DESERT ISLAND TIMES

Sharing fellowship in

NEWPORT SE WALES U3A

No. 36 1st July 2021

Room with a view (Croyde) and balcony with a view (Porthmadog) – our May holiday venues

A MISCELLANY OF CONTRIBUTIONS FROM OUR MEMBERS

The Great Outdoors!

As planned we have been able to organise a partial reopening of our U3A by providing organised outdoor activities in accordance with Welsh Covid regulations. The relevant requirements for those attending any activity are summarised below.

No-one with Covid or Covid symptoms may attend any activity for 10 full days from the date of test or from when symptoms started.
No-one can attend a meeting who has been in contact with anyone who has Covid or has symptoms of Covid for 10 full days from date of contact
Up to 50 people will be able to gather from a mix of households as long as they remain outdoors during these activities.
If the activity is taking place indoors, the maximum number of people that can take part, from a mix of households, is 30. The activity must not take place in private homes, including in gardens or grounds. Music groups are permitted to rehearse indoors with up to 30 members under these rules.
Although the organiser must take all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus, individual members have their part to play and must themselves take all necessary precaution to ensure their own safety.
For Track-and-Trace purposes, a full attendance record of every event MUST be kept; it must contain the name, address and telephone number of each member present AT ANY TIME DURING THE SESSION. It is also required that any attendee MUST be a current member of Newport U3A.

WEEKLY OUTDOOR SOCIAL MEETINGS in the café area at Belle Vue Park started on Monday 7th June and will continue for the foreseeable future, subject to weather. You must bring sanitiser and a protective mask; you will also need to bring a chair or blanket to sit on. Should the numbers exceed 50 it will be necessary to form additional groups to ensure social-distancing is maintained. Times 10.15am – 12.15pm.

The CHOIR started meeting at the bandstand in Belle Vue Park on Thursday, 10th June, and has actually started rehearsing again. Each weekly session (again according to the weather) will take place from 10.15am in the bandstand and will incorporate at least a short concert performance.

The CRAFT GROUP is meeting on Fridays at 11am outside the conservatory attached to the café and are working on a number of projects.

Other OUTDOOR GROUPS can meet if they would like to – and our Walking groups are already doing so. Please contact your convenor to ask about arrangements.

PLEASE let your convenor(s) know whether you would be prepared to attend indoor meetings (subject to full risk assessment of premises and all safety measures being put into place) so that we can gauge the level of interest and have an idea of the size of the premises that will be appropriate for your group(s).

DON'T FORGET – YOU MUST HAVE PAID YOUR CURRENT SUBSCRPTION BEFORE YOU ATTEND ANY ORGANISED EVENT OF NEWPORT SE WALES U3A, though potential new members are welcome to join us at Belle Vue Park for a cuppa and a chat!

I propose to have a month off from Desert Island Times in August, but please submit any material for the 1st September edition of Desert Island Times by 21st August. Items should be emailed to me at stephenberry249@gmail.com and in Word format if at all possible, please.

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 **15 WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH CROCKERY** in the grid below?

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

Can you find the **15 SHAPES** in the grid below?

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

Answers are on page 11.

Extracts From The Gwent Village Book compiled into this article by Angela Robins

Here are the last of the interesting facts gleaned from the above which was compiled by W.I.s throughout Gwent and is one of The Villages of Britain series published in 1994. We can now stroll around our local places of interest and soak up their social history.

Caldicot had an English outlook until the arrival of Llanwern Steelworks in 1958. The Welsh Valleys provided much of the workforce and so the Welsh accent is now dominant but occasionally the Gloucestershire 'burr' can be heard. Many of those Welsh voices are now to be heard in the Caldicot Male Voice Choir, which has an international reputation.

