearts. Pat Fackrell was our liaison member with the group and she has kindly supplied photographs which she took of some of the display.



And now for a photograph of probably the daftest sign of the times! Mike and Angela ordered a single packet of seeds, one that would have fitted into an ordinary envelope. This is what was used for the delivery!



Walter by Ian Lumley

I should have known better than to smile at Rachel when she lifted me up that very first time. But what else would you have done? I knew that they were looking for one of our family to take home with them, and I also knew from what Mum had said already, that staying with my two brothers and Samantha, my older sister was a practical impossibility. She'd said in that voice that we all knew would brook no questions 'Your Dad isn't here anymore, you know that. How can you expect me to look after you all, never mind feed you properly. You'll just have to make the best of it, I've done all I can to give you a good start in life.'

Peter, my younger brother, had already left the family - taken away when the last two people had come calling to see who they might like. They seemed to be quite a nice couple, and he hadn't even turned around to wave goodbye. I cried myself to sleep that night, knowing that I might be the next one to leave. Samantha said not to worry, but I did, wouldn't you have?

When I saw Rachel pull out the cheque book, I knew what was about to take place. They agreed that I could stay with Rachel and her husband for a couple of days 'to see if it worked out'. Mum heaved a sigh that was clearly more in relief, than pleasure, although I'm sure the money would help to ease her pain. It didn't ease mine though. Rachel said as she carried me out to their car, that I would like being with them. They'd had a baby from here before and so they knew how to bring us up properly. I hoped she was right.

Their house was big enough I thought, as we drove through the gates a little later. There would be plenty of room for me to play in the garden without going out onto the road beyond. That at least would be good. Mum had never had the time to take us out much, and it would be so nice to be able to run around a little without feeling that she was always ready to shout at us to come in. I was more than a little surprised at the size of the bed she put me in on that first night. There was so much room in it, I could turn around – twice – without touching the sides! Rachel had laughed as I tried to make myself comfortable, and said the last baby they had was much bigger than me. She said she had washed the bed to get rid of as much of the smell as she could, but it didn't seem as if she had done it very well.

Rachel took me outside to the back garden the very next morning. It was a lovely day, but she kept talking about someone called Bill. I didn't know who he was. It took me quite a while to realise that she was calling me Bill! I tried to tell her that my name was Walter, but she wouldn't listen. Eventually I just gave up and smiled to her whenever she shouted Bill. That seemed to please her, although it didn't make me very happy. I liked being a Walter. It showed a bit of class, I always thought. Maybe she'll realise the mistake she has made – sometime soon, I hope.

When we were each having a drink later in the morning, Rachel said that I had to have a couple of injections to make sure I was properly Nimunised or something like that. I didn't know what that meant, but I could see that I wouldn't be able to do much about it. I cried as we got into the car and again when I was given the injections. The sweet I was given to keep me quiet wasn't very nice either.

When Tom – that's Rachel's husband - got home from work later, he lifted me up and smiled at me. He threw me into the air and then caught me. He was lucky I hadn't eaten recently or else I might have been sick all over him. I don't think he would have been very pleased at that! When we were all watching television later, they had an argument about whose knee I should be on. Rachel said that they shouldn't start with something like that, that I should lie in my own little bed at night, but Tom said I was only a baby, so what did it matter? Tom won the argument, but then he didn't like the fact that I couldn't get comfortable. He had VERY bony knees. He eventually handed me back to Rachel and it was much more comfortable there. Tom sulked for the rest of the night. I'm going to avoid that in future as much as I can.

The next morning, I realised that this was going to be a permanent arrangement after all, when Rachel said we would go and get a proper collar made with my name on it. I suppose I'm going to be 'Bill' after all.

Do You Know Your Operettas and Musicals?

1. In which operetta does the famous Can-Can appear and who composed it?
2. "Vilja" is an aria from which operetta? By whom was it composed?
3. Queen Elizabeth (the first!) is a character in which operetta?
4. The most famous English operettas were the products of Gilbert and Sullivan. How many did they write? Was it 11, 14 or 21?
5. Who has "got a little list" in the most famous of their works, and what was his occupation?
6. In which operetta does the song "Good Bye" appear?
7. Which is the longest-running musical on Broadway?
8. Which musical features the song "Skimbleshanks"?
9. "This nearly was mine" is a song from which musical?
10. Jean Valjean, Fantine and Javert are characters from which musical?
11. The Jets and the Sharks battle in which Broadway adaptation of "Romeo and Juliet"?
12. In which rock musical, with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyrics by Richard Stilgoe, do the actors perform the entire show on roller skates?
13. What classic musical features a girl named Kim who falls in love with a soldier?
14. What year did "The Phantom of the Opera" first entertain musical fans?
15. The lyrics, "You are sixteen, going on seventeen" are from which musical?
16. What group's music is featured in "Mamma Mia!"?
17. Which musical opens with a weather forecast, what is the name of the character who sings it and what is its title?
18. "If I Were a Rich Man"? is from which musical?
19. Which show about Danny and Sandy was made into a film with John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John?
20. 'I Could Have Danced All Night', 'The Rain in Spain' and 'Get Me to the Church on Time', are all songs from which musical?

Answers are on page 7

Dave Woolven on Old Age (not that he is old, of course!)

"When I was young, the Dead Sea was still alive".

"Old? She is approaching middle age for the third time".

"Old? His toupee turned grey".

"Her birthday cake has so many candles on it she was fined for air pollution".

"You know you're ancient when you can remember a time when errors were blamed on human beings rather than computers".

I KNOW I am getting old – the bride whose wedding I played at last Saturday (see page 2) is the daughter of a couple whose wedding I played for in 1984!!! (SJB)

Winter in Berlin by Barbara Phillips

As the snow flies, on a cold and grey Berliner morning, another baby child is born out in Gatow ...
(With apologies to Messrs Presley et al) Gatow was the RAF base.

The last few weeks of cold and snow have reminded me of the winters I spent in Berlin. Of course I was much younger then, but I remain surprised that the UK is always taken aback when it snows in January and February; yes OK sometimes even after Easter, but that was remarkable. I recall being at a Cricket Match in Cardiff (a rare occasion in itself and so deserving the capital letters) when it snowed!

Being in the middle of a large land mass, the air was very crisp and dry, not the soggy stuff we get in the UK. On the plus side, winters were very pretty, the snow didn't turn to dirty grey slush; on the minus, the static electricity from, for instance, shaking a duvet or grabbing hold of a shopping trolley was pretty impressive. You can imagine the fright when you pick up a kettle, not plugged in mark you, and still get "bitten". Hair raising really doesn't cover it!

I have attached a map, borrowed from Via Michelin. Some of the street names have changed since I was there so I have added a couple of comments to pinpoint important places, my house for instance ... I've also changed the names of the few people mentioned. Well, you never know ...

Our first winter started in November, almost when we arrived. New neighbours offered to show us about and collected us from the transit hotel at Edinburgh House to show us some of the sights. My first experiment with the local culture was a Curry Wurst from a street vendor. Let's just say I missed the next couple of days and haven't eaten a takeaway hot dog since!

I was lucky enough to get a job as a shampoo girl in the NAAFI hairdresser next to Edinburgh House, which was great fun. There were three stylists, two local girls Gerda and Anna and a New Zealander called Wayne. He got very emotional when it snowed on Christmas Eve – first time he'd ever seen snow, let alone at Christmas. He was great fun, wore very tight trousers and his clients had great difficulty putting tips in his trouser pockets. He had a boxer dog called Helga and one famous day he actually split his trousers when bending down to put on her collar and lead. Not that the NAAFI was status conscious, but Wayne had clients, Gerda and Anna had customers. I worked for the girls but was available to fetch anything for anyone from the shops, including the NAAFI next door. In retrospect, as they were not UK citizens, it must have been black market, but who knows? And who cares, 50+ years later?

Summer was long and hot, as they probably all were at that age. I can't say I noticed any travel restrictions, despite The Wall and obvious care that was needed. And if you got the wander lust, you could always catch the daily train out to Western Germany. That was educational – I'd seen things like that in war films but this was the real thing. There were a couple of stops for engine changes but we were "advised" not to disembark the train under any circumstances. The train had to run every day, 365 days a year, through the Corridor to keep it open. I did get an almighty fright one morning. I used to ride out on one of the army horses several times a week. The Grunewald was (and probably still is) a huge forest, sandy soil and great to just meander through, some fallen trees to jump over and, very important, some steep sandy slopes to gallop the horse up if she doesn't respond to the brakes. As always never a good idea to ride out alone, and of course this is pre-mobile phones. I was wandering through the wood, enjoying the morning sunshine, and I noticed a clearing I hadn't found before. The forest was used as a military training ground, particularly for tanks, ours, French and American, so there were some gaps to accommodate them, turning circles, parking areas etc. This however was different. No trees for hundreds of yards in any direction, no shrubs, no nothing. Just barren ground ... and in the distance a 20' wire fence with two guard posts. Ooops! I had obviously gone too far, in more ways than one, and ended up at the border.

I turned the horse around and we went back a lot faster than we came out, I had to trust the mare to know her way home as I was totally lost.

After November, the stables moved indoors, and very sensibly everything equestrian moved indoors with it.

Meanwhile I changed jobs and started work for the British Military Government in offices at the old Olympic Stadium buildings. My boss was involved in all sorts of meetings with the other Powers, particularly where Rudolf Hess was concerned. If you remember, that gentleman was guarded in turn by all four powers but when he got sick it usually happened under British care so he went in to the British Military Hospital which was opposite our house. Of course, we noticed an increase in traffic and military presence but otherwise kept our heads down. My biggest disappointment was with the boss's American counterpart. Now you must remember I was only 18 ... The voice over the phone sounded like a young Randolph Scott, slow spoken southern accent, 6' tall in hand-decorated cowboy boots. When he came to the office, he was about 5'2, fiftyish, not a lot of hair, and wearing a rumpled suit. Talk about a let down! The biggest fright I had in work was when one of the local police turned up for a meeting. He introduced himself very correctly, clicked his heels together and announced that he was *Geheime Staatspolizei*, (usually abbreviated to Gestapo). Leather raincoat, slouch hat, round metal rimmed glasses – Herr Flick without the sense of humour. I smiled sweetly and kept well out of his way.

The year moved on, and November brought absquatulous fogs. I was in the habit of walking to work, and usually got there on auto-pilot. One morning I was ambling along, my mind in as much of a fog as my surroundings, when I heard a deep rumbling somewhere behind me. I turned around, as you do, but couldn't see more than 20 feet. The pavement was easy to follow and I headed for the safety of my office building with its military guards etc. The rumbling got louder and louder, with added clanking now for good measure. Whatever it was, it was going faster than I was and I was worried that whatever was coming up behind me wasn't going to see me and I was liable to get squished. Then I saw a vague, misty light behind me, creeping slowly, so slowly along the road. It wasn't Hallowe'en so I was pretty worried by now. We had been warned when we moved to Berlin that we were dispensable, so if "the unthinkable" happened there would be no rescue, could be no rescue. All this went through my mind as the noise came closer. When it got as close as I could bear, I nipped into someone's gateway to watch without being seen ... and watched as half a dozen tanks rumbled by. Ours, thank Heaven. Heads popped out of the vehicles, arms waved and various calls of "Wotcher darlin". They were taking over the guard on the Olympic Stadium buildings, which housed different army regiments as well as various diplomats and likes of me. The cavalry I was hoping to save me were the ones who gave me the fright in the first place!

December came and went with terrific frosts (0° F, approx. -32°C) so when you walked outside, sensibly muffled in gloves and scarf, the condensation drifted upwards and froze your eyelashes together ... The policemen on point duty did very well at Christmas. It was, and probably still is, illegal to cross against the little red man, or jay-walk, so you made friends with your crossing point policeman. Their regular "customers" brought them little gifts, often bottles, and put them in and around their podium in the middle of the road. All beautifully gift-wrapped. The humungous roundabout outside the NAAFI was particularly busy, with a zebra crossing one side, and Gunter on duty the other. Traffic that was supposed to go behind you on a crossing made sure to stop at Gunter's station. There was a lot of building work going on, scaffolding and cranes everywhere; each crane had its own Christmas tree lit up, higher scaffold corners too. It was magical. No wonder Wayne got emotional.

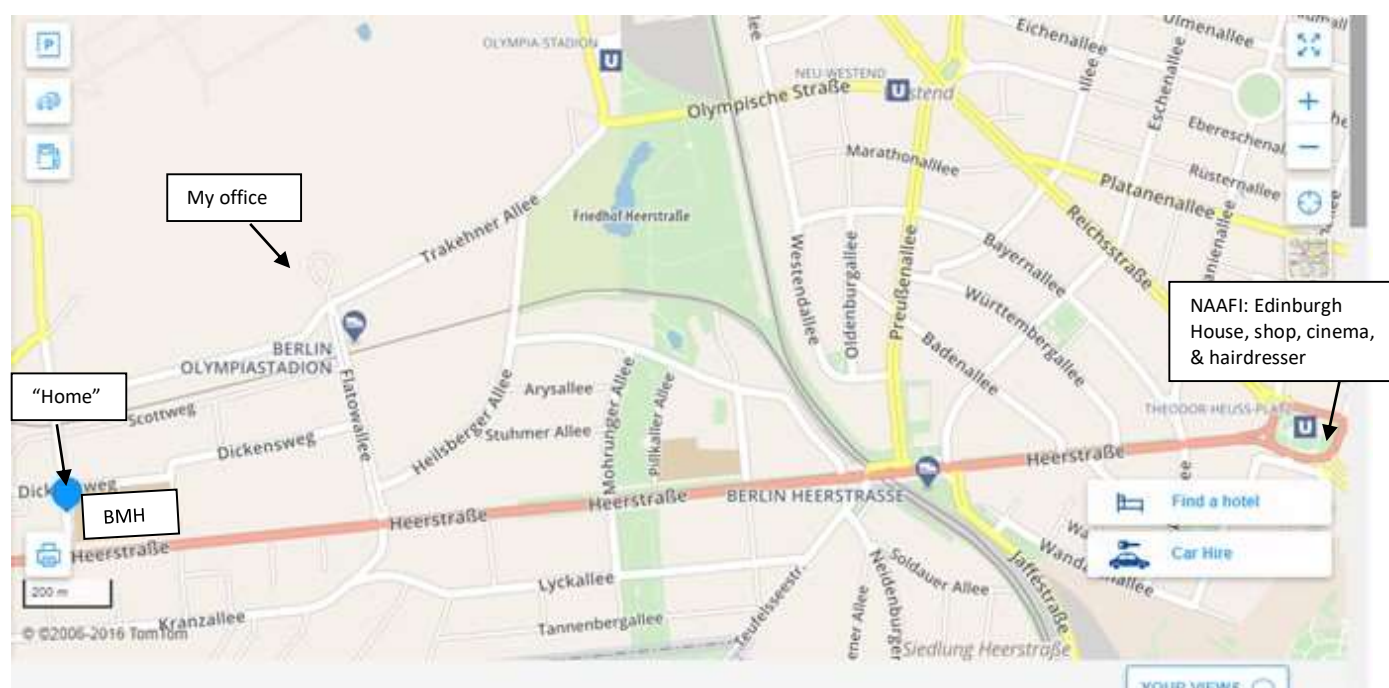
Snow? Of course it snowed, it was winter. "Snowflakes that stayed on my nose and eyelashes" and refused to melt into grey slush. Wonderland, indeed. As I said before, I usually walked to work, easily done as the local council provided snow ploughs not just for the roads but also for the pavements. Yes it got a bit slippery at times but with care and a spirit of adventure ... much more fun than getting a lift. Except when

the ploughs turned up in the “wrong” order. One morning I was making my way along after the pavement plough, who was throwing a plume of snow off behind him, to the edge of the road. This left the pavement clear and dry, safe to walk on, and crossed the road to the pavement opposite, just where I needed to go. Unfortunately, he was closely followed by the road-size plough with a big scraper that pushed all the snow to the opposite side (my side!) and blocked up the exit the little pavement machine had left. Impossible to go around and dangerous, not to mention undignified, to scramble over. Climbing Everest had nothing on me trying to clamber over an 8’ frozen snow-drift! In a way it was lucky no one saw me. But I had no choice, it was that or stay on the pavement until Spring.

Spring usually arrived mid to late March. We built a snowman on the patio Christmas Eve that year, put a paper hat on his head. He was still there at Easter! The hat was a bit faded but still obviously red ...

They were happy days; I was privileged although I didn’t realise it at the time. Yes, despite being “dispensable”! As a British citizen I could shop in the NAAFI, or in the wonderful shops on the Ku’damm; also I didn’t pay German tax on my salary but being locally employed I didn’t pay UK tax either, and this was in the late 1960s so my £12 a week went a very long way.

Would I go back? What a question. Part of me says YES as it was a beautiful city, but then part of me says NO as now the Wall has gone it won’t be the same. The winters will still sparkle and glow like fairyland, but some of the magic will have gone. Ask me again when travel restrictions are lifted.



Operettas and Musicals Quiz (page 4) – Answers

1. Orpheus in the Underworld; Offenbach
2. The Merry Widow; Lehár
3. Merrie England
4. 14
5. Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner
6. The White Horse Inn
7. The Phantom of the Opera
8. Cats
9. South Pacific
10. Les Misérables
11. West Side Story
12. Starlight Express
13. Miss Saigon
14. 1986
15. The Sound of Music
16. ABBA
17. Oklahoma! Curly McLain sings “Oh what a beautiful morning”
18. Fiddler on the Roof
19. Grease
20. My Fair Lady

The Strange Story of James Leiniger by Rob Wilkinson

If you had said to me, do you believe in reincarnation, I would have said “no”. But the account of James Leiniger’s life certainly makes you think.

He was born just over 20 years ago and lived mainly in the Southern USA. His parents were Andrea and Bruce, neither of whom had any connections with the military or aircraft history. Until he was about two, James seemed to be perfectly normal, but from then on he suffered serious nightmares and frequently could not sleep. When his parents asked him what was wrong, he said his plane was on fire and was going to crash into the sea. He also showed amazing knowledge of aeroplanes from the Second World War period, stated that he flew a Corsair and corrected his mother when she said an aeroplane was carrying a bomb when in fact it was a “drop box” or extra fuel tank. When asked who had shot down his plane, he said “The Japanese, of course” and was able to say where the plane had come down. He said that his plane normally took off from an aircraft carrier called the Natoba, which was later proved to be correct.

Bruce Leiniger could not understand how his son was coming up with all these details at a very young age, but the psychologist who was seeing James encouraged the parents to let James draw and talk about the issues as much as he needed to. It was striking that James always signed his pictures “James 3” and explained it by saying that he was the third James from one family. The Leinigers decided to investigate further and much to their amazement found that a pilot killed at Iwo Jima in 1945 had been called James Huston Junior, making him the second James and James Leiniger the third. Eventually the Leinigers were able to contact the Huston family who confirmed that the young boy knew some very specific details, known only within the family itself. Bruce and Andrea were further confounded when they asked their son to name a friend he had in the Airforce and he named Jack Larson; after much searching, they discovered Larson still alive and able to confirm other details that James 3 gave.

With the help of the psychologist and by talking openly about the incredible situation, James’ night terrors began to alleviate. They stopped totally when the Leiniger family travelled to Japan and paid their respects to James Huston in a short ceremony at sea. Many books, videos and TV programmes have been made about the Leiniger experience. The parents wrote a book called “Soul Survivor” which came out in 2009 and I think there is a “Wonders of the World” video on YouTube which lasts about 10 minutes, as well as some sceptical comments by people who believe the parents made up most of the details. If you put “James Leiniger, reincarnation” into your search-bar, you will find a number of references coming up, which will allow you to make up your own mind after reading all the details - it’s a fascinating story.

Desert Island Times

It is my intention to reduce issues of Desert Island Times to one per month for the foreseeable future. This is largely because, with the finer weather (hopefully!) on its way and the relaxation on movement, I am sure that the level of contributions is likely to fall off somewhat.

What I propose is to issue each monthly edition in the last week of the month (unless I am prevented from doing so because I am away from home – I can but hope!) and, to assist with the planning, it would be very helpful if contributors could please send items to me:

- At my personal email address (stephenberry249@gmail.com).
- By the 21st of the month, though this can be extended if necessary and you let me know in advance.
- For articles, paragraphs etc in Word or similar format so that it can be ‘lifted’ easily.

Obviously, if we go back into a lockdown, or circumstances alter adversely, I will reassess and adjust the frequency accordingly.

THE JOYS OF THE STRING QUARTET part 2 by Neil Pritchard

Dvořák was of course best known for his New World Symphony, with its famous slow movement theme which is acknowledged as one of the most often heard and recognisable pieces of classical music. But he composed a lot more besides this symphony, including 14 string quartets, the most famous one of which is "The American". Antonin Dvořák was born on 8 September 1841 in a small village north of Prague. He was the eldest of 14 children. His father was a professional zither player, an innkeeper and a butcher and he and his wife made sure that folk music accompanied every family occasion, and young Dvořák soon joined his father in the local band, at the same time serving as an apprentice butcher. The youthful Dvořák studied organ, violin, piano and - less successfully - the German language. He also played viola in the Bohemian Provisional Theatre Orchestra, performing in restaurants and at balls. In 1871, he resigned from the orchestra to concentrate on composing, scraping a living at first and finding it difficult to make ends meet. In 1873 Dvořák married Anna Čermáková, after courting and being turned down by her sister, Josefina. He and his wife had nine children in total – six survived infancy. After his marriage, he left the orchestra to be a church organist which guaranteed better income, greater social status and more time to compose. Dvořák's first composing efforts received no critical reception or public performance, and the self-critical composer even burned some of his early works. But his music did begin to attract the interest of the critic Eduard Hanslick and the composer Johannes Brahms, who gave Dvořák's career a boost.

In 1877, on Brahms' recommendation, the publisher Simrock commissioned Dvořák to write some Slavonic Dances for piano duet. Aimed at the lucrative domestic market, the sheet music for the eight dances sold out in one day. As a result his fame spread, and his music became very popular throughout Europe, and particularly in Britain. He visited this country nine times and some of his major works received their world premieres in Birmingham, London and Leeds. In that same year he made his first visit to the US. It was the lure of an amazing fee that persuaded Dvořák to travel to New York for some teaching and conducting. He ended up spending a four month vacation over there and he was promised the unimaginable salary of 15,000 dollars - 25 times what he was paid in Prague, and worth about £500,000 in today's terms. During his time in America, Dvořák produced three of his most famous works - the String Quartet No.12, known as the 'American', the Cello Concerto in B minor, and the 'New World' Symphony. The String Quartet No. 12 in F major, Op. 96, nicknamed the American Quartet, was the 12th string quartet composed by him. It was written in 1893 and is one of the most popular quartets in the chamber music repertoire. This performance, by an excellent American quartet, attracted my attention in the way they use the great outdoors to give the music an American feel. So now for something completely different:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbp8ymzMzUw>

As you can hear from the pieces I've chosen the string quartet had come a long way from the days of Haydn, and it was now going to move into a new period with the advent of the last years of the 19th century. This turned out to be a "musical fork in the road", as composers moved away from romanticism and developed new ways of expressing themselves in the quartet form. That's not to say they completely rejected the past, they built on it, and in doing so produced some remarkable works. Debussy is a case in question. With early influences including Russian and Far Eastern music, Debussy developed his own style of harmony and orchestral colouring, derided by much of the musical establishment of the day. Achille-Claude Debussy was born on August 22, 1862, in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France. He was the eldest of the five children of Manuel-Achille Debussy and his wife, Victorine. Debussy senior ran a china shop and his wife was a seamstress, they had no musical background. The shop was unsuccessful and closed in 1864; the family moved to Paris, first living with Victorine's mother, and from 1868 in their own apartment. Manuel went to work in a printing factory. Debussy showed an early love for the piano, and he began taking lessons at the age of 7. By age 11, he'd entered the Paris Conservatory, where his instructors and fellow students recognised his talent but often found his attempts at musical innovation strange. In 1880, Nadezhda von Meck, who had previously supported Russian composer Tchaikovsky, hired Debussy to teach piano to her children. With her and the children, Debussy travelled around Europe and they began

taking in musical and cultural experiences, in particular in Russia. Most notably he gained contact with Russian composers who would greatly influence his work.

In 1884, when he was just 22 years old, Debussy entered his cantata *The Prodigal Child* in the Prix de Rome, a competition for composers. He took home the top prize, which allowed him to study for three years in the Italian capital, though he returned to Paris after two years. While in Rome, he studied the music of Wagner, specifically his opera *Tristan and Isolde*. Wagner's influence on Debussy was profound and lasting, but despite this, Debussy generally shied away from the ostentation of Wagner's opera in his own works. Debussy returned to Paris in 1887 and attended the Paris World Exposition two years later. There he heard a Javanese gamelan—a musical ensemble composed of a variety of bells, gongs and xylophones, sometimes accompanied by vocals—and the subsequent years found Debussy incorporating the elements of the gamelan into his existing style, to produce a wholly new kind of sound. The music written during this period came to represent the composer's early masterpieces: *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*; completed in 1892 and the *String Quartet* in 1893. A radical new kind of music emerged in Claude Debussy's *String Quartet*. It broke all of the rules in terms of harmony and form, opening the door for Debussy's later Impressionist sound world, and it had a profound effect on twentieth century music. Debussy's *Quartet* blends the influence of Gabriel Faure and Cesar Franck with the exotic sounds of the Javanese gamelan. The colour and the texture of the music become as important as melody, as the music floats through a surreal dream world. Not surprisingly, when the Ysaÿe Quartet gave the premiere at Paris' Société Nationale on December 29 1893 much of the audience was bewildered. The criticism of the academic establishment was harsh, and even the composer Ernest Chausson, for whom the work was originally to be dedicated, had reservations. In many musical quarters Debussy's music was too far ahead of its time, but in the years to come audiences embraced it as a new and exciting departure from the past. This is one of my favourite quartets, I particularly like the final movement played by the Danish Quartet:

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

To quote from the comments: The Danish string quartet rocks! There were two leading composers for the string quartet in the 20th century: the Hungarian Bela Bartok who composed 6 quartets, and the Russian Dmitri Shostakovich with 15. It was difficult to choose which one to include, but I've chosen Shostakovich to include in this quartet journey. I believe his quartets had something new to say and were a match for the classical and romantic quartets I've referred to. Some people view his music as grim and depressing, not perhaps the music that you turn to for comfort and joy when you're living through our present times. But hang on a minute, if you'd lived through the Soviet reign of terror and you fancied yourself as a composer, you might have a tendency to reflect the surrounding gloom in your music. However what's remarkable about Shostakovich, is that he wrote a hell of a lot of fun-filled music such as a hilarious version of "Tea for Two", two Jazz Suites, a Musical and even in chamber music and symphonies he couldn't resist the temptation, at times, to let it rip with mirth and merriment to surprise the listener. He was a musical "Jack of all Trades" and a master of all. I find that his works grab your attention from the word go, drawing you into his ear-catching music and never failing to surprise. Dmitri Shostakovich is considered to be one of the most important composers of the 20th century. He was born on September 25, 1906, in Saint Petersburg, Russia, and died on August 9, 1975 in Moscow, at the age of 68 from lung cancer. Shostakovich had a less than ideal life. His career was marred by the terrifying situation he had to suffer due to Stalin and the Communist Party's rule of Russia from 1923 to 1953. During that period there were harsh restrictions on the creation of art and he witnessed family members, friends and colleagues being arrested and sent to the Gulag Concentration Camps.

Throughout much of Shostakovich's life, there was a constant tension between his desire to create more contemporary music and Stalin's push for more traditional music that he believed to be more compatible with his communist political beliefs and ideologies. One such conflict centred around Shostakovich's opera "Lady Macbeth," which received great reviews from audiences until Stalin went to see the opera. The next day after Stalin's viewing, an editorial was published by Pravda entitled "Muddle Instead of Music" and describing the opera as "course, primitive, and vulgar". This put Shostakovich in a precarious position

since, without Stalin's approval, his next piece could be his last. In fact, performers decided to cancel the performance of his 4th symphony because they believed it would result in either his death or theirs. As a result of this intense campaign against Shostakovich, his 4th symphony was not performed for 25 years — after Stalin's death. Fortunately, his 5th symphony was performed instead a few months later and was well received by audiences and Stalin. However, these continued attacks against his work led to a significant reduction in his sponsorships and his ability to support himself with his music. In 1960, Shostakovich finally conceded and reluctantly joined the Communist Party which allowed him to resume teaching at the Leningrad Conservatory and freed some of his works from exile to be performed again, including the 4th symphony and Lady Macbeth. Shostakovich composed his 8th string quartet in only three days from July 12th - 14th in 1960. Though his 8th string quartet was officially titled "In Memory of the Victims of Fascism and War," the sombre composition is recognisably autobiographical. The 3rd and 4th movement is played by four talented musicians from the Norwegian Academy of Music:

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

It's time to look at what's been happening, string quartet wise, in recent years. One area, that's new, is the bringing together of Jazz and Popular music with the traditional world of classical music: Crossover Music. I had a pleasant surprise when I explored the music that's out there for Jazz String Quartet - there's a lot of it about, and it's well worth listening to. One of the foremost musicians to have popularised the crossover trend is Mads Tolling an internationally renowned violinist and composer. (Mads is apparently a Scandinavian form of Matthew). Born in 1980 and raised in Copenhagen, Tolling relocated to the United States to study at Berklee College of Music where he graduated in 2003. After graduating he received Denmark's Sankt Annae's Award for Musical Excellence as well as grants from Queen Margrethe of Denmark. Since graduating he has toured worldwide with the Stanley Clarke band and Turtle Island Quartet. To date Tolling has spent most of his professional life touring internationally. His latest album is called "Mads Tolling & The Mads Men – Playing the 60s," which features classic songs from TV, film and radio in fresh jazzy versions with guest vocalists. For nine years in the Turtle Island Quartet he spent most of his time on the road or in the recording studio. In 2007 Tolling started his own trio and in the following year the trio expanded it to a quartet. Today, 14 years later, the quartet is still going strong, and the Mads Tolling Quartet has performed all over the U.S.

Besides his activities as a performer, Mads Tolling is an accomplished composer. In addition to his original writing on his albums, he's arranged one of his compositions for saxophonist Joe Lovano and string orchestra. He has additionally contributed numerous arrangements and compositions to the Turtle Island Quartet's repertoire. In 2014 Tolling was commissioned to write a Violin Concerto for Oakland Symphony Orchestra. The highly anticipated performance took place at the 3000 seat Paramount Theatre, Oakland, San Francisco, in 2015. The piece and the performance turned out to be an overwhelming success, and Tolling received high praise from the orchestra, critics and audience alike. Since then, he has been involved in the educational aspects of jazz and improvisation, and has been active running workshops, coaching, and giving master classes throughout Canada and the U.S. In the last two years, Tolling has been teaching at Berkeley Jazz School Institute, mainly focusing on spreading the knowledge of jazz and groove-oriented styles to string players of all ages. He has had to resort to virtual teaching during this last year but has done so in an inspiring and creative way to overcome the lack of face-to-face contact. Chick Corea the famous jazz pianist commented in 2010 that Tolling was "A wonderful new voice on the violin - very refreshing!" Let's catch him in fine form in this recording:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9vJUecPqA4>

To end with I'm going to present you with another example of the best in Crossover music, where a well-known pop song can be offered in a new form. Hailed as "the young American string quartet of the moment," the Dover Quartet catapulted to international stardom in 2013, following a stunning sweep of all prizes at the Banff International String Quartet Competition, and has since become one of the most in-demand ensembles in the world. Amongst a string of other awards the Dover Quartet has also won top prizes at the Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition. The quartet's first volume of the

complete Beethoven string quartet cycle, which focuses on the composer’s Op. 18 quartets, was released by Cedille Records on 11th September 2020. Cedille Records also released the Dover Quartet’s Voices of Defiance: 1943, 1944, 1945 in October 2017; and an all-Mozart debut recording in the 2016–17 season. Voices of Defiance, which explores works written during World War II by Viktor Ullman, Dmitri Shostakovich, and Simon Laks, was lauded upon its release as “undoubtedly one of the most compelling discs released this year.”

The Dover Quartet is the Ensemble in Residence at Curtis Institute of Music, a private conservatory in Philadelphia. Their residency integrated teaching and mentorship with cutting-edge digital presentation. This has proved particularly necessary in the last year as their planned concerts have been cancelled due to the pandemic. With this residency, Curtis has been able to maintain a top professional string quartet on its faculty, while providing resources for the ensemble to experiment with new technologies and engage audiences through digital means. Working closely with students in the String Quartet Program, the resident ensemble is recruiting the most promising young string quartets and fostering their development in order to nurture a new generation of leading professional chamber ensembles. In the spirit of reaching out to new audiences, the Dover Quartet is dedicated to sharing its music with under-served communities, and is actively involved with Music for Food, an initiative enabling musicians to raise resources and awareness in the fight against hunger. It's interesting to note that as well as developing new routes for classical quartets to reach out to non-classical audiences, many quartets are using modern technology to great effect in helping to bridge the divide with music from the classical to the Crossover field. In the following example I'm including them playing their version of Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody with two other musicians (piano and cello). There is a bright future ahead for string quartets as they maintain their allegiance to classical music, including new works from contemporary composers. But also because many are reaching out to new audiences in both the traditional and the Crossover scene giving the form a new lease of life. This is a first-class example of Crossover. Let's welcome the Dover Quartet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1nGx4DX83U>

Wordsearch 1 – Barbara Phillips

Can you find the 13 words associated with KNOTS in the grid below?

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

L	S	G	B	D	K	W	N	D
O	K	P	I	N	R	A	E	H
O	N	I	L	A	E	O	I	L
P	A	E	N	I	W	T	C	G
N	H	C	R	O	C	H	E	T
S	S	O	T	H	S	E	G	D
T	P	E	C	A	A	N	D	I
E	E	R	A	T	I	E	I	A
N	E	S	E	R	L	R	O	R
L	H	T	T	A	O	B	A	B
R	S	S	I	E	R	N	S	L

Answers are on page 27

British Prime Ministers - David Lloyd George, The Great Outsider (part 1) by Gerald Lee

Lloyd George is the only Welshman and the only solicitor to become a Prime Minister. In a national poll he was rated second to Churchill in Great Britons. Personally, I would rate him at least equal, if not higher than Churchill. He achieved much and could have achieved more had he not found himself a man without a party, distrusted by other party leaders, dreaming that a failure of the system might bring him back to power.

Paradoxically, he was not born in Wales, but in Chorlton Medlock, near Manchester, on 17 January 1863. At his birth, the midwife predicted he will be able to earn his living in two countries. His father was a schoolteacher. Due to bad health he returned to Wales to farm in Bwlford, near Haverfordwest. His father died, aged 44, on 7 June 1864. The newly widowed Betsy sent a telegram to her brother Richard Lloyd, 'Tyrd, Richard.' He was shoemaker in the village of Llanstumdwy and like his father, the leader of the local non-conformist Church, the Disciples of Christ. It was his first night away from home. He walked twenty miles to catch a train to Haverfordwest and together they brought the family to live with him.

From an early age David was exceptional. His brother once asked him when he first realized he was a genius. He replied that other boys climbed trees, but he was the only one who took a copy of Euclid and began to study it. His uncle's home was full of books. He read avidly. His hero was Abraham Lincoln.

From an early age he was a rebel against the landlord interest. Before the Secret Ballot Act of 1872 came into law, he remembered tenants being evicted for voting Liberal. As a child he persuaded the other pupils to refuse to recite the Anglican Creed. The strike was broken by his younger brother William, who led the others to recite, 'I believe in God.'

At twelve he was baptised by his uncle Lloyd. Unlike his brother and his sisters his uncle allowed him to adopt the name Lloyd George. He confided to his uncle he had little religious belief. Although he described himself as 'a pagan,' he would walk miles to hear a rousing non-conformist preacher and sing Welsh hymns with emotion and vigour.

His ambition was to become a lawyer. Like the young Margaret Thatcher with the help of a teacher he crammed enough Latin to pass the entrance examination. David and his uncle Lloyd learned French together from a copy of Aesop's Fables. He became an articled clerk to a local firm with Liberal connections, Breese, Jones and Casson. Throughout his life he was beset by nerves, so only passed his examinations at the second attempt with low grades, unlike his younger brother William who passed with distinction. He visited Westminster and decided that was where his destiny lay.

He was disappointed not to become a partner, instead he was offered management of a branch. When his brother also qualified, they established the firm of George and George. He was an able lawyer. They established their reputation on the 'bread and butter' cases of tenant's rights, poaching, and petty crime.

The Llanfrothen burial case established his reputation as a leader of nonconformity. An Anglican clergyman thought he had found a loophole in the act allowing nonconformist burials in Anglican churchyards.

On the advice of Lloyd George, the Roberts family and their friends broke the locks and buried the quarryman Mr Roberts next to his daughter. In court the judge ruled against the family despite the jury supporting the family. On appeal Lloyd George won the case.

In 1888 he became an alderman, the youngest in Wales, a position he held until his death. In the same year he married Maggie Owen. Her family were Methodist property owners, much higher up the social scale. Perhaps too they knew of Lloyd George's reputation as a ladies' man.

In 1890 he had his first chance to stand for parliament in Caernarvon Boroughs, a seat he held for 55 years. It was rumoured a widow was bribed not to disclose Lloyd George was the father of her baby. His son Richard recalls meeting a young man, so close to himself in appearance, that he was convinced it was a secret brother.

He established his name speaking on the great Liberal causes, Licensing, Land Rights, Church Disestablishment and Home Rule. Education was perhaps the biggest issue. There was a consensus that education needed reform if Britain were to compete with Germany, united since the war with France in 1870. The Balfour Education Act was a major and very necessary reform. Lloyd George fought the act clause by clause to protect the interest of Nonconformity. He knew it was an urgent and much needed reform but fought the Nonconformist case to the end. The act established the basis of education in Britain until the Thatcher reforms. Even then he was thinking that all such big issues could be agreed between the parties as much of it was common ground.

Although he said he spoke for small nations, he was also an imperialist at heart. His ideas on the Boer War were 'Home Rule All Round.' He opposed the war, and as with other Tory reforms, he exposed how ministers would gain personal benefit, in this case the Chamberlain family. The public read horrific stories of concentration camps.

When he came to speak to an anti-war meeting in Birmingham, one hundred thousand demonstrators were waiting for him. A policeman and a member of the crowd died. Lloyd George escaped dressed as a policeman. The helmet is on display in the Lloyd George Museum.

Throughout this time, he was gaining a reputation as untrustworthy. He became involved in a highly dubious investment in a gold mine in Patagonia. Then on his return from Argentina he learned he was cited in a divorce case. Dr Edwards claimed Lloyd George was the real father of his daughter. He had an alibi, which has since been questioned, that he was at Westminster at the time. The station-master Edward Wilson admitted an affair with Mrs Edwards, but as the judge remarked, Lloyd George managed to avoid a court appearance.

Maggie lived mostly in Wales. Lloyd George sounds like a spoiled child upbraiding her for not taking better care of him. Another long running affair was with 'Mrs Tim,' wife of a fellow liberal MP, Timothy Davies.

The political tide was turning in favour of the Liberals. Joseph Chamberlain split the Unionists over Tariff Reform. It was a gift to the Liberals who campaigned on cheap food. The 1905 election gave the Liberals a massive majority. Lloyd George could expect a post, at most Home Secretary. He was appointed President of the Board of Trade.

His name is associated with some important reforms, The Merchant Shipping Act, The Patents Act and the creation of the Port of London Authority. He developed a style of negotiation, starting with confrontation and moving towards consolidation. He once said the best time to collect firewood is after a storm. Also, rather new for a government minister, he intervened in disputes as workers became more organised into trade unions.

He was always ready to challenge convention, persuading the Foreign Office to allow commercial attachés to join embassy staff. 'Go anywhere,' he said, 'and the first person you see is a German commercial traveller. They take the trouble to learn the language.'

In 1908 the Liberal PM Henry Campbell-Bannerman was forced to resign due to ill health. He was unable to leave Downing St: he is the only PM to die there. His obvious successor was Asquith, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He considered keeping the Treasury himself as Gladstone had done, but decided instead to offer the post to Lloyd George. The excitement was tinged with sadness. His daughter Mair died after an appendix operation. The promotion was a financial boost. As an MP he did not receive a salary. At the Board of Trade his salary was £2000, but as the equivalent of a Secretary of State his salary was now £5000, plus accommodation at Number 11.

Asquith had prepared a budget speech, which included the introduction of the Old Age Pension. He decided to deliver his budget himself and let Lloyd George take it through the House. His replacement at the Board of Trade was Winston Churchill, of whom Lloyd George said, 'He is a brilliant fellow, without judgment, which is adequate to his fiery impulse.'

He continued his interest in Wales. He held the post of Constable of Carnarvon Castle and presided over the installation of Prince David, later Edward VIII as Prince of Wales. Through his influence a separate Welsh Board of Education was created under Owen M Edwards as Chief Inspector.

As a government the Liberals were strained by financial pressures. Lloyd George as Chancellor had to meet demands for increased naval expenditure and social reforms, the familiar battle between 'guns and butter.' In 1909 his budget caused uproar. He delivered his speech badly, according to Hilaire Belloc the worst he had heard. It lasted over four hours and he was exhausted. His response was it had not been his intention to create 'hwyl.'

He announced new taxes on motoring, licensing and alcohol, increases in death duties and income tax, and a super-tax of incomes over £5000. He also introduced new taxes on land and land transfers, a form of Capital Gains Tax. The landed classes disliked these plans for a register of land.

The aristocracy thought they would be ruined and resigned as patrons of sports clubs. Tempers were high, especially when the House of Lords rejected the budget arguing it was not a true budget. It was the cumulation of Liberal frustration at the blockage of key legislation. The King was forced to request that Asquith restrain the language of ministers, especially Churchill and Lloyd George.

The King was also in an awkward position. The Liberals could seek the creation of enough new peers to block the bill. There were some precedents over Parliamentary Reform Bills. Heirs to Liberal peers could be ennobled early. Lists of possible peers, including the writers E M Barrie and Thomas Hardy, were prepared.

In 1910 two elections were held with similar results, each party on 272 seats. With support from the Irish Party and Labour, the Liberals could retain office, but there would have to be concessions on Home Rule. The Liberals submitted a Parliament Act which restricted the House of Lords to only delay legislation. Irish Home Rule and Welsh Disestablishment were within sight. The Lords conceded, purely on the bluff that the King would have to create new peers and 'dilute the peerage.'

Lloyd George's greatest legislative achievement was the passage of the National Insurance Act, which formed the basis of a contributory welfare state. It was in part administered through Friendly Societies such as Oddfellows and Trade Unions, which gave an unintended boost to union membership and the newly formed Labour Party.

Lloyd George used all his negotiating skills to win over the General Medical Council, even paying them a rate of nine shillings and sixpence, well above the original rate of four shillings. The Unionists did not oppose the act. However, it did not entirely benefit the Liberals politically. Many covered by the act did not have the vote, and there was opposition from many groups at the deductions, including one by

domestic workers with the encouragement of their employers. Lloyd George's catch phrase 'ninepence for fourpence' did not make paying any easier.

At a time of rising tensions with Germany Lloyd George made a rare intervention in foreign affairs. In his Mansion House speech, he gave Germany a veiled threat that Britain did not accept peace at any price.

Lloyd George although he used confrontation in negotiation was always looking for a deal. During the crises over the budget and the parliament act he privately looked for an agreement between the main parties. Perhaps he saw then that Liberalism was in decline all over Europe and he needed to secure a non-socialist alternative. His attitude to Germany was the same. He visited Germany, ostensibly to study their model of social reform and insurance, but he was also looking for an agreement whereby they could coexist and avoid a confrontation.

In his private life there was a major change. Frances Stevenson was a school friend of his daughter. In 1911 a friend took her to the Welsh Baptist Church in Covent Garden to hear Lloyd George preach. Although he spoke entirely in Welsh, she found herself 'in some mysterious drawn into the orbit of his personality.'

She was asked to help translate a book on land reform from French, then she became tutor to Megan. He gave her a gift of a book on the Irish politician Parnell whose career ended in a scandal after an affair with the wife of a fellow MP. In her diary she entered the date 21 January 1913 as the date of 'their marriage.'

His career nearly ended when he was implicated in the Marconi Affair when leading Liberals bought shares in the American Marconi Company at a time when the government was awarding a contract to the British company. He was only saved by the good will of Asquith and the committee of inquiry dividing on party lines. As with his other scrapes, he claimed to have acted 'mistakenly but innocently.'

At the outbreak of war, he extended the August Bank Holiday and introduced paper currency, known as 'Bradburys' after the chief Clerk. In 1915 as a result of the shells crisis Asquith conceded to pressure to form a coalition. Lloyd George accepted the post of Minister of Munitions on condition he could return to the Treasury. One result was the demotion of Churchill to Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, after which he decided to return to active service in the Royal Scots.

The new department started life in a requisitioned hotel without even a carpet and just one table and two chairs. By the end of the war, it comprised 65,000 staff and directed the work of three million. Production of shells increased 34 times and heavy artillery by 94 times. He managed to standardise where possible but had little success in this with the allies.

Industrialists were seconded to the ministry. On machine guns he said, 'Take Kitchener's figure, square it, multiply by two, then double it for good luck.' From 1,330, the army now had nearly a quarter of a million machine guns.

On the death of Kitchener on a trip to Russia, Lloyd George became Minister of War. In one speech he berated the government failures by repeating the phrase 'too late.' Discontent with Asquith was rising. Lloyd George proposed that the war be run by a council of four, headed by him. Asquith felt the loss of power was too much. He resigned expecting to be recalled. The Unionist leaders refused office in favour of Lloyd George, who was now PM.

He is often described as the 'man who won the war.' He led Britain to victory and changed the face of government.

A Day of Reflection by Alan Barrow

Why I am writing to you is for my sake.
I feel the need for a day of reflection.
The 23rd of March this year shows a year long lockdown.
What did I do? What did I like? What did I hate?
What will the next year be like? How has it affected me?

A year ago there was a word that was not in my vocabulary, now it is constantly there.
The word was Zoom.
Now I feel I am a trapped zoomologist.
Yet I persist as an armchair traveller travelling the world.
I have been on an Antarctic Voyage crossing the circle.
I have seen the highlights of Imperial China.

I am a lucky man and have had three tastes of Japan, the cleanest country in the world.
I have seen the magic of Chile, and would you believe it the river Niger and Timbuktu.
I never believed there was a Timbuktu, did you?
Of course I did the course of Renaissance Art and the British Art 1700-1850 had its part.
I saw the Amazing Artemisia and why the Spanish Armada failed.
My apologies for almost forgetting Egyptology.
I liked the Gods and Goddesses, the valley of the Kings and those sort of things,
but I was in quite a fix with hydroglyphics.

I was delighted for a while with pop up poetry but had to leave to try out different paths.
I am what I am, once I knew where I was going and who was going with me.
I can count on one hand how many times I have been out this year, two for injections
one for a repair of a hearing aid, two for haircuts. I find it quite exciting to let my hair grow like a Viking.
I am told I have walked the Sahara desert there and back.
That may be true but the fact is I as a mouse did not leave the house.
I have learnt a lot but mostly to know how much learning I have not got.

I do not like shopping, but now I no longer have to carry my wine
it is better than before for now everything is brought right to my door.
It is loneliness I hate, although my daughters are great, what can I say - they talk to me each day.
It seems absurd that often, even speaking to myself, I cannot find the right word.
I have not driven my car for a year, I think things will remain the same.
I think I will not want to drive again.

But let me say, just for today
I will not worry, just for today
I will not anger, just for today
I am grateful, just for today.
Remember that tomorrow with luck may be just like today.

The Wheel Of Time by Martyn Vaughan

The wheels of the HGV spun as it slowly inched its way up the hillside road. Rain was falling in a sheet of grey misery, making dull rainbows around the vehicle's headlights and turning the road into a glistening river in which those headlights were reflected in ribbons of wavering yellowish light. The driver spun the wheel as the ponderous vehicle came to a turn in the road. He rubbed the back of his hand across his face and felt his coarse facial hairs prick the flesh. *This was where all those accidents had occurred*, he thought to himself. It looked a normal enough road to him. Fifteen years in the business and not so much as a scratch on any vehicle he had driven in all those years; not so much as a dent.

He reached the brow of the hill and slowly descended the other side, the great weight of the steel bars pressing heavily down on the slowly revolving wheels.

The greengrocer's van swept along to the crossroads. *What a day!* The driver thought, *I hope I can get home quick.* As he approached the crossroads he realised that this was where all those accidents had happened. He shrugged. Accidents happen all the time. But not today.

The HGV had been gaining speed imperceptibly with every wheel revolution. The driver automatically applied the brakes; slightly, expertly, with fifteen years of faultless driving behind every small muscle movement. Yet he was worried. The heavily laden vehicle was travelling faster than it should be. He pressed more firmly on the brake pedal. Nothing. He tried again and heard the wheels screech in complaint, but the foot of the hill seemed to rush up to meet him as the massive vehicle hurtled on with ever-increasing speed. This was serious! He turned to the door, unclipping his safety belt as he did so and pulled the door handle. Nothing. It would not open. He turned back to the windscreen just in time to see a small greengrocer's van appear in front of him.

The driver of the van became aware of the scream of tortured brakes a few seconds before he reached the crossroads. Then a huge vehicle seems to leap out of the curtains of swirling rain like a metal predator pouncing on its prey. He jammed on the brakes. Nothing. The glare of the HGV's headlight filled his cabin. Then all was lost in an explosion of noise, the sound of rending and buckling metal. And pain. There was pain.

The two vehicles had met.

The van was tossed as a tangled heap across the road, hurtling over and over in a whirlwind of flying metal shards. The HGV spun around on two wheels, then crashed onto its side as the steel girders broke free from their fastenings and punched their way through the cabin. Then it toppled over and slid for a few metres along the shining road, the still spinning wheels flinging the rain back into the sodden air.

Richard Cross Ph. D. looked up from his glass of Chateau Neuf du Pape as a light shadow fell over him, cast by the warm glow of the log fire which flickered reassuringly in its vast inglenook fireplace. He saw a tall young man standing near him bearing a distinctly haggard expression. The white line of a recently healed scar was displayed sinuously on his left cheek. Cross raised an eyebrow. 'Yes? I don't seem to know you and this is a Members-Only Club.' The young man gave a nervous smile. 'I usually work in the kitchens but this is my day off.' 'And you chose to spend it in your place of employment. That seems a little eccentric.' 'I came in today because I knew this is the day you spend in the club. May I confirm that I have the honour of speaking to Richard Cross—the Psychic Investigator?' Cross placed his glass on the table and waved at the armchair which faced him. 'You have that honour.' He smiled. 'Please sit down. You look as if you're about to fall down.' The young man looked immediately gratified and accepted the offer. As he sat down, he took a quick look at Cross, seeing a confident looking man in his late thirties; lean, angular, grey-eyed, bearing a clipped moustache and with raven-black hair showing the slightest hint of recession at the temples. He suddenly realised that he must have been staring, as Cross leaned back, placed his fingers together, tip to tip, and said, 'Well, what can I do for you? And before you enlighten me, may I enquire as to your identity?' 'I'm Ralph Thomas, sous-chef here.' 'Indeed. I'm sure I must have enjoyed many of your

dishes. My compliments to the sous-chef. But what can I do for you—in return, so to speak?’ Thomas looked hesitant for a few moments as if unsure of what he was about to say. ‘I was cut-up pretty badly in an RTA some months back. On the Marlton crossroads. Do you know of the place and its history?’

Cross stroked his moustache absent-mindedly. It was a habit of his of which he was unaware. He tended to do it when the conversation was not of any interest. ‘I believe it’s an accident blackspot,’ he said after a long pause, ‘Quite a few bangs there I believe.’ ‘Twenty-eight *bangs*,’ the younger man said, bristling slightly at Cross’ obvious boredom, ‘Ever since they built that new road. Twenty-eight *bad* bangs. Each one involving two fatalities.’ ‘That’s very unfortunate. But I still don’t understand why you’re telling me this instead of the Local Authority.’ ‘Mr Cross, investigations show that every one of the vehicles involved was in perfect condition, and from witness evidence it is clear that there were no obvious driver errors. The vehicles involved appeared to accelerate towards each other. On several occasions, the drivers were seen trying to escape from their vehicles, as if they had lost all control.’ ‘I still don’t understand why you have interrupted my post prandial reverie, Mr Thomas. I am not a traffic flow expert. Nor am I an M.O.T. Specialist.’

Thomas leaned forward, the flickering red glow of the fire seeming to light another fire in his gaze. Cross found himself held in that gaze, despite his earlier insouciance. ‘Mr Cross, I was a witness at one of those accidents. I saw the two vehicles both accelerate towards each other even though the weather and road conditions were perfect. There was absolutely no reason for what happened. A flying shard of metal tore my face—a few centimetres higher and it would have blinded me. It was as if something had not wanted me to see the event but had not quite succeeded.’ ‘Somewhat melodramatic, Mr Thomas.’ ‘You think so? I’ve checked up. Every one of those smashes has occurred at 7:30 AM on a Monday. Every one. I’m not a road traffic analyst nor am I a statistician but what do you think the chances of such a pattern occurring naturally? Twenty-eight times?’ Despite himself, Cross found that a flicker of interest had begun to burn in his mind. He also leaned forward. ‘Are you suggesting that there is something...’ He paused, as if weighing the consequences of his next utterance before committing himself, ‘something—supernatural involved?’ Thomas showed the flash of a grateful smile for an instant. ‘I *am* suggesting that. And I am certain that these accidents will go on, time after time, with a terrible slaughter unless someone can do something about it.’ Cross leaned back, taking his gaze off the younger man. Automatically, his hand reached for the wineglass and as he sipped the red liquid he ran through his engagements for the coming month. Nothing that couldn’t wait. Instantly he decided. ‘All right,’ he said, returning his gaze to the expectant sous-chef, ‘I’ll see what I can do.’

‘This where the accidents occur?’ he said, turning to Thomas. ‘Yes. Always at the intersection.’ Cross looked up and down the roads. There was nothing unusual about them; the layout looked perfectly rational. One of the roads was on a slope but not a particularly severe one. If this was an accident blackspot through bad design, then the carnage would be much worse at other locations. Except it wasn’t. ‘And always on a Monday at 7:30 AM?’ ‘Yes. Obviously not every Monday, but when they do happen it’s always that day of the week and at that time.’ Cross nodded and Thomas saw that his expression had changed since they had arrived; the planes of his features had hardened into a display of flinty determination. ‘I’m sorry I doubted you, Mr Thomas. This is not natural. It shouldn’t be happening. Yet it is.’ He looked around for a moment and then back at Thomas. ‘Your place is not far from here, you say?’ Thomas nodded. ‘Just five minutes away.’ ‘Good. I mustn’t be too distant from this locus. Let’s go.’

Just over five minutes later, the two men were in Thomas’ flat. The blinds were closed and only a dim light penetrated to reveal Cross sitting in an armchair, with Thomas looking uncertainly down at him. ‘Sit yourself down, please,’ Cross said, ‘but kindly be absolutely silent when you have done so.’ Cross sat back and closed his eyes. His breathing began to alter slowly, becoming deeper and more regular.

‘This is a perfect place, Mr Thomas,’ he murmured, apparently drowsy. ‘The air is alive with psychic energies—or, if you prefer pseudoscience, ESP influences. You see, when the mind receives a violent shock

it emits a form of radiation, a radiation not to be found in the electromagnetic spectrum. This radiation does not travel through space but remains associated with the location of the event, but it is transmitted through time. It is a kind of memory of the trauma which generated it. When another mind encounters that field of energy, it relives the event that generated it—to a certain extent. These are the “ghosts” that we chill our spirits with. Through training, or, as in my case, natural ability, some minds are more receptive than others. Lay people call us “mediums”. Without vanity, I believe I am among the world’s best—but we shall see. I do not expect people to take my word for it; I prefer to demonstrate the truth of that assertion.

‘I am now going to remember the event which is plaguing our modern lives and...’ His voice faded into silence. His pulse slowed. Before Thomas’ concerned eyes he became completely silent and motionless. Thomas did not dare to approach him but was sure that if he had, that no sound of breathing would have been detectable. He sat down and waited. And waited.

‘Oh, Marcellus,’ the young woman sobbed, resting her head on his burly shoulder, ‘It is a cruel world that we have been born into when the gods torment us because we dared to fall in love.’ She was a slight, pale skinned Celt, beautiful as are many of the women of the Britons, especially when they have just blossomed into womanhood. A mass of raven-dark hair cascaded over one bare shoulder, and her dark brown eyes were brimming with tears. The man was a soldier of Rome, tall, broad and strongly featured. His massive chest was protected by a gleaming bronze breastplate and by his side hung the dread, stabbing short sword known as the *gladius*; a sword which had sent many a hostile native to the dark halls of the Otherworld. His helmet was lying in the straw, unnoticed as he stroked the woman’s tear-stained face. ‘We will find a way,’ he murmured, ‘the gods will relent. Have we not made all the proper observances to them? Did I not offer them the heart of the deer I had slain, the one I had brought down especially for them?’ ‘But the druid,’ she said, looking deep into his eyes, ‘he cursed us. He said whatever we did we could not escape the *geas* he laid upon us; that we would never find peace as long as we were together. All the druids hate you men of Rome, Marcellus, with a hatred that can never be quenched, never die!’ Marcellus smiled grimly. ‘Much good their spells and incantations did them when we landed on the Isle of Mona and hunted them down like sheep. We laid them on their own altars and ripped out their guts with our blades. No gods descended to save them then, as I recall. I thought we had rid this earth of their contagion but some of the creatures escaped.’ ‘Escaped to curse us and me in particular,’ she replied. Her Brythonic name was Vindomora but she had accepted the Latin “Alba”, as Marcellus had found her native name too barbarous. ‘And your father as well...’ ‘My father?’ Marcellus looked dispirited, ‘I told him that our peoples are now reconciled together and desire only peace, but..’ ‘But,’ she completed for him, ‘You are High Born and I—what am I?’ Her breasts heaved under the thin shift with the intensity of her emotion, ‘I am just a low born Briton, an uncultured savage, a barbarian. I cannot quote Virgil or Horace and that damns me in his eyes.’ She stood up and looked down on him as he lay there on the straw. ‘High Born, Low Born—what does it matter to those who love each other! The same colour blood flows in our veins; we feel the same pains. We are still man and woman! Why should anyone enjoy happiness if it is denied to us? I hate the gods!’ Marcellus stood and made as if to push her away but instead brought her closer. In his arms she felt light and fragile, almost insubstantial, a faery woman, woven from mist. ‘What do I care for nobility or the ravings of deluded priests! I care only for you, Alba!’

At that moment the door of the barn crashed open and three Roman soldiers burst in. ‘Marcellus Magnus!’ one yelled, ‘Your father desires your attendance. But first he commands you to put this sow of a Briton to death with your *gladius*—immediately!’ Marcellus retrieved his plumed helmet from the straw and thrust it onto his head. ‘That I will not do. Perhaps you’d like to take her from me, Aurelius?’ He reached for his sword and brought the weapon out from its scabbard in a blur of fierce steel. Aurelius laughed and, lifting his own sword above his head, leapt forward, bringing the death-dealing blade down at his opponent’s throat.

There was the ring of clashing metal as Marcellus interrupted Aurelius' swing with his own blade and in the next instant it bit into Aurelius' neck, sending him crashing into the reddening straw. 'You killed him!' one of the others gasped, 'A Roman like yourself—for a barbarian!' For answer, Marcellus leapt towards them, gladius stabbing out like the tongue of a deadly snake. They turned and ran. 'Come Alba,' he called, pulling her towards him, 'We must go now! My father will kill me for this!'

They ran out into the courtyard. The sun was rising like a bloodied eye behind grey banks of cloud, and in the trees beyond the villa birds were greeting the dawn with entrancing melodies. But only anger, fear and apprehension were in the minds of the lovers as they raced towards the waiting chariot. Two horses stood in their harnesses, snorting and pawing the ground in their eagerness to be on their way. Then a crowd of soldiers, led by a bald noble in a white, red-fringed toga, poured out of the villa as the couple climbed into the chariot. With a flick of the reins it shot away from them. 'Murderer!' the noble roared behind them, 'you are no longer my son! I call the furies down upon you and the creature beside you!'

Marcellus and Alba did not look behind them as the chariot swept on down the wide Roman road and as the villa disappeared into the green folds of the southern British landscape Marcellus placed his lips on the trembling ones of his companion. 'For you I would fight all of Rome,' he whispered, 'let my father and the whole miserable tribe of druids do their worst!' 'But where now, Marcellus?' Alba panted as she cast a first, fearful glance behind her. 'Londinium!' he replied, 'and a ship to Gaul where I have friends who will gladly take us in! Then we will be free—free to laugh and love!' The chariot seemed to leap forward, faster and faster at those words.

The walls of Londinium, with a mass of white buildings behind them, came into view beyond a slight hill. 'Not far now, my love,' Marcellus said, allowing the horses to slacken their headlong flight slightly. She looked up into his face with the adoration she had only felt before when bowing before the idols of her tribe among the harsh hills of the Brigantes. He was so strong, so magnificent—almost like a god himself! The horses had dropped to a quiet walk as they reached the crest of the hill and suddenly before them lay Londinium in all its majesty! Alba drew in her breath in a short gasp. Londinium was vast! —Surely it could not be the work of mere men!

The chariot began its descent of the low hill. The horses suddenly seemed to leap forward as if being pursued by wolves. Marcellus frowned and tried to reign them in but still they plunged onwards, snorting and turning foam-flecked muzzles back and forth. Then they were at the foot of the hill and he turned to speak to his lover. Suddenly a great cart heavily laden with amphorae appeared from a cloud of dust, bearing down upon them. Marcellus turned the chariot to pass on its flank but it was too late. It was struck a heavy blow and keeled over. Roman and Briton were tossed out like dolls and the next instant the cart toppled onto them. When the baying of the horses and the screech of the wheels had both died away Marcellus managed to turn his face toward Alba. 'We will meet again in your Isles of the Blest,' he managed to say, before blood filled his lungs. And then they died.

The Mind once named as Cross stirred in the darkness. *So that's what happened*, it thought, *this was the outcome of the geas of the druid and the curse of the father. And thus the tormented souls were seeking a retribution for being robbed of the happiness they had been expecting; the bliss that had been snatched away at the last moment. In their bitterness and despair they were forcing their fate onto others.*

Well, there was only one thing to do. The Mind gathered all its strength and power, reaching down into depths of being; into dark strata of existence normally forbidden to mere mortals. There was a flash of spilt fire, flames that blazed without heat or sound.

And before Thomas' astounded eyes, Cross vanished from the armchair in modern day London.

Cross lifted his head. There had been soft grass tickling his face. He moved into a crouching position and saw before him a soft, green landscape framed in a blue sky in which only a few, soft-contoured clouds were drifting. A dusty road was just a short distance away and at the nearby foot of the hill was the crossroads he seemed to know well. *I still have the abilities*, he thought with self-satisfaction, *I wonder what Thomas thinks has happened!* Suddenly there was no more time for thought. He heard the chariot behind him and spun around to see it hurtling towards him. Automatically he raised a hand to indicate that they should stop before realising the meaninglessness of that action. Instead he brought the power of his mind to bear upon the horses. He dipped into their brains and there he saw only terror and gibbering horror. No wonder they would not stop in their headlong flight. He sent his power into their turmoil, and in a blaze of light that only he and they could see, he drove those phantoms of fear from their minds. Then he sent an imperious command into the churning equine minds: STOP! As swiftly as they could, the horses obeyed, and the swaying chariot came to a halt. Marcellus drew his gladius and made to jump from the chariot onto Cross but even as the deadly blade slid out he and Alba looked away, drawn by the sight and sound of the heavy cart thundering past just below them.

All three watched the cart as it rumbled on towards Londinium. Marcellus stepped down from the chariot and bowed towards Cross. 'I thank you stranger,' he said, 'we are in your debt. If you had not stopped us...' Cross looked inwardly for a moment, seeking guidance. His time here as a physical entity was limited: soon he would be pulled back to the twenty-first century. As he had expected, there were other Minds nearby, watching him; some benevolently, others less so. He quickly borrowed the knowledge of demotic Latin from one of the favourable Minds and looking back to Marcellus said, 'You must hurry from here, Marcellus. Your father is close behind and his plans for you are not pleasant.' 'How do you know my name?' Marcellus asked, his eyes narrowing, 'your manner of speech is strange. Your clothing...' Alba had joined them and she looked up at Cross with doubt clouding her features; doubt tinged with another emotion—fear, perhaps. 'Are you a god?' she said in little more than a whisper, 'the way you stopped the horses. And your attire is so strange.' 'No,' Cross said. *(They have to get moving!)* 'I am just a friend. Please hurry.' 'At least, tell us your name!' 'Cross.' 'Cross? What strange names you Britons have.' 'He is not a Briton,' Cross heard Alba whisper to Marcellus, 'we do not speak like that. And we certainly do not dress like that!' 'Your friendship is welcome, stranger, whatever distant land you may come from,' Marcellus said, offering a huge hand. Cross ignored it; physical contact with people had to be avoided or he risked being marooned in Roman Britain. 'You really should go,' he said and to emphasise his point he gestured in the direction of the white sprawl of Londinium. Marcellus nodded and he and Alba climbed back into the chariot. They gave him one last wondering look and then the whip cracked and the chariot resumed its flight to the capital of Britain.

Cross knew that their departure had been just in time. He returned the borrowed knowledge to the watching Mind just as he felt invisible tendrils of temporal force begin to tug at him. Had there been onlookers, they would have seen a sudden, mysterious flash of spilt silent flame and then emptiness instead of a human figure. Some minutes later another chariot rushed past where he had stood, hurtling on in a vain effort to catch the chariot that bore Marcellus and Alba before it could reach the great city.

The ships were tied up against the wharf, rocking gently on their chains on the muddy brown water of the Tamesis. The merchant was protesting loudly that he carried no passengers. 'I will offer you ten denarii,' Marcellus said, meeting the merchant's gaze with a steely stare. 'No!' 'Fifteen.' 'No.' 'Twenty.' 'Very well,' growled the merchant, secretly overjoyed by the bargain he had just struck. 'But I am sailing almost immediately - you'd better get on board.' 'Thank you, kind sir,' Alba said, relief washing over her. The merchant watched them head out into the bright sunshine and ran a calloused hand over the wiry stubble on his chin. Those two were obviously in a hurry to quit Britain which meant that they were running away from something. The woman was very good-looking for a Briton and he wondered briefly whether he

could have asked for her instead of the money, but the soldier seemed too attracted to her to have risked it. He shook his head wonderingly as he spat on the floor.

What was the world coming to when Roman nobles were reduced to nosing around after native women! Marcellus and Alba walked briskly along the crowded quayside, heading for the merchant's ship, threading their way through the crowds of sailors. She found the noise and smells of the bustling port overwhelming; completely unlike her quiet northern hillsides. There were busy people everywhere, lifting bales or guiding livestock onto the boats, and she was amazed to see that some of them had skins as black as jet! She had heard tales of such people but had always believed they were just fables. But then Marcellus felt her fingers stiffen and dig into his shoulder. 'What is it?' he said, looking down in shock at a face blanched with fear. 'Your—your father,' she said, wide-eyed, 'I thought I saw your father on the ship next to ours!' Marcellus followed her trembling finger, narrowing his eyes against the sun's glare. He saw a small ship whose deck was covered with bales of wool. There were men carrying more bales up a gangplank which was bowing under their weight. But there was no Roman noble. 'You are being haunted by shadows,' he said, smiling, 'my father couldn't be here. How would he know from where we were embarking?' He held her shoulders and turned her to face him. 'We are safe now, and nothing but happiness lies ahead of us. Safe, do you hear me? Safe.' He kissed her and they joined the sailors on the ship that would take them to safety, not knowing that the merchant was at that very moment adding the money Marcellus' father had earlier given him to keep watch, to the money that the son had just delivered. Soon the ship was on its way down the turbulent Tamesis, out into the open Channel. Alba noticed that there was a fog bank directly ahead of them and shivered slightly.

Cross leaned back into the plush fabric of his favourite armchair and gently sniffed the aroma of his wine. He had earned this rare vintage, he thought to himself. He took a contented sip, careful to savour the richness of the wine and not rush the pleasure. Thomas was back in the kitchen and in gratitude for the service that Cross had given, had ensured that Cross had had only the best cuts of meat from now on, smothered in the most sumptuous sauces.

The shadow of the past had been lifted.

Once again Cross ran the triumph of his endeavours through his mind and shook his head at the thought that no-one would ever know what he had done, with the solitary exception of Thomas. Even he had not witnessed anything other than a mysterious disappearance. He had not seen the glories of Roman Britain or breathed in air that carried none of the pollutants of modern life. Cross closed his eyes to relive his endeavours but as he did so a strange doubt began to surface from the recesses of his mind.

Never before had he attempted utterly to change the sweep of history; never before had he dared to interfere in the course of the great river of Time. Had he over-reached himself? He tried to push the thought away, but it kept floating back to the surface.

He opened his eyes and looked around.

Nothing had changed; his Club was still full of the Rich and Famous who, like him, were enjoying the best that money could buy. And then, for reasons he could never explain, he put his glass on the nearby table and reached for his computer pad. His fingers seemed possessed of their own will as he selected the news page.

He stared at the headline for a few moments and then the pad slipped from his fingers and bounced on the floor at his feet.

The wheel had completed its revolution, for the headline had read:

NEW FATALITIES AT SEA: THIRD COLLISION IN CHANNEL IN THREE MONTHS!

Wordsearches 2 and 3 – 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 KENT** in the grid below:

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

Can you find the 11 **WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH DORSET** in the grid below:

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

Answers are on page 27

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

2. Medium

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

3. Hard

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

4. Evil

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

Talking Points (started by Stephen Berry!) – responses to DIT 32

The two challenges I set in DIT 32 proved very difficult – in fact, only Roger Lewis provided a correct answer to the first photograph and nobody did so for the second, although a few readers doubtfully suggested the correct area in which the photograph was taken! Roger says of the first photograph:

“I think the first photograph is of the original Maindee School on Chepstow Road. This is now the site of the pay & display car park opposite Lloyds Bank. I would guess that the photograph was taken in the early 1900s and possibly as late as the 1920s as the headgear of the ladies appears to be of that vintage. I also note the policeman has a long coat. The main school building is just to the right of the picture. I was a regular user of the Maindee library in my youth and it always puzzled me that the building on the left of the photograph appeared to be more of a church like building. I assume now it was the hall for the school.”

The identification is absolutely correct – the catch was that virtually all of the well-known views of Maindee School are taken looking in the opposite direction (i.e. from a position *behind* the tram) and show the length of the main building, of which only the one corner appears on the right of the photograph.

I was slightly surprised that nobody identified the second location as the buildings have not been demolished and are still recognisable, at least above street level. However, they are difficult to view from a passing vehicle as they are situated on a busy and usually quite fast-moving stretch of road – Clarence Place. The building is now a part of Kwik-Fit and I am taking the unusual step of repeating the original with a modern view of the building, albeit one taken from the opposite direction as it proved impossible to replicate the view exactly. However, enough detail remains for a positive identification – the solitary walker in the modern view would be in the left bottom corner of the original between the wide and narrow doorways. The interesting fact about this rather grand building is that it was originally the home of the Firbank family, who later moved to St Julian’s House. In the mid-19th century Clarence Place was quite an industrial area (and, indeed, remained so for another 100 years). Do you remember the large timber yard situated roughly where the Iceland store is now? The strict segregation of “posh” families and industrial premises was just beginning and, with the disappearance of so many of Newport’s grand houses, it is good that this one has survived, even though it is hardly recognised as such!



... and this edition's challenges!

An easy one to start, but a rather more difficult one to follow! Both locations are still recognisable today. As always please let us have any memories you have of the buildings or the areas in which they are or were situated – and any other observations.



Wordsearches (pages 12 and 24) – Answers

Wordsearch 1 (Knots): Loop Sheepshank Braid Crochet Twine Splice Rope Hitch Cord Tie
Sailor Lariat

Wordsearch 2 (Kent): Medway Ashford Dartford Thanet Margate Ramsgate Deal Lydd Hythe
Chatham Sandwich

Wordsearch 3 (Dorset): Weymouth Sherborne Wimborne Swanage Purbeck Coast Fossils
Bridport Poole Sandbanks Tolpuddle

A Man's Gotta Do What a Man's Gotta Do by Pam Cocchiara

In days of old, in the courts of kings medieval,
It was the usual rule, or so we learnt at school,
That a man would show, till he was old and feeble,
Proof of his manliness and traits primeval.

On his massive charger he would take the field;
At jousts he was adept, every challenge he'd accept,
And with his mighty mace, his sword and shield,
He'd fight all comers till to him they'd yield.

If a princess for a dragon's lunch was fated,
To win his lady's favour with his resolute behaviour,
From its fearsome clutches she'd be extricated
And the beast be slain, though it be armour-plated.

As a talisman he'd carry on his quest
Perhaps a scarf or garter from his inamorata
That would be pinned, conspicuous on his chest
Or maybe tucked discreetly in his vest.

But nowadays what is a man to do?
For modern man it is so hard to show machismo.
No longer any acts of derring-do
Like saving damsels from a beast or two.

But there still is much exciting action.
He can climb a mountain high, or freefall from the sky.
There's activities galore for his distraction
With risk enough to give him satisfaction.

So fellers, do some manly recreation
Where you can show validity of your modern masculinity.
Just flex those muscles, no more hesitation,
And the girls will all look on with adoration!

You are my Sunshine



How everything has come on in the last week or so! Our tubs are really coming to life again.