

DESERT ISLAND TIMES

Sharing fellowship in

NEWPORT SE WALES U3A

No.34

1st May 2021



Black Mountains, Carmarthenshire

*A MISCELLANY OF
CONTRIBUTIONS
FROM OUR MEMBERS*

Some Progress at Last?

The recent relaxation of restrictions hasn't meant a return to "normal", but it has at least enabled us to make some plans for the coming months. What can we expect?

It is still too early to plan a return to our centre at Shaftesbury Street Methodist Church, particularly as social distancing remains at 2m in Wales. We already know that the implications of this are that none but our smallest groups could gather there and there would still be other issues surrounding hygiene, security, refreshment and travel.

We must hope for an improvement in weather over the coming months as the Committee is putting together a series of outdoor meetings to cater for subject groups - where members want to meet formally outdoors; and for social groups – for members who simply want to gather for a chat over a cuppa.

Each of the sites we have examined have pros and cons, but for formal meetings Malpas Court and Belle Vue Park seem to offer the most advantages, but for informal or social gatherings members could also consider Beechwood Park, Tredegar House and Tredegar Park. If you would like to participate in a subject group meeting you **must** contact your convenor to express an interest.

At present we can organise outdoor groups of no more than 30 members from 17th May and hopefully we will be able to plan for meetings from that date. Zoom will still be available for those groups using that method of meeting at present – and, indeed, there is plenty of timetable space for new groups who would like to meet by this means. Given that outdoor gatherings are subject to our somewhat variable weather it is almost certain that groups will need to use both methods over the coming months. Groups may also like to consider meeting socially, perhaps once a month. Each group has the opportunity of deciding for itself just what style or blend suits it best.

As previously advised, I propose to reduce issues of Desert Island Times to one per month for the foreseeable future. Each monthly edition will be planned for release on the first of the month, unless I am prevented from doing so because I am away from home.

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

PLEASE LET ME HAVE COPY FOR THE 1ST JUNE EDITION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AS I WILL BE AWAY FOR THE SECOND HALF OF MAY.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

If you have not yet paid your subs for 2021/22, please do so as soon as possible. Instructions for making payment are included in the letter you will have received at the end of March, BUT PLEASE NOTE that whichever method of payment you choose to use, YOU MUST complete and send the membership renewal form to Margaret Swabey, our Membership Secretary.

Your subs are vital if we are to keep our U3A open and to provide outdoor venues across the summer.

Pet Corner - submitted by Barbara Phillips

1. Which pop star has a beagle-chihuahua mix called Toulouse?	a) Ariane Grande b) Katy Perry c) Taylor Swift d) Nicki Minaj
2. What is the name of Doc Brown's dog in Back to the Future?	a) Thales of Miletus b) Newton c) Einstein d) Archimedes
3. Which US President had a cocker spaniel called Feller?	a) Richard Nixon b) John F Kennedy c) Harry S Truman d) Dwight D Eisenhower
4. In Friends, Rachel's childhood dog LaPooh dies after being hit by what vehicle?	a) Camper van b) Hootie & The Blowfish tour bus c) Phoebe's grandma's taxi d) Ice-cream van
5. What was the name of the Jack Russell who played Edie Crane in Frasier?	a) Rudolph b) Bullwinkle c) Moose d) Bambi
6. Which of the following films didn't star Ace the Wonder Dog?	a) The Adventures of Rusty b) The Phantom c) Girl from God's County d) The Million Dollar Coat
7. In the sitcom Frasier, what was the name of Martin Crane's dog?	a) Eddie b) Billy c) Bruno d) Kipper
8. What breed is Hagrid's dog, Fang?	a) Basset hound b) Bloodhound c) Boarhound d) Deerhound
9. What was the real name of the cat who found internet fame as "Grumpy Cat"?	a) Dijon Mustard b) Tardar Sauce c) Banana Ketchup d) Sour Cream
10. What is the name of Geppetto's goldfish in Disney's 1940 film Pinocchio?	a) Figaro b) Cleo c) Nemo d) Ariel

Answers are on page 10

Cryptic Puzzle - Step Ladder submitted by Angela Robins

Descend the ladder from TENT to DOME in 12 steps changing just one letter at a time and without disturbing the order of the remaining letters. Most Cryptic Crossword clues also include a definition of the answer as in a straight crossword, so anyone can have a go at this one.

The answers are on Page 10.

Contact me on valdemosas2@gmail.com if you would like to receive my weekly easy cryptic crossword with hints and answers.

	T E N T
1. Check Ford model is French.	— — — —
2. Animal without a champion.	— — — —
3. Take a break with snooker spider.	— — — —
4. Let directions in the outskirts of Rogiet.	— — — —
5. Artist at National Trust has a rave.	— — — —
6. The heart of Franky made the grade.	— — — —
7. It's damp in Aidan Kidd's shed.	— — — —
8. The Spanish not known to be lifeless.	— — — —
9. Lois in aircraft not quiet.	— — — —
10. Rod starts to cosh and nobble enemy.	— — — —
11. Once melted into confectionary.	— — — —
12. University fellow with energy is executed.	— — — —
	D O M E

You can't beat the Old Ones! – submitted by Dave Woolven

A sad tale of an Eskimo

Nanook (of the North) decided to go out fishing in his canoe. It was bitterly, bitterly cold, Nanook had never been so cold, so he had a brilliant idea, he'd light a fire in his canoe. Off he went out into the ocean. He was as warm as toast, but, unfortunately, the fire burned a hole in the bottom of the canoe, the canoe sank taking Nanook with it

The moral of this story is you cannot have your kayak and heat it!

At your convenience!

On his way home from work, Mr Brown always called into the public lavatory. He always spoke to Old Jack, the lavatory attendant.

One day Mr Brown asked Old Jack how long had he worked there? Old Jack said it was 35 years. Mr Brown asked him if he'd ever had a holiday? Old Jack said he'd never had a holiday. Mr Brown told Old Jack to write to his boss and ask for a holiday.

A week later Mr Brown visited the public lavatory and found Old Jack sitting in a deckchair on the lavatory flat roof. He was wearing a straw hat, sunglasses and Hawaiian shirt. Mr Brown asked Old Jack what he was doing. Old Jack replied that he'd done what Mr Brown has suggested and the Council said he could take a holiday - at his own convenience!

Blown Away – Our Great Heritage of Brass Band Music (part 1) by Neil Pritchard

If you think brass bands are part of a "bygone age", then think again, they are still around and better than ever. Reaching out to new audiences, they are still very much "alive and kicking". There's something magical about listening to a brass band, whether it's the Salvation Army warming the spirits on a cold winter's evening, or one of the wonderful Welsh Bands, such as the Cory Band; there's nothing quite like the sound of brass in full swing. They are as British as fish and chips and for decades they have been part of the fabric of community life in towns and villages across the country. While some colliery bands have disappeared following the coal industry's demise, others have managed to keep going, even enjoying a mini renaissance on the back of the hugely popular 1996 film *Brassed Off*.

Traditional brass bands have played an important cultural role in working-class British communities for centuries. But some warn that without funding, they could become a thing of the past. One thing to note about brass bands is that although the players are amateurs, the standard of their playing is really professional. I remember years ago where I lived in Manchester there were a number of brass bands in local mining areas. I found out that a number of brass players with the Halle and BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra were formerly with local Brass Bands. Some of these players still performed with the bands at the time. This it seems was quite common practice with other orchestras up and down the country. This does illustrate that band performers are in no way inferior to brass players in leading orchestras and that goes for the present day. I think you'll agree with this when you hear my musical selection.

The brass band movement of the British Isles is a musical and cultural phenomenon somewhat unique in the history of bands. From its formative years in the early 19th century, through the continual changes they experienced, they still remain active today. The movement began as an effort to provide the working class, primarily in Wales and the Northern industrial provinces of England, a social and cultural outlet. From humble beginnings today's bands boast highly skilled musicians of professional calibre. Through successive generations brass bands have promoted art music to the working class. However, despite the acceptance brass bands have enjoyed in certain social circles, they have not enjoyed the respect other music mediums take for granted. For example, in the first Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians in 1879, J. A. Kappey an army bandmaster wrote in the entry on brass bands that many "bands had reached a high state of excellence, but of course, looked upon as high art culture, brass bands are of no account." Considering the stature of Groves in the music world this kind of statement could do nothing but drive a rift between people in the music culture of the country. Others have observed that the entry on the history of the musical triangle receives almost as much notice as the entry on brass bands. And, while Groves acknowledges the work of Johann Petzmayer, a 19th century zither player, Harry Mortimer, a most influential figure in 20th century brass bands, receives no entry at all. This came from a major British music publication no less - shame on them! So the battle continues for both recognition and respect, a situation not all that uncommon in the band world. The following video was made in 1972, and shows Harry Mortimer conducting four Brass Bands in a version of the 1812 Overture at Niagara Falls in Canada.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tld09Ysh8iw>

They richly deserve that standing ovation for what was one of the finest versions of the "1812" I've ever heard. The four bands included in that piece were:

1. The Virtuosi GUS Band, a world-famous brass band based in Kettering in the Midlands. Originally known as the Munn and Felton Works Band, it was formed by Fred Felton in 1933 in Kettering.
2. The CWS (Manchester) Band, whose conductor was Harry Mortimer in the fifties, sixties and seventies. His name was synonymous with Brass Bands and brass playing around the world.
3. The Fairey Band based in Heaton Chapel in Stockport, Greater Manchester.
4. The Fairey Aviation Company, Black Dyke Band. This is one of the oldest and best-known brass bands in the world. In 2014, the band won the National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain for a record 23rd time, and the British Open Championship for a record 30th time. They have also won the European Championships a record thirteen times, most recently in 2015.

I think you can see why that performance was highly praised at the time, with playing of such a high quality that your average orchestra would be hard pressed to match. Another band with a great reputation is the Pride of Wales: the Cory Band. They are acknowledged as the finest and oldest Brass Band in the World. They are from the Rhondda Valley in Wales and were formed in 1884, originally bearing the name 'Ton Temperance' a reference to the Temperance movement in the South Wales Valleys at the time.

The actual date the band was formed is not known. However records show that initially rehearsals took place in a draughty shed behind the Blacksmith's shop in Gelli. In 1895 Sir Clifford Cory, Chairman of Cory Brothers, heard the band and offered to provide financial assistance for them, resulting in the band's change of name to 'Cory'. John Cory was a 19th century British philanthropist, coal-owner and ship-owner. In 1920, the band gained championship status and three years later achieved the distinction of performing what is believed to have been the first radio broadcast by a brass band. A significant honour was bestowed on the band in 1976 when they were chosen to represent Wales and the Brass Band Movement on a tour of the USA as part of their bi-centennial celebrations. Cory Band has developed musically outside of the contest field. In 2001, together with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales they were appointed as resident ensemble to the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, and in the same year appointed Dr John Pickard as their Composer in Residence. The band is dedicated to new music, raising the profile of the brass band and keeping music alive in Wales. In 2002 the band were selected to play for the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations and have since performed in many of the world's finest concert venues including the Royal Albert Hall and Symphony Hall, Birmingham. In 2003, they performed with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Last Night of the Welsh Proms and were also featured during the opening celebrations of the Wales Millennium Centre. Having dominated in Wales for many years, 2005 saw the Cory Band officially ranked number 1 in the World in February 2020 - the band remain the World's number one ranked brass band. In May 2019, the band became European Brass Band Champions for the 7th time and in October 2019, they became the National Brass Band Champions of Great Britain for the 9th time. What an amazing track record. Well, it's about time we heard some of their fantastic playing. I've chosen the following two videos, the first gives you an idea of how the band competed in the World Music Championships in 2012 in the Netherlands. This is followed by a performance of the William Tell Overture, which shows them at their best:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWneQp6MXtQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEMbmvsAg8U>

Wasn't that magnificent? They richly deserve all the accolades that come their way. I raise my glass to the Cory Band.

One of the other bands that has made an impact outside the Brass Band fraternity is the Grimethorpe Colliery Band in South Yorkshire. It has a long and distinguished history with a reputation for outstanding playing. The Grimethorpe band's own struggle for survival was famously depicted in the 1996 film *Brassed Off*, starring Ewan McGregor and Pete Postlethwaite. The band was originally formed in 1917, and nearly 100 years later, a group of tuba, euphonium and other brass players still bears the band's name. They gather every week inside a crowded practice room in Grimethorpe. It's an old coal-mining village of fewer than 2,000 people, but the band is considered one of the best in England. The walls inside the rehearsal space are cluttered with photos and memorabilia from national competitions the band has won regularly. In the 19th and 20th centuries nearly every colliery or coal mine in the U.K. had a brass band. They were a matter of civic pride for local communities. "That's what our job was: to be ambassadors for the coal industry, and to provide really top-class concerts," says Ray Farr, a stand-in conductor with the Grimethorpe Band. As a result of that long history, Farr says the players in this part of Britain have brass-band music in their blood. "These guys, they're almost naturally born to it," Farr says. Grimethorpe plays close to 60 shows a year, but even with the revenue from ticket sales, the band's manager, Nigel Dixon, says it struggles to pay bills and buy instruments. "We simply can't make ends meet at the moment,"

Dixon says. "Now, we have something that is quintessentially British here, and we have an obligation to keep the band in existence."

Grimethorpe survives with sponsorships from local businesses, but many of the UK's remaining brass bands aren't so lucky. To understand why, you don't have to look back too far in Britain's past. In the 1980s, miners' strikes paralysed the country as Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher began to close the UK's coal mines, often amid violent clashes with police. This left colliery bands with a major crisis. Trevor Herbert, a professor at The Open University who's written about the social history of British brass bands, says that in the past, bands were financed in part through mandatory contributions from fellow coal miners. "My own father was a coal miner," Herbert says. "And on a Friday, he and my mother would sit at the kitchen table and check the money that he'd been paid. And I can remember that 2 pence would have been subtracted every week to support the band. This was when my father's wage was about 3 pounds a week". Under that old system, musicians like Farr — who first joined the Grimethorpe band in 1979 — were on the payroll as miners but spent their workdays playing music. But when the government decided it was not economic to mine coal, "lots of jobs were taken away, including my own" Farr says. With the coal mines closing, colliery bands either called it quits or did their best to keep going. Here's an example of the Grimethorpe band's superb playing:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SS_PBkzPKZQ

That piece was based on the theme from the slow movement of Dvořák's 9th Symphony (aka Symphony of the New World).

It's time to reflect on the history of the brass band movement. From medieval times up to the early 19th century, every British town and city of any note had a band of "Waites". Their duties varied from time to time, and from place to place, but included playing their instruments through the town at night; waking the townsfolk on dark winter mornings by playing under their windows; welcoming royal visitors by playing at the town gates; and leading the Mayor's procession on civic occasions. Then there were military bands, which originated in the late 18th century, and were funded by direct patronage of the officers and were restricted to ten players. Militia bands, while considered less professional, were more flexible with six to twelve players involved. Besides drums, the most common instruments were trumpets, clarinets, and flutes, with horns, bassoons, and trombones. The repertoire consisted of a mixture of national and patriotic music as well as arrangements of popular art music. By the middle of the 19th century musicians from the military bands would influence the brass bands, through the efforts of men such as composer Dan Godfrey. Godfrey had musical roots that dated back to the Band of the Coldstream Guards during the 18th century. Church bands in rural Britain were at their strongest between the years 1780-1830 and provided yet another tradition of amateur music performance. They were especially noteworthy for promoting musical awareness amongst the local populations, with their most common instruments being strings and woodwinds. Village bands performed at various social functions early in the 19th century, and they provided an important base for the eventual establishment of the brass band.

Most of the instruments used in British brass bands had been in use for some time in village, church and military bands, and in the 1840s and 1850s the brass band emerged from these as a popular pastime. Brass bands were a response to industrialisation, which produced a large working-class population, followed by technological advances in instrument design, and mass production to manufacture and distribute the instruments. A major improvement to the old designs was the development of efficient piston valves, which were easier to play and produced a more accurate, consistent sound. Arguably brass bands were an expression of the local solidarity and aspirations of newly formed or rapidly growing communities. This was seen, for instance, in the creation of brass band competitions by the late 1850s. In 1853 John Jennison, owner of Belle Vue Zoological Gardens in Manchester, agreed to stage the first British open brass band championships. The event was attended by a crowd of over 16,000 and continued annually until 1981. Brass bands probably reached their peak in the early twentieth century, when there were over 20,000 registered brass bands in the country. Today, there are still over 4,000 registered brass bands in Britain with around 80,000 players. The brass band is something of a social phenomenon, a

brotherhood, part of the British way of life. Truly amateur bands are not merely haphazard groupings of players who happen to enjoy a "blow". They have a more serious purpose, part of which is to give opportunity for the unfolding of artistic skill and experience in those whose daily tasks are all too often monotonous and unsatisfying, although necessary. Britain no longer has a monopoly on brass bands, and upwards of 20 countries now have many bands. These countries have warmly embraced the brass band movement. Here is an example of a really modern take on brass band playing, by the European Youth Brass Band:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Tn8TE0LtVc>

You can see how that kind of performance can encourage young brass students to turn on to the brass band scene. To return to the early days of bands. With the rapid growth of the brass band, manufacturing and retailing of brass instruments increased dramatically, representing both foreign and domestic sales. Firms such as Joseph Higham of Manchester, formed in 1842, advertised itself as "Makers to the Army". Under terms of the 1843 Design Act, numerous patents and registered improvements were filed through the course of the century. From the late 1850s the price of instruments continued to fall due to the removal of import tariffs, increased trade volume, and competition between manufacturers. By 1895 the Besson Brass Company employed 131 men in their London factory making 100 brass instruments a week, producing 52,000 instruments in all between the years 1862 and 1895. Joseph Hingman employed 90 men who produced 60,000 instruments between 1842 and 1893. All this activity ran alongside considerable growth of music in general throughout Britain. It is estimated that from 1841 to 1891 the number of professional musicians and music teachers grew from 7,000 to 40,000. Concert attendance was increasingly broad-based and listening to "serious" music was becoming a staple for more than just the upper and middle class.

One of the earliest brass bands was the Cyfarthfa Band founded in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales, in 1838, by the industrialist Robert Thompson Crawshay. Merthyr was one of the world's largest centres for iron smelting, and the 1830s saw large-scale immigration into the area from other parts of Britain and Ireland. Crawshay hired professionals for key positions in the band, then filled out the remaining positions with local talent. In addition to active employment in Crawshay's iron works the members received some compensation for their performance engagements. Other private bands were the Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeoman Cavalry Band with which Thomas Lee was associated (Lee was one of the earliest conductors of Besses o' th' Barn Band) and W. L. Marriner's band at Keighley in Yorkshire. Both the Cyfarthfa and Marriner bands participated in early contests and in 1837 Queen Victoria established a band of seventeen brass and woodwind players. These were key prototypes of the industrial bands founded a decade later. It's interesting to note that one prevailing Victorian opinion held that participation in music was a socially acceptable activity.

Music as an art form was considered a force for moral and positive good in society, some even believed different types of melodies could encourage virtue. Such was the attitude of George Hogarth, who wrote in *The Musical Herald* in 1846: "The tendency of music is to soften and purify the mind... the cultivation of a musical taste furnishes for the rich a refined and intellectual pursuit... a relaxation from toil more attractive than the haunts of intemperance, and in densely populated manufacturing districts of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Derbyshire, music is cultivated among the working classes to an extent unparalleled in any other part of the kingdom". The acquisition of music skills was a source of pride for the working class, which had become increasingly self-conscious of its low social status. It also increased respect for the working class in a society that had a high regard for artistic music and competent performance. The next piece we're going to hear is *Legends of Cyfarthfa*. This is arranged for band and draws on many of Joseph Parry's works, including his hymn tune *Aberystwyth*, folk melody *Myfanwy*, *Sospan Fach*, *Men of Harlech*, *Lisa Lan* and *Calon Lan*. These are just a number of the melodies that are used in this composition. To celebrate the Cyfarthfa Band the City of Cardiff (Melingriffith) Brass Band conducted by Christopher Bond plays *Legends of Cyfarthfa*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZjsAnPXQC4>

Creative Writing ***David Jenkins***

I've mentioned in the past that one of the delights I find within the group is seeing the different slant that various members will use when all are given the same prompt for a piece of writing.

The piece below, for instance, was written in response to a prompt during the USA Winter School Creative Writing course. (We slightly took things over – six of the twelve registered for the course were from Newport!) Those of you with a sharp eye may have already noticed that the title is the same as that of a story by Martyn Vaughan included in DIT issue number 30. That's because the title was the prompt we were given. My take on the subject wanders off in a rather different direction from Martyn's ...

Mrs. Lancelot's Revenge

DS John Wells pulled the car into a parking-space indicated by his superior.

'Number 47, that's the one,' said Hodson, indicating one of the large detached houses.

Wells glanced at the DI. 'What was the call about, guv?'

'Haven't a clue, John, except that some woman wanted to speak with whoever deals with murder. And tonight that's us. Come on.'

The two officers approached the door. A slight echo when Hodson used the substantial door-knocker suggested a large entrance hall within. The door swung partially open. One side of an attractive face appeared. 'Yes?'

'Good evening madam. Detective Inspector Hodson. And my colleague Detective Sergeant Wells. You called the station?'

An exterior light snapped on, and the woman examined the warrant cards both were holding for her view. After a few moments she nodded, released a security chain and swung the door fully open.

'Elaine Lake. Thank you for coming so promptly. Please, come in.' She led them to a comfortable sitting-room-come-office. Hodson took a large leather seat, watching with some amusement as his sergeant scanned a few bookshelves. 'Tea or coffee?' she asked.

Hodson shook his head. 'No thank you, Mrs Lake.' From the corner of his eye he noted Wells' expression of disappointment as his acceptance of the offer was forestalled.

The detective looked at the woman. There were signs of recent worry and distress on her face. Turning his attention to the room he examined with some interest a number of shields and replicas of coats-of-arms displayed. The spaces between were filled by pairs of crossed blades. He noted from professional habit that there seemed to be no blades missing from the display. Framed photographs were atop the book-cases, also on the mantelpiece and widow-sills. They were all similar in nature, depicting figures wielding swords or posing in armour. It was, he thought, how a medieval study would have looked had cameras been available at the time.

Wells followed his superior's gaze for a moment. 'Same subject here, guv,' he said, gesturing to the bookshelves. 'Manufacture of armour, swords and other weapons. Codes of chivalry, Mediaeval re-creationist, Mrs Lake?'

The woman took a seat behind a desk. She shook her head slightly. 'Not me, no. It was my husband's hobby. Or rather, his passion.' A frown crossed her face and she fell silent.

'Do go on, please,' Hodson requested.

'He joined a group some time back. And he was, I'll admit, quite good at pretending to be a medieval knight. He learned to use a sword and make some of the armour and stuff like that. He was, I think, becoming quite prominent within such circles.' She fell silent once again. 'Though I wasn't included. He took the name Lancelot when he went to the meetings and donned the gear. He even started speaking in a manner he imagined those knights of old would talk.'

She fell silent once again, until prodded into continuing by Hodson. 'As I said, I wasn't a part of that world. Some women were, of course, no doubt attracted by the glamour of chivalry. And my husband developed a weakness for damsels in distress with a low-cut robe, or a tavern wench's heaving bosom. He started an affair with some woman or other.'

Hodson nodded slightly. It was a tale he had heard, with variations in the detail, more often than he cared to recall. 'How did you find out about the affair?'

'Oh, he told me,' said the woman with a bitter laugh. 'Said that the rules of chivalry and his honour as a knight demanded he tell the truth. Perhaps some of that rubbed off on me, which is why I called you. He decided to live in history and that wrecked our marriage and ruined my life. And now I have to admit what I did.'

While speaking she slid open a drawer in the desk, picking up an object from within as she continued. 'I didn't revisit medieval times and copy the people of that age. I went back to a much more recent time and took my inspiration from the 1950s and a woman called Ruth Ellis. He probably would have preferred death by sword or some other knightly manner. But I wouldn't offer him a chivalrous death. I used this.'

She fell silent for a moment, then dropped a revolver onto the surface of the desk. 'I shot the two-timing bastard.'

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Pet Corner (page 3) - Answers

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|----|--------------|
| 1 | Ariana Grande | 7 | Eddie |
| 2 | Einstein | 8 | Boarhound |
| 3 | Harry S Truman | 9 | Tardar Sauce |
| 4 | Ice Cream Van | 10 | Cleo |
| 5 | Moose | | |
| 6 | The Million Dollar Coat | | |

Cryptic Puzzle (page 4) - Answers

1. T/est 2. Be(a)st 3. Rest 4. R/E.N./t 5. R.A./N.T.
6. F (Rank) y 7. dan K 8. La /NK 9. (p)Lane 10. C.A.N.E. 11. Cone 12. Don/E

A Tour de Forts by Mike Brown

Wales has got more castles per square mile than any other country in the world; a colossal 641. Here's a selection of some that would make an enjoyable day out for this summer's staycation.

Manorbier Castle, Pembrokeshire (www.manorbiercastle.co.uk)

This castle has been described as "the pleasantest spot in Wales", It is a medieval des-res perched upon the cliffs in the heart of the village and overlooking a sandy, dune-backed beach that's a favourite with bathers and surfers today.

During the 17th century its ruins were used as a farm, and its ancient vaults and easy access to the sea made it ideal for storing smuggler's contraband during the following two centuries. Today there are beautiful gardens that have been landscaped by Ireland's foremost plants woman, Daphne Shackleton.

Carew Castle, Pembrokeshire (www.visitpembrokeshire.com)

Set in a stunning location, overlooking a 23 acre mill pond with a working tidal mill, Carew displays the development from a Norman fortification to an Elizabethan country house and is the most architecturally diverse castle in Wales.

There are several ghosts that have received many paranormal investigations: a Celtic warrior in the undercroft; a kitchen boy clanking pots and pans; and a Barbary ape! However, the most intriguing is the 'White Lady' who roams from room to room.

There is easy access to the castle, gardens, mill, shops and a delightful mile-long stroll around the millpond.

Caerphilly Castle (www.cadw.gov.wales)

This big cheese is the largest castle in the UK after Windsor. It has all the features that kids expect: mighty towers; an enormous moat; a drawbridge; and siege engines that actually work. It also has a shop and baby changing facilities (not original features but handy for parents!)

Carreg Cennen Castle, Llandeilo (www.carregcennencastle.com)

The limestone crag which dominates the skyline for miles is accessed through a rare-breeds farmyard before a scramble up to the castle where a couple of thrills await: the dizzying precipice behind the castle commands panoramic views over the countryside, and a secret passageway that leads to a cave with a natural spring far beneath the castle.

Pennard Castle, Gower (www.visitswanseabay.com)

It's not so much the scant, sandy ruins that appeal but its unique location overlooking Three Cliffs Bay (voted the 16th best beach in the world). The story goes that the castle's Lord was holding a wedding party, when he became annoyed by a group of noisy fairies holding their own knees-up nearby. The Lord ordered his men to chase the revellers away with their swords; in revenge, the fairies swamped the castle with sand.

Cardiff Castle (www.cardiffcastle.com)

I've kept the best 'til last - in the heart of our capital city, inside the Roman fort is a Norman keep that overlooks a neo-Gothic mansion that was lavishly refurbished by the 3rd Marquis of Bute. He was, in the 1860s, the richest man in the world, which is evident in the opulence of the decor. This is a must for anyone's bucket list. There's not many portrait pictures or pieces of old furniture, but room after room that are works of art; exquisitely decorated with precious stones, marquetry, gold leaf and picturesque stained-glass windows (and there's more of the same a few miles away at his other pile, Castell Coch).



Manorbier Castle



Caerphilly Castle

The Hands of Time by Ian Lumley

Jimmy Tasker had always been fascinated by the hands on clocks. As a baby, his loudest crying would stop, and a smile would come over his face, whenever his mother brought her clock that stood on the fireplace and put it close to his ears. As a very young boy, he had needed to ask his mother several times every morning if it was time to start the morning trek to his Primary School. When she started to teach him to understand what the position of the hands on the clock on the living room wall were telling him, he became even more fascinated. She had had to tell him, on more than one occasion, to stop gazing at the clock - the hands wouldn't go any faster just because he was watching them. He didn't quite believe her.

Throughout his Primary years, he was given a variety of practical projects to make. Whenever he had any choice in the subject matter, he always made a clock, complete with the most bizarre hands he could think of. On one occasion when he had been given the task of making a Dinosaur by his class teacher, he managed to make it carry a large pocket watch. Everyone laughed and said that watches hadn't been invented when Dinosaurs had ruled the world, but he fired back, 'how do you know, were you there?' The teacher knew better than to carry that argument too far.

By the time he had reached the end of his schooldays, he was well known for his predilection with time throughout the school. He became chairman on the 'one minute please' and House 'challenge' evenings where he took fiendish delight in stopping contestants in full flow with their answers if they strayed a single second over their allotted time. He watched the hands of the large clock used so closely, that he became a greater source of amusement to the audience than the contestants themselves. He didn't care - obeying the movement of the clock hands was all that was important to him.

When he married Jean, she just knew that there was no way she could follow the usual bride's routine of keeping the groom waiting. If she had tried, he more than likely would have left before she even got to the church. When he said the wedding was scheduled for 14.00 hours, he meant 14.00, not 14.01!

He could have got work in a number of places after leaving school, but once he realised that the electronics factory still made its workers clock on at the beginning of a shift and then off again at the end, there was only one choice for him. When he had been allowed to go home a little early one day, his supervisor was surprised to see him standing in front of the clock. 'What is the matter, Jimmy?' he was asked. 'Nothing, Bob' he replied, 'just waiting for the hands on the clock to come round.' Bob Just shook his head in bewilderment. Later when his performance had led to him being selected for a management role, he insisted that he should still clock on and off. It meant that the whole software package used had needed to be rewritten, but he didn't care. The personnel manager at the site had been pleased with that approach. He felt it was because Jimmy wanted to show solidarity with the workforce and that would be seen as a plus by the workers. The workers knew better.

At home, he and Jean eventually became proud grandparents. Four grandsons meant lots of time spent helping to raise them. Jimmy couldn't wait to help them understand the time and how the hands of a clock were so important. He and Jean had often gone to France for their holidays and when the boys started appearing, they needed to find small presents they could bring back for them all. There were several outdoor markets in the locality that they had visited regularly as a way of buying some fresh food and also those lovely French cheeses. He was always quoting General De Gaulle, the erstwhile de facto 'King' of France who had said 'How can anyone govern a nation that has two hundred and forty-six different kinds of **cheese**?'

On their last visit to the market, Jimmy had come across a stall holder who was selling pocket watches. He looked at Jean. She laughed and said 'if you must'. Ten minutes later they had walked away with four pocket watches in a little plastic bag. The boys didn't spend more than ten minutes playing with them

when they were given them later, but Jimmy didn't care. They asked if they could keep them at Nannies, and Jimmy was overjoyed that he could make sure the batteries were always working and the hands were moved forward (and then back again) whenever the clocks changed. He did that for some time even when the ravages of arthritis began to take its toll on his now elderly pair of hands.

After the cremation of Jean took place, precisely at 10.30 am on Friday the 13th, and he had fended off all the well-wishers who often inhabit these occasions, he drove slowly back to his house, sat down and looked around the lounge. He had anticipated that it would be so quiet now without Jean bustling around the place, but it wasn't. The sound of the hands on his clocks moving around their individual dials was quite loud. Strangely, he'd never really noticed it before. He was changed and in bed before he looked at the bedside clock - a gift of long ago from Jean, who had wanted to give him something special. He reflected that she had said as she was handing it over to him 'something to remember me by' and they had both laughed. He wasn't laughing now. He noticed as his head hit the pillow that the hands showed it to be a whole minute slow compared to the wristwatch he always wore in bed. 'Ah well' he thought 'time enough to change that tomorrow'.

But he was wrong.

What We Were Doing . . . Angela Robins

Three years ago the Out & About Group travelled to Holland for a five day coach holiday. Our rural hotel was very quirky with the grounds and public rooms crammed full of folk museum curios.

We had a whole day in Amsterdam starting with a guided boat tour; a great way to get under the fabric of the city and learn some fascinating facts. We were led through the Red Light District on the way to a diamond factory where we saw how they are cut and polished. There was plenty of time afterwards to get lost in the labyrinth of narrow lanes and explore the floral markets, boutiques and museums.

The next day we saw cheese and clogs being made before travelling to Zaanse Schans. This is a pastoral paradise that's so photogenic even though its shops and warehouses depict how a 19th century community looked during the Industrial Revolution. There are various windmills dotted along the river producing dyes, paint, oil, spices and, of course, flour. The saw windmills prepared wood for ship building and this was its hub for Western Europe. To complete the day we visited Volendam (Holland's best known fishing village) rich in tradition with wooden painted houses and it's handsome harbour full of old Dutch ships.

On our final day we passed through the world-famous tulip fields with their colourful stripes across acres of lowland en route to the picturesque city of Haarlem. This charming medieval city, close to its beaches, has loads of atmosphere. On the way back to base we were dropped off at the local village of Graft De Prip where we wandered back to the hotel through typical houses amidst canals.

Evening entertainment comprised a Name The Antique's Use, which created much discussion, a fun Quiz, and a Singalong to a local pianist, which included Tulips From Amsterdam and A Mouse Lived in a Windmill.

----- X X X -----

Euan and Juanita are driving in Holland whilst on holiday when their car is hit and severely dented and the Dutchman was clearly at fault. But the Dutchman, typically frugal and unwilling to pay for the damages, explains to Euan how to remove the dents. "Just blow into the exhaust pipe and the dents will pop out in no time." So Euan starts blowing and the Dutchman sneaks away.

Ten minutes later a policeman stops to see what is happening, and Euan explains. The policeman exclaims "This will never work!" " Why not? " asks Euan, "Because you left the windows open, you idiot!"



Wordsearches 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 STONEHENGE** in the grid below?

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

Can you find the **12 WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH LONDON SQUARES** in the grid below?

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

Answers are on page 19

British Prime Ministers - David Lloyd George, The Great Outsider (part 2) by Gerald Lee

It seemed natural, despite the anomaly of Asquith remaining party leader, to continue the coalition. Lloyd George was returned as leader of the coalition of mostly Conservatives with 130 Liberals elected with 'the coupon.' During the war, the government had made many promises on housing and the treaties. The country was heavily in debt and trade was at a standstill.

Asquith lost his seat in Fife. His branch of the Liberals was reduced to 28 'wee frees.' It was a strange government with Lloyd George as leader and his own party leader in opposition. For the first time the Labour Party fought as a separate party with its own manifesto.

Lloyd George was preoccupied with foreign affairs and rarely attended Parliament. As one of the Big Three he dominated the Versailles Conference. He was accompanied by Frances and Megan. This period he described as the best six months of his life.

The government made some important social reforms extending National Insurance to all trades and virtually the whole workforce. Conversely, the government failed to make any success in housing. A £385 house cost £910. Only 10,000 houses were built, well short of the target.

In education the government had more success. The Fisher Act made 14 years old the official school leaving age. Teachers' salaries were set by the Burnham Committee with free secondary school places for more able pupils. In farming there were moves to a minimum wage and the Old Age Pension increased from £26/5s/0d to £47 per annum.

All was not well. Many Conservatives viewed Lloyd George as corrupt. Coalitions are never popular. For the majority party there is the loss of ministerial places, and minority parties seldom benefit, such as the Liberals under Nick Clegg in recent times. There was a scandal over the sale of honours, although the Conservatives enjoyed the profits equally. With a possible war in Greece, the Conservatives at the instigation of Stanley Baldwin, the President of the Board of Trade, voted to discontinue the coalition by a vote of 185 to 88.

Lloyd George left office, relatively young at 59, probably expecting to return. He never held office again and so was unable to contribute substantially to inter-war politics when his talents were most needed.

Baldwin manoeuvred a Liberal reunion by fighting an election on tariff reform in 1923. The result was that although the Liberals could still poll at around 30%, they could never win an election.

Relations with his fellow Liberals were never good. He kept personal control over the fund at a time when Liberal finances were poor. Asquith was still party leader. They took opposing views over the Coal Industry. Lloyd George produced his own plan and was suspended from the party for not condemning the General Strike.

On Asquith's death he assumed the leadership despite much bad feeling over the fund. Many, such as Alfred Mond, drifted away to other parties. The Liberals were reduced to only 40 seats in 1924. There was a Liberal revival in 1929 as a result of Lloyd George's plans to beat unemployment, summarised in the 'Yellow Book,' 'We can conquer unemployment,' which was part of a series of books on land and industrial restructuring with different coloured covers. Like Keynes he was looking for alternative ways to run the economy. This gave rise to a second minority Labour government, but not a coalition.

The economic situation deteriorated. Lloyd George was recovering from a prostate operation and so was unable to participate in the negotiations for a National Government. He opposed the temporary leader Herbert Samuel's agreement to a coalition and detached himself from the main party.

After the 1931 election there were effectively three Liberal parties. Lloyd George led his family group of four, with the main party led by Herbert Samuel. The other group led by Sir John Simon effectively became part of the Conservative Party. Until at least the 1960s some Conservatives still styled themselves 'National Liberal.'

On a personal level, Maggie still felt close enough to him to fight his election campaign while he was ill. Frances gave birth to a daughter Jennifer in 1929. Most probably she had had at least one termination. Maggie knew all the Welsh servants, who passed on titbits of information to her. She took delight in telling him he might not be Jennifer's father. Lloyd George did not acknowledge Jennifer in his will nor officially recognize her as his daughter. His brother remarked how similar she looked to the young Megan.

From then on Lloyd George became less relevant. He continued to speak in parliament and to write for the newspapers. In the mid-1930s he tried to recreate the old Liberal constituency in his Council of Action advocating an American style New Deal. His threat to field 300 candidates did not endear him to Baldwin. He was invited to discuss his ideas at a government committee, with a carrot that he might join the government, but in reality, neither MacDonald nor Baldwin wanted to serve with him.

It was rather to his discredit that he met Hitler and praised him as a great statesman, as always looking for a deal. Fortunately, he did not accept the invitation to attend a rally. After the outrages against the Jews, he changed his opinions and opposed appeasement.

His main home was his model fruit farm in Churt. Maggie lived at Criccieth, which was considered her property. Lloyd George bought a house and farm at Ty Newydd, which was to be his Welsh base and where he died. He still had an eye for the young girls. Baroness Trumpington worked at Churt and recalled that the farm girls avoided being alone in a room with him.

He spoke less in Parliament, delegating mostly to Megan. He still campaigned for land reform, effectively nationalization of all land. He finally wrote his war memoirs and a book about the treaties, which made him very wealthy. Almost certainly he reneged on his original promise to give the profits to ex-servicemen.

He supported Edward VIII over the abdication crisis. His suggestion that his wife be styled Duchess of Renfrew is similar to Prince Charles calling his second wife Duchess of Cornwall.

His last great intervention was to destroy his old adversary Chamberlain in the Narvik debate. Either Megan or the National Liberal Clement Davies gave him an account of the debate, which spurred Lloyd George to speak. When Chamberlain said, 'I have friends in this House' he replied, 'He has called for sacrifice; nothing can contribute more to victory than that he should sacrifice his seals of office.'

This prepared the way for Churchill to be PM. Like Lloyd George he was PM without being party leader. Chamberlain ran the home front. Lloyd George was offered office twice, once as Food and Agriculture Controller and then as Ambassador to Washington - but refused both. At first, he claimed he could not work with Chamberlain. Maybe as he approached 80, he distrusted his own capacity for high office. An alternative view is that he still saw himself as a potential PM if the war went badly. In his journalism he defended the war, but privately he harboured doubts that Britain could win decisively. He might be the leader to negotiate peace.

His last intervention in parliament was to his discredit. He called any invasion plan 'fatuous' and demanded a smaller war cabinet. Churchill's retort, that his speech was worthy of Marshal Pétain in the Reynaud Cabinet, was a severe reprimand.

In 1943 Maggie died. He was unable to reach her because of bad weather, but still felt a sort of attachment to her. This left the way open to marry Frances, who felt she had waited long enough and must have wanted some security as Lloyd George aged.

Despite a final plea from Megan, they married in Dorking. Even his chauffeur did not know in advance. Although Megan was disapproving of her father, she was herself for many years in a relationship with the Labour MP, Philip Noel-Baker. When he was widowed in the mid nineteen fifties, he refused to marry her. Perhaps then she would have felt some sympathy for Frances.

Lloyd George attended the House to hear of the D-Day landings; he made his public final speech on 9 November 1944 in Caernarfon.

He did not want to leave parliament despite his age and failing health. His secretary, A J Sylvester, tried unsuccessfully to persuade the other parties to allow him to be returned unopposed. Eventually he realized he might not win in 1945, so he accepted an earldom, Earl Lloyd George of Dwyfor and Viscount Gwynedd. He did not live to take his seat in the Lords.

On 26 March 1945, after a short illness, Lloyd George died, the only time Frances and Megan were united – holding hands. After his death, Megan still rejected overtures from Frances, which meant a plan to endow an agricultural college on land he had owned, did not happen.

He told his friend Tom Jones, 'Don't put me in a cemetery.' He had chosen the spot, which is adorned with a single stone and an arch designed by Clough Williams Ellis, of Port Merion fame.

Aneurin Bevan called him 'the most incandescent figure that ever illuminated the British political scene.'

His achievements were many. He secured much for Wales. He persuaded Kitchener to allow a Welsh Division using the Welsh language, and pressure from him led to the creation of a Welsh Department of Education. He introduced health and unemployment insurance which eventually covered the whole workforce. He was the man who won the war and negotiated the Versailles Treaty.

However, his critics say he destroyed the Liberal party. But Liberalism was in decline all over Europe anyway. Organised labour wanted their own form of representation. He was untrustworthy and not a party man, although he said he would live and die a Liberal. His private life was chaotic: although he preached in chapels his morals were loose. Certainly, he became wealthy in office, but it has never been proved that he used the political fund for his own purposes.

Was he greater than Churchill? I would personally think so. If the modern Liberal party does not look back to him because he never led a Liberal government, his achievements are reflected in our modern welfare state, our system of graduated taxation, the supremacy of the Commons over the Lords, and the right to vote being extended to all men and women. He ranks among the great men of history.

Wordsearches (page 16) - Answers

Stonehenge

Tourist Neolithic Pillar Solstice Circle Midsummer Stones Equinox Block Wiltshire Megalith

London Squares

Dolphin Eaton Soho Hanover Sloane Leicester Canada Parliament Smith Grosvenor Portman Vincent

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

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

2. Medium

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

3. Hard

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

4. Evil

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

A Brief History of the Railways of Newport by Stephen Berry

One of the most imposing buildings in Newport is the old station building at the top of Cambrian Road – now unfortunately no longer in railway use but thankfully preserved and still in use. Unfortunately its replacement does little to enhance the architecture of the city, but that is another story!

The story of railway travel into Newport predates the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway in 1825 by several years and was not a link to London or Bristol as might be expected.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the industrial revolution was picking up pace in the coalfields of South Wales. Monmouthshire had progressed to the point where improved means of transport to Newport, for the export of coal and iron, was a necessity. By an Act of 1792 the Monmouthshire Canal Company was incorporated and authorised to build canals and railways. These followed the course of the Eastern Valley from Pontypool and Blaenavon, and the Western Valley from Risca and Beaufort.

These canals were opened in 1795-6, from Newport to Pontnewynydd with a Western Valley section to Crumlin; railways, built to a gauge of 3 ft. 4 in., continued northwards to Blaenavon Ironworks and to Beaufort Ironworks respectively, the gauge being later increased to 4 ft. 4 in. Because the Company was allowed to build tramroads to meet the canals within a seven mile distance from them it was possible, by 1805, to travel by tramroad through to Newport from both valleys, though it was an arduous journey as neither route provided a direct, uninterrupted route.

The two tramroads met at Courtybella (opposite Belle Vue Park). A mile west of here the line crossed Tredegar Park, belonging to Sir Charles Morgan. The Act empowered him to make and maintain the mile of track through his land and to receive tolls of 1d for every ton of mineral crossing the land. Thus was born the famous "Park Mile" or, as it was better known, the "Golden Mile," which remained the property of the Morgan family until bought out by the Great Western Railway in December 1923.

The Monmouthshire Canal Company's tramroad had a branch 2½ miles long from Risca to a point nine miles from Newport. An Act of 1802 permitted the Sirhowy Tramroad Company to build a tramroad from this point to Tredegar. The station situated at this location was, rather uninspiringly, named Nine Mile Point.

The tramroad to Tredegar was opened in 1805. The tramroads were open to all who could provide their own vehicles and horses, toll houses being provided at intervals, as on turnpike roads.

The Rumney Tramroad, running from the ironworks at Rhymney was opened in 1836 to a junction with the Monmouthshire Tramroad at Bassaleg.

A horse-drawn passenger service between Newport and Tredegar was started in 1822. A directory of 1840 lists five operators providing regular conveyance by tramroad to Tredegar, Rhymney and Bedwas (for Caerphilly).

An Act of 1845 gave the Monmouthshire company powers to adapt the whole system for locomotives and passenger traffic and to become carriers. The Park Mile had to be similarly improved by Sir Charles Morgan. By an Act of 1848 the company changed its name to The Monmouthshire Railway & Canal Company.

At this time, the railway or tramroad system of Newport and Monmouthshire, although extensive, was quite isolated from that of the rest of Great Britain. Not until 18th June 1850, did a main line reach the town, when the 75 miles of the South Wales Railway were opened from Chepstow to Swansea. This was laid out by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, and was built to the Great Western broad gauge of 7 ft. 0 ¼ in. Their passenger station at Newport still occupies the same site and it took the name "High Street" from 1875. It consisted originally of two platforms with three tracks between them and no overbridge. The tracks converged into two just east of the station, at the Thomas Street level crossing.

Within three years of the opening of the High Street station, four stations were opened by the Monmouthshire Railway, two of them being temporary ones. First to be provided was the temporary station at Courtybella, opened for the passenger service to Blaina on 21st December 1850. This was sited roughly opposite the bottom gates into Belle Vue Park but was superseded on 4th August 1852 by a station near the Town Dock. This station, Dock Street, was reached by improving the existing tramroad along Cardiff Road and George Street and stood opposite where the Masonic Hall stands today. The bases of the station entrance gates are still *in situ*. Until the mid-1950s the station was quite recognisable and its wooden platform survived until the early 1970s.

The Eastern Valley line reached Newport on 1st July 1852, when a passenger service from Pontypool Crane Street was started to a temporary terminus at Marshes Turnpike Gate (where the line crossed Malpas Road at the point where it later became Shaftesbury Street). This was the first standard (4 ft. 8½ in.) gauge railway in the town and was a single line eight miles long. The station was removed when the line had been extended a quarter of a mile to Mill Street on 9th March 1853. This was situated at the point where Mill Street became Marshes Road and, until the extensive demolitions in the 1960s and 1970s, was marked by the Station Inn. In May 1855 the Mill Street line was extended southwards parallel to the canal for one mile to Dock Street, although the latter passenger station could only be reached by reversal and no passenger services ever ran between the two.

Direct rail access to the North of England was provided by the opening of the Newport, Abergavenny & Hereford Railway on 2nd January 1854. In spite of its name, it did not start from Newport but at the junction with the Mill Street to Pontypool railway at Panteg, nearly seven miles north of Mill Street. Beyond Hereford, the line to Shrewsbury was already open, and from there traffic could be sent northwards or eastwards by existing railways. From 1863 through passenger services were provided from Mill Street to Hereford and Shrewsbury.

In 1875 the L.N.W.R. acquired the Sirhowy Railway which, since 19th June 1865 had run a passenger service from Tredegar to Newport via Nine Mile Point.

The Brecon & Merthyr Railway was incorporated in 1859, and in 1863, acquired the Rumney Railway (the old Rumney Tramroad re-incorporated as a railway in 1861). It thereby inherited the Rumney's running powers between Bassaleg Junction and Newport, and on 14th June 1865 its passenger trains began to work into Dock Street Station.

The South Wales Railway was amalgamated with the Great Western in 1862, and the Newport, Abergavenny & Hereford (by then known as the West Midland) followed a year later. May 1872 saw the broad-gauge lines through Newport converted to standard gauge, which meant that all the railways in Monmouthshire were now of the same standard gauge and further developments were possible.

The Pontypool, Caerleon & Newport Railway, promoted by the G.W.R., was opened on 21st December 1874, from Pontypool Road to a triangular junction (Maindee North, East and West) with the G.W.R. on the east side of the River Usk.

The original route from the Western Valley, having passed through the Golden Mile, crossed the main Cardiff Road by a level crossing near the point where the South Wales Railway was later built underneath the road. The level crossing was removed in 1878, when the Monmouthshire Railway was diverted to cross the road by a bridge about 300 yards away. In 1879, the G.W.R. opened a connecting line three-quarters of a mile long from Gaer Junction, west of Newport Tunnel on the Cardiff main line, to Park Junction, at the end of the Park Mile, allowing Western Valley trains to run into High Street. Another line from Cwmbran to Llantarnam on the Caerleon route, gave a similar facility to the Eastern Valley.

High Street Station was rebuilt in the 1870s, a project directly connected with the take-over by the GWR in 1875 of the Monmouthshire Railway's lines. The enlarged station had four tracks between the two platforms and the up platform made into an island. All trains from both valleys were diverted into this enlarged station – Western Valley services from 12 May 1880, Brecon & Merthyr and L.N.W.R. (Sirhowy)

services from 1st June 1880 (when Dock Street station was closed) and Pontypool and Hereford services from 1st August 1880 (when Mill Street station was closed). The final company to start running into Newport was the Pontypridd, Caerphilly and Newport Railway, who started to run trains in 1887 between the three towns using their own tracks to Machen and the Brecon & Merthyr Railway and GWR from there.

The tunnel west of High Street was doubled in 1912 by means of a separate double-line bore on the north side, and in 1925 the river bridge was widened to take four tracks.

High Street station was again rebuilt during the years 1926 to 1930. The up island platform was extended – and became the longest station platform at any GWR station. Both sides were capable of holding two normal-length trains and tracks were designed so that this could happen. The down platform was similarly arranged, though not quite as long, and a terminal, or bay, platform added on its south-eastern face. A new platform was added on the north-western side, giving the station a total of eight working platforms. This was the rebuilding that provided the iconic building we all know. It had a large dining room, club room and Divisional offices in the stories above ground level; at ground level were the main booking offices, a large refreshment room, enquiry office, newspaper stall and platform staff rooms and parcels department. Power signalling throughout the station area was introduced in 1927.

The lines from Courtybella to Llanarth Street and to Dock Street via George Street had been closed in 1907, but remained in use as sidings for another 20 years or so. They were then lifted, and the land vacated was used to widen Cardiff Road and provide new roads. The canal south of Llanarth Street had been stopped up in 1879 and in the early 1930s a further section back to the Old Green was also filled in. A quarter of a mile of the railway was realigned on to the canal site, the land vacated by the railway being used for the construction of a new road, named Kingsway. This was opened on November 5, 1934.

Railway development on the east bank of the Usk was much later and less extensive than on the west side. Ordnance Survey maps of 1812 and 1833 show an early "iron way" running for a mile in an easterly direction from limestone quarries in the Somerton district to the river bank, but that presumably ceased operation with the coming of the South Wales Railway, as they certainly provided a siding for this traffic in later years. The present branch from the main line at Somerton Bridge and known as the East Usk branch opened in sections as a single line between 1898 and 1901, to serve several large works; it was doubled in readiness for the opening of the Uskmouth Power Station, one of the largest in Europe, in October, 1953. Although subsequently singled the branch still operates.

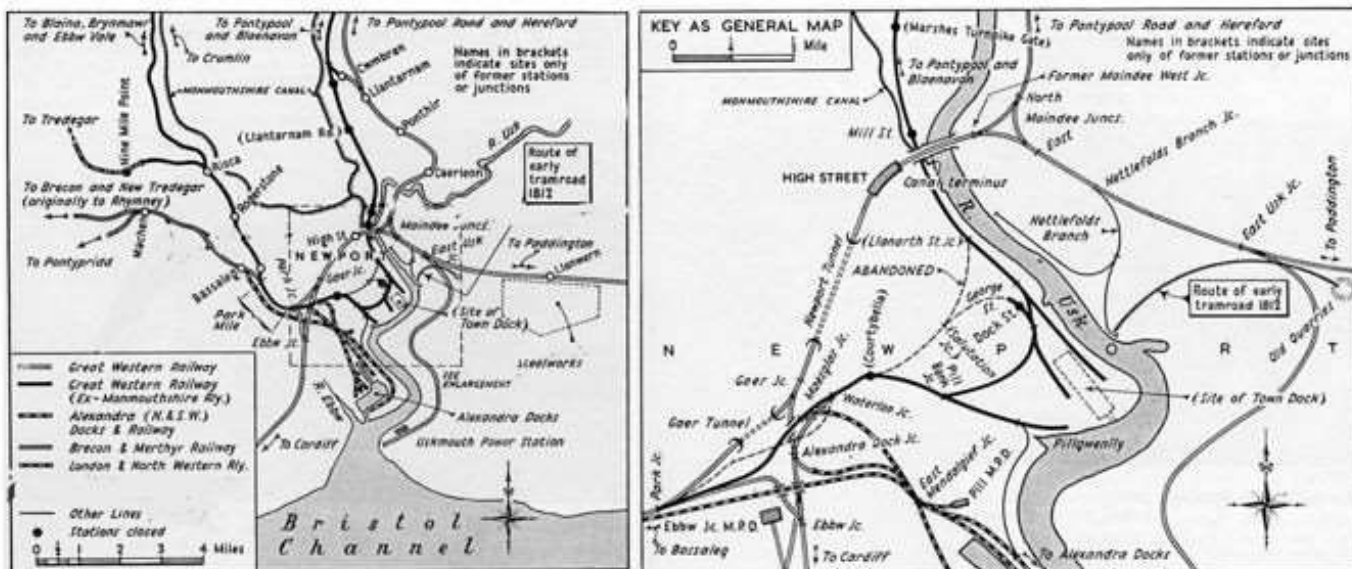
Half a mile nearer Newport was the Nettlefolds branch, a private siding opened in February, 1875 to serve the Great Western Wharf and a chemical works. From it another branch served the former Corporation power station and other works. The entire branch was closed in 1974.

The building of the Llanwern Steelworks caused major disruption to the railway system as it required an entire rail system within the works. A £2M railway scheme, announced early in 1960, realigned tracks to confine passenger trains to the northernmost pair of tracks, and use the island platform at High Street Station for both up and down passenger trains, and the down platform for parcels trains only. The north western platform of 1928 was retained for a few years (mainly for Brecon trains) but gradually fell into disuse.

Passenger services remained in operation until 1956. On 17th September 1956 the Pontypridd and Caerphilly services were withdrawn, followed by the Sirhowy Valley services on 13th June 1960. Eastern and Western Valley services lasted until 30th April 1962 and Brecon and New Tredegar services until 31st December 1962. This left just the main line from Paddington to West Wales and that from Newport to Shrewsbury. Most of the goods lines had also disappeared by the early 1980s and now there are just a few docks lines and the Uskmouth branch remaining. Passenger-wise the last 15 or so years have proved to be years of increasing demand for rail travel and the old north western side platform has been brought back into regular use as the down parcels only platform.

It is now the third busiest station in Wales, only Cardiff Central and Cardiff Queen Street being busier. Latest statistics (for 2017/18) reveal that total passenger exits and entrances were just short of 3 million, per annum.

This short article barely does justice to so complex a subject but I hope that it does give some insight into the way in which Newport developed during the 19th century as a direct result of its position and transport links into its industrial hinterland.



Left – Newport and its surrounding area

Right -Enlargement of Central Newport showing the complexity of lines

Both of these maps have appeared in an article in the Railway Magazine and are not indicative of the situation at any particular date. Rather, they provide an idea of what the system would have looked like had all lines been open simultaneously.



The eastern end of the station in broad gauge days with Thomas Street level crossing. Mill Street is on the left. Note also the primitive signal on the right and water tower on the left.



Dock Street passenger station



High Street passenger station before rebuilding in 1926 – 1930



High Street passenger station after rebuilding in 1926 – 1930

Talking Points (started by Stephen Berry!) – responses to DIT 33

Interestingly everyone who responded correctly identified the first photograph as being of St Julian's Methodist Church, the photographer standing just outside the Victoria pub. The road to the right (with the gathering of females and a child on the corner) is Somerset Road and, in the distance what was to become St Julian's Avenue branches off right of the church. The bunting and general decorations suggest an important occasion – and there was at least one royal visit around this time. However, the event was actually the Bath & West Show which was held in Newport in 1907. It was held on the fields sloping down from Caerleon Road towards the river, roughly where The Moorings now stands. There are several interesting points of interest. The Methodist church was opened in 1902, having relocated from premises in Prince Street. The original building still exists and is now in use as a motor mechanic's workshop. There is no development in St Julians Avenue and it was still the driveway to Upper St Julians House which stood roughly in the area of the lower part of Elaine Crescent. One of the gate posts can still be found in St Julians Avenue – on the right hand side at the start of what is known as the Dingle, a path leading to Carlton Road. The fact that the B & W Show was held in Newport suggests that it was a generally (but erroneously) held opinion that Monmouthshire was English rather than Welsh. I guess that the lady with the banner in the bottom right hand corner of the photograph is pointedly challenging this view!

The second was not identified by anyone. It is the house on the corner of Beechwood Road and Gibbs Road, still easily recognisable if you know the area!

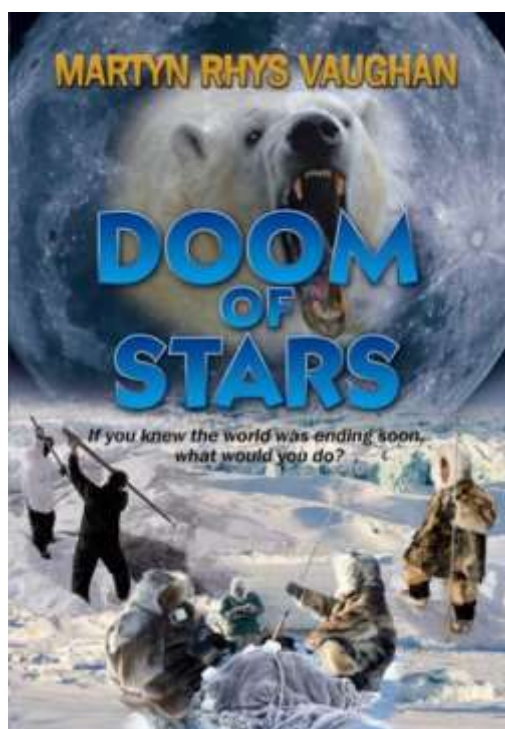
... and this edition's challenges!

An easy one to start, but a slightly more difficult one to follow! 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.





I am always happy to advertise original work from members of our U3A and this month I am advised that one of our regular contributors, Martyn Vaughan, has had a book published. Read on!



For thousands of years people have prophesied that the world is ending. But this time it's true. It is ending — and soon. For young Kalli that fact is doubly painful, for everyone believes that the catastrophe is the result of something her grandmother did. Yet she has in her possession a mysterious sphere that tells a very different story of how the disaster came about. Using its powers, she learns of someone else who may have been involved—a woman scientist, both brilliant and beautiful.

The sphere has the answers to many questions, but does it have the answer to how she and her new friend Jason can escape the Doom of Stars?

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/B08ZR9CDCM>