A certain Henry Jones, purveyor of flour and biscuits in Bristol, lived in Caldicot. In 1846 he invented self-raising flour. Within six years he had granted licences to make this flour in the USA, Australia and New Zealand. When Florence Nightingale complained to 'The Times' about the sour bread that was supplied to troops in the Crimea, Henry Jones took on the Admiralty in her support. Eventually the Army and the Navy were using the new flour. Jones was eventually appointed purveyor of patent flour and biscuits to Queen Victoria.

Blaina owes its existence to the industrial revolution which brought ironmasters to the area and one George Brewer built Coalbrookvale House as his personal residence circa 1820. It was one of the finest houses in the community and noted for the fact that it was the first to have an indoor lavatory and running water. Brewer was one of the few ironmasters that refused to employ children under ten years of age. Within half a mile of the house can still be seen the fortified Round Tower that was built by Crawshay Bailey of Nantyglo to defend himself from revolting workers. Those were violent times. The mountain nearby is where 'Scotch Cattle' roamed. These were the early trade unionists who met secretly, dressed in cattle skins, and paid threatening visits to the homes of workers who were not prepared to support the early union formation in the ironworks.

Llantony's history began when St David chose to build himself a hermit's cell here in the 6th century. He lived (so tradition has it) on water and the wild leeks that later became the national symbol. (Apparently it was the Victorians who replaced them with the daffodil, finding a common vegetable rather undignified! The name Llantony derives from the Saint's residence there, being a corruption of Llandewi nant Honddu, or the Church of St David on the Honddu brook.

Gilwern On the hillside above Gilwern, commanding a magnificent view of the Vale of Usk, stands Llanelly church which is dedicated to St Elli. It has served the community since 1150 when it was built during the construction of the castles in the area and contains many historical features. Surrounding the church were 16 yew trees in a circle which were made famous by the Bowmen of Gwent who used the branches for their bows. Many are still standing but are now hollow.

Whitson and Goldcliff One of the oldest houses in the area was Whitson Court (recently demolished) and was built in 1795 and designed by John Nash. He was responsible for Clarence House and Brighton Pavilion. In 1901 it was used by French refugee nuns. More recently it became a zoological park when the RSPCA asked the owner to take two bear cubs, which led to a varied collection of animals. Unfortunately it had to close and the animals were distributed to other zoos, but the tiger remained until its death. When Eve Roberts died at The Farmer's Arms, the occupants of the inn became troubled of nights. The clashing of furniture, rattle of dishes, clanking of fire irons were followed by the sight of a woman in white walking to the church, who had the features of Eve. With full ceremony, the clergy came with bell, book and candle to lay the phantom. At the moment when her name was called, Eve's ghost appeared and fled with the villagers in full cry. Through meadow after meadow until she reached the Maindee area, and with the crowd hard-pressing her, she flung herself into a well and sank, never to be seen again. So the well became known as Ffynnon Eva - Eve's Well.

Raglan is dominated by the impressive ruins of the 15th century castle which was slighted under the orders of Cromwell, and for a century it provided free building materials for the neighbourhood. It is now maintained by CADW and is open daily. In the centre of the village is St Cadoc's Church, and in the Beaufort Chapel its north window is a striking testimony to the first Lord Raglan who died at the Crimea in 1855. He had been Wellington's Military Secretary and lost an arm at the battle of Waterloo. Ironically, the Raglan sleeve was named after him. About 1860 a Miss Anna Marie Bosanquet gave a peal of bells to the parish, but finding them too noisy sent them over to Llandenny Church. She then donated the tower clock which has only three faces because the railway had incurred her displeasure, so she decreed that the station should not have a clock facing in its direction.

Llanthony Priory

Famous Artists and Composers Quiz submitted by Pam Cocchiara

The following famous artists and composers are recognisable by their surnames but what are their forenames? Answers are on page 16.

1. Toulouse-Lautrec
2. Matisse
3. Picasso
4. Klimt
5. Vermeer
6. Manet
7. Monet
8. Renoir
9. Munch
10. Holbein

a. Vaughan Williams
b. Mendelssohn
c. Vivaldi
d. Bizet
e. Liszt
f. Chopin
g. Wagner
h. Verdi
i. Purcell
j. Debussy

The Organ in Shaftesbury Street Methodist Church by Stephen Berry

Although this article traces the history of the pipe organ in Shaftesbury Street Methodist Church, it is necessary to start by giving a general overview of the instrument we call a pipe organ.

The pipe organ has a millennia-long history and, although it has evolved greatly, still has many features in common with its early ancestors. For centuries there has been a keyboard or keyboards (*manuals*) almost identical to that of a piano and, on most instruments of any size built in the UK since 1851, a pedalboard, consisting of much larger notes but in an identical arrangement, played by the feet. One immediate difference comes in the quantity of notes available – generally 85 or 88 on a piano and 54, 56, 58 or 61 on an organ. Pedalboards vary, generally between 13 and 32, with 25, 30 and 32 notes being the most common. An organ needs a supply of wind at a constant pressure and at least one set of pipes (one pipe per note usually) which sound when notes are played. Each set of pipes is called a *rank* and is operated by drawing out a *stop*. Ranks (and therefore stops) fall into four main categories – Diapasons, Flutes, Strings and Reeds. The first of these contain stops that are immediately recognisable as being an organ; the second stops that effectively imitate a flute, the third a sound that approximates to the string section of an orchestra; and the fourth the trumpets and such other instruments as oboes and clarinets. As stops have three main pitches (unison, one octave higher and two octaves higher) while the pedal organ is pitched at one octave lower, the art of the organist (apart from playing the right notes!) lies in the effective combination of different stops to achieve various sounds. Dynamics (volume) can only be achieved by the addition or subtraction of stops except in the case of the second manual, whose pipes are enclosed in a box with opening shutters operated by a pedal or lever.

No two organs are identical. Even if there are no visible differences the sound is likely to be different as it depends to a very large extent on the building in which the instrument is situated.

The organ which forms the subject of this article was built in Newport, South Wales, in 1853 and may still be heard in Shaftesbury Street Methodist Church. The builder was Charles Goddard of Newport, and it was built for H. J. Groves.

The family tree I have constructed suggests that a John Goddard, was born in Middlesex (and almost certainly one of the London parishes) in 1785. He had relocated to Bath by 1810, when he married Emma Manley there. The baptismal entries variously show his occupation either as Carpenter, or as Organ Builder or as Piano Forte Maker and it is clear that all four of his adult sons and five out of six of his adult grandsons followed in his footsteps. The eldest son, James, is consistently described as an organ builder, while the others were all engaged in the manufacture of pianos.

The sons were all born in Bath. They are James (1815), Charles (1817), Edwin (1822), John (1824 – died 1839) and Frederick (1831). James first settled in Bath, but moved to Cheltenham in around 1847, he being described as an Organ Builder on the census for 1851. John and Emma, together with sons Edwin and Frederick, were living in Gloucester by 1851; Charles had moved to Newport by this time. James joined his brother Charles in Newport sometime around 1855. James' sons were Henry, James, John and Hubert; Henry went to Jersey where he was an organ tuner, James to Gloucester as an organ builder, John stayed in Newport as an organ builder and Hubert (clearly the black sheep of the family!) went to London as a tobacconist.

Charles is the son who is of particular interest to us. He always seems to have been described as a piano forte maker in official documents, although the Newport directories for the period 1852 to 1859 describe

him as a Pianoforte and Organ Seller. However, we know that he was definitely responsible for the construction of this pipe organ in 1853. We know that "Goddard of Newport" built a pipe organ for Lydney Parish Church in 1860, but we don't know whether this was Charles or James – date-wise it could have been either, although given the other circumstantial evidence available it would seem that it was more likely to have been James who was responsible. Early in 1867 Charles' name appeared in the London Gazette as a bankrupt, his occupation described as Pianoforte Maker and Furniture Dealer. By 1871 James is described as an Organ Builder and I wonder if Charles passed this side of the business (which was probably a very small part of it) over to his elder brother, as James continues in this occupation thereafter.

What is very clear is that the handful of instruments that we know were built by any of the Goddard brothers were all small. In a sense, that is why the chances of their existence were so much lowered. It must be remembered that, at the time we are talking about, organs were still a novelty in all but the largest churches and cathedrals and it was certainly not usual to find an organ in a non-conformist place of worship. Thus, when an organ was considered, the ruling bodies of many religious buildings erred on the side of caution and ordered a small instrument, not only to see how successful the experiment was going to be but also because of cost considerations. Many such instruments were later extended or replaced, and, because of its method of construction, individual parts could be recycled into other instruments. This was particularly true of ranks of pipes, although it is possible that the pipes in the Goddards' organs were bought commercially from a larger organ works which had the facilities for producing them. We have no means of knowing.

It really is wonderful that the organ built by Charles Goddard in 1853 can still be seen and heard. It has had virtually no alterations made to it and is certainly the only known organ built by any of the Goddards which still exists. It is (during non-COVID restriction times) still in regular use and is clearly a historic instrument, coming as it does shortly after the Great Exhibition of 1851. This was really a watershed in the historical development of the organ in Britain. Although the organ had been developing, progress was erratic and many organists still preferred the "English" organ to what was beginning to supersede it – the "German" organ. We are not concerned here with larger instruments – those that show the most change – but with those smaller instruments which incorporated at least some of the new fashions. Amongst these was the shortening of the main keyboard (or manual) at the bass end and the provision of pedals to provide the bass instead. It is a fact that many older and smaller organs still in existence have never had pedals. The fact that our particular organ was built with pedals shows quite an advanced outlook – but this might be accounted for when we consider for whom it was built.

A label on the organ tells us that it was built for H. J. Groves by Chas. Goddard, Organ Builder, Newport, Mon. So what do we know of Mr Groves? In the 1848 Newport Directory he is living at 99 Stow Hill and is a Professor of Music and Singing. According to the 1851 Census, Henry Groves was 26 years old, born in Oxford and living with his wife and a servant in Palmyra Place, Newport. Ten years later he was living at 49 Stow Hill. By 1871 he was living at 12 Tredegar Place at the bottom of Bridge Street – that area around the front of the Queens Hotel. In around 1882 he disappeared from the local scene, moving to Sussex where he died shortly afterwards.

He was clearly a very prominent figure in the musical world locally and there are reports in the local press of concerts put on by Professor Groves as far afield as Raglan – easy today, but no mean feat when he had to organise the transportation of all of the artistes from Newport.

We know that Mr Groves was organist of St Paul's church quite early on in his musical career and, later, at St Woolos church. The fact that he was still moving around the town when the organ was built in 1853 suggests that it was not provided for his residence. It was certainly not unknown for Victorian organists to defray the costs of installation or improvements to instruments they played – enlargements made to the organ in Victoria Road Congregational Church in 1887 were wholly funded by the then organist. On this basis, we may deduce that our 1853 organ started its life in St Paul's Church, although it cannot have lasted there too long as there is evidence that, in 1893, the then organ in St Paul's was enlarged. There is a hint that it might have spent some time in a Masonic Temple in High Street, although this would have been at an early stage of its career as the Masonic Hall had assumed its present position in Lower Dock Street by 1876. What is certain is that it found its way to Commercial Road Methodist Church (possibly when the Masonic Hall relocated to Dock Street). From here it was moved to its present home in Shaftesbury Street by March 1899.

Apparently the organ travelled with a reputation! It was suggested in February 1898 that it was "aged and infirm", and it is quite possible that it had gained this reputation largely because of its location within its previous homes. Nothing affects the sound of an organ more than its being placed in a constricted position or in a very dry acoustic; this is certainly not the case at Shaftesbury Street and a contemporary comment to the effect that "the instrument was transferred there because it would be of no use anywhere else" was soon disproved; by January 1901 the Circuit Magazine reported:

> "This instrument gives a good account of itself in its new surroundings and effectively leads the hearty singing which is a feature of the services there."

Mr Dowding, a former organist at Shaftesbury Street and the late father-in-law of the present organist, Alan Bigley, carried out some initial research into the history of the organ in 1953. His notes have been of immense value in drawing up this article. He records that a tuner once told him that "You will not find pipes and materials of this quality used today. He was also told by a builder who inspected the instrument that the signature "John Goddard" and the date 1853 had been inscribed on the great organ soundboard; from this we have the date of construction and the fact that the soundboard (on which the pipes stand) had been made by Charles' father. This is highly likely as it the sort of work that would need the skills of a carpenter and joiner – and John had also described himself as an organ builder. By 1853 John could easily have travelled from his home in Gloucester to Newport to carry this out.

I have already mentioned that the organ is in virtually its original condition. It is now time to have a look at what that means and to specify what alterations have been made.

The "console" (that part of the instrument from which the organist directs the sound) is, of course, important as he or she has to be comfortably positioned and everything has to be within reach. Its position is extremely unusual for a small instrument; the console was usually an integral part of the case of the instrument. At Shaftesbury Street, however, the organist sits back to the case and facing the congregation. All of the links between notes and stops and the soundboards are mechanical (known as tracker action) and they pass beneath the organist's feet and into the heart of the instrument. The real advantage is that the organist can see the choir, who sit in front of the console. The layout of the stop heads at the console is slightly unconventional, but this is something which is soon overcome.

The organ has two manuals (or keyboards) of 54 notes each and a pedalboard of 25 notes. In total, it now has 475 pipes. The lower manual is known as the great organ. In most instruments of this age the great organ contained the louder stops but this instrument defies convention as both manuals are well-

balanced in volume. The stops it contains actually suggest a design which harks back to earlier days – many Victorian organs were bigger than this one but were far less successful in accompanying congregational singing because of the absence of what is known as “upperwork”. The great organ contains the following stops:

Open Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason Bass	8
Stopped Diapason Treble	8
Dulciana	8
Principal	4
Flute	4
Fifteenth	2

Now this needs some explanation for the uninitiated. Firstly, the numbers. They relate to the speaking length of the longest pipe for that stop, if the pipe is “open”. If, however, it is “stopped”, then the actual length of the longest pipe will be half of this. It is therefore better to think of the numbers as relating to pitch; any stop labelled 8 will sound at pitch; one marked 4 will sound an octave higher and one marked 2 two octaves higher. The smaller the number, the brighter will be the sound produced and these smaller-numbered stops are what constitute “upperwork”. There are, in fact, only six stops and not seven as it might first appear; the Stopped Diapason is divided into treble and bass sections. There is a reason of economy behind this; on a small instrument the Dulciana only has the top 42 pipes out of 54, the Stopped Diapason bass completing the bottom octave. The Open Diapason (the biggest pipes in the organ, made of metal) will be complete from around 6ft upwards, the bass notes being provided with stopped wooden pipes.

Of these stops, the Open Diapason, Principal and Fifteenth are the three members of the Diapason family, which is the most recognisable of all the sounds found on English organs. The Stopped Diapason despite its name, is a flute stop! The Dulciana is midway between the two with a slight string tone and is one of the quieter stops.

The upper manual is known as the swell organ. Its pipes are all contained in a shuttered box as described above. As was common in organs of this age, only the top 42 notes were provided with pipes. The swell organ contains the following stops:

Stopped Diapason	8
Principal	4
Cremona	8

The Cremona is a reed stop and is in fact a miniature trumpet, which adds considerably to the full organ.

The pedal organ has but one stop – this was common even on much larger instruments. This is named Bourdon and has a sounding length of 16ft. It is the bass equivalent of the Stopped Diapason.

As originally built, the organ would, of course, have been hand-blown. This was the first improvement to be made; in November 1947 a “Discus” Electric Blower was installed. Eight years later the organ was completely dismantled for cleaning and repair or renewal of any time-worn parts, including the installation of a new pedal board. This was simply routine maintenance. However, the opportunity was taken to add the bottom octave of pipes to the swell organ, though, as space inside the swell box was severely restricted, the additional pipes were placed outside the box. This minor amount of new work

incorporates the most modern technology within the instrument as it was not possible to replicate the original mechanical action because of space limitations. For the bottom twelve notes of the Swell manual, therefore, tubular pneumatic action was used. This avoids mechanical linkage, as the connection between the notes and the wind chest inside the organ is by means of thin metal tubes. When a note is played, air is admitted into the thin tube which then passes rapidly into the organ, causing a tiny bellows to inflate. Attached to this tiny bellows is a thin rod which operates a lever to admit wind into the pipes. This system was common from around the time the instrument was moved to Shaftesbury Street, but thankfully the original mechanical action was retained and is still working perfectly.

Thus, the only changes to the 1853 organ are the installation of electric blowing and the completion of the swell organ.

A representative from Hill, Norman & Beard, one of the country's larger organ builders of the 20th century, gave the following opinion in 1978:

> "We are delighted to learn of the decision to retain the Shaftesbury Street organ which Mr Burn [*who had inspected the instrument*] feels may well be of historic importance – there are many indications which lead us to suspect this. He describes the instrument as being "unique, a gem of the early English period."

Nine months later a further letter came from the same source, which confirmed:

> "Mr Burn has much praise for the quality of the instrument and I think it might be said that you have an historic instrument."

At the time of his first inspection in 1977 Mr Burns asked how much the organ was insured for, going on to say that it should be insured for £25,000 – and that was just over 40 years ago!

I don't know what schemes have been advanced in the past for this organ, but it would not be surprising to learn that some "improvement" and enlargement had been mooted at some point – particularly back in the 1920s when such schemes were rife. Perhaps the costs were prohibitive even back then – if so, we must be very thankful that nothing has been done to destroy the essence of this wonderful instrument, which is still sounding as sweet as it did when it was built 168 years ago.

I had compiled this history late in 2017 and, given the conclusions concerning the historic importance of this instrument, suggested to the church authorities that an application should be made to the British Institute of Organ Studies to seek a Historic Organ Certificate. Such certificates are issued very sparingly and applications are vetted by leading figures in the organ world. The church agreed and was happy for me to proceed with making the application on their behalf.

The application was successful and the organ has been given a Grade II listing, the system being a parallel of that we are used to for historic buildings, It is the only instrument in Newport to have been awarded any listing by BIOS and is an important recognition of the worth of the organ that we are used to hearing when we are able to gather for our U3A Carol Services. Hopefully it won't be too long before we can hear it again!

CRYPTIC PUZZLE PYRAMID - Angela Robins

Each answer, except the first, is an ANAGRAM of the previous answer plus one other letter. Most Cryptic Clues include a definition of the answer, as in a straight crossword, so anyone can have a go at this puzzle.

Contact me on valdemosa2@gmail.com if you would like to receive my weekly easy cryptic crossword with hints and answers.

Answers are on Page 24.

1. State Code is 100 : Zero __ __
2. Mythical bird is primarily riot of colour __ __ __
3. A short moment from Spanish island will find whale __ __ __ __
4. Scatty Taroc is a thespian __ __ __ __ __
5. Deranged heartless crackpot is a jailer __ __ __ __ __ __
6. Fruit; a soft right one before bed __ __ __ __ __ __ __
7. Hot and humid is retro P.I. Callan at heart __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __
8. Illustrative old Sunday newspaper __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __

HINTS: 1. Numbers representing letters. 2. Acronym. 3. Part Word Exchange 4. Anagram 5. Anagram of Part Word 6. Text/ A-Z Abbreviations/ number/ Word Exchange. 7. Hidden Word. 8. Double Definition.

Wordsearches (page 3) - Answers

15 CROCKERY ANSWERS in no particular order:

GLASS	TEAPOT	CUP
PITCHER	BOTTLE	CHINA
RAMEKIN	CARAFE	JUG
PLATTER	MUG	TUMBLER
SAUCER	DISH	BEAKER

15 SHAPES ANSWERS in no particular order:

ARC	CROSS	ROUND
HEART	CHEVRON	SPHERE
OVAL	WEDGE	PRISM
FORM	STAR	CONE
SQUARE	ZIGZAG	BOW

What We Were Doing . . . by Angela Robins

. . . Two years ago, long term member, Greg Platt resigned as convenor of the All That Jazz group, but not before arranging yet another live concert for the entertainment of all members. Greg himself has performed with many musicians for several decades so had plenty of associates from whom to choose.

The professional quartet consisting of Mac Cambray, Mike Gale, Jeff Meredith and Alan Johnson soon had us clapping and foot tapping to some well-known Jazz tunes, and the 'pièce de résistance' was our very own Greg singing a solo for the final number. How cool was that!

The Chairman thanked Greg for all his hard work and for providing some wonderful memories for us all in his various roles within our U3A.

This group will continue to meet monthly to listen to a programme of recordings and to explore all genres of Jazz, from its roots in New Orleans to Swing, Latin and through to the Modern.

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Euan is a drummer and is often ridiculed by his U3A musician mates. One said "Someone who can't play any instrument is given two sticks and makes him the drummer" to which Euan replied "and if he can't play that, they take away one stick and make him the conductor!"

So he visits a music shop with the intention of buying a new instrument to learn. He has a look around and says to the shop assistant, "I quite fancy that red trumpet and that massive accordion." To which the assistant replies, "You can have the fire extinguisher but the radiator has to stay!"

British Prime Ministers - Herbert Henry Asquith, 'The Last of the Romans' by Gerald Lee

Asquith achieved much as prime-minister, yet he is hardly remembered.

He is often referred to as 'the Last of the Romans.' He brought an end to a certain style of political leadership, the classically trained imperialist, maintaining certain values of liberty and social reform within the established order.

Until the time of Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair he was the longest serving prime-minister of the twentieth century, serving eight continuous years. He was the last PM to lead a Liberal government. After Asquith, the Liberals only ever held office as part of a coalition. Historically, he is overshadowed by his subordinate and successor as PM, David Lloyd George.

His background was traditionally Liberal and nonconformist. His father was a wool merchant. Asquith attended a Moravian School. When he became PM, he was regarded at court as 'not quite a gentleman'.

Although born near Leeds he was as much a Londoner. On his father's death in 1860, other members of the family supported him, so he received much of his education in London.

He won a scholarship to Balliol College Oxford, where he became president of the union. He was awarded a first class degree in Greats and a junior fellowship. He decided to pursue a career as a barrister, from which he earned a steady income. He was always a happy family man. Through his friend Richard Haldane he became active in Liberal politics. Gladstone asked him to write a report on the legal position of the MP Charles Bradlaugh, who as an atheist refused to swear the oath.

His career received a boost when he acted as junior counsel in the Piggott case. The 'Times' printed an article by a journalist called Piggott alleging the Irish leader Purnell had sympathized with political violence. There was a commission to investigate. Asquith was asked to cross-examine the manager of the 'Times,' C J Macdonald. He succeeded in destroying the credibility of Piggott, who fled and committed suicide.

From this his prestige as a barrister increased. Haldane suggested he apply to be a Liberal candidate for the neighbouring constituency of East Fife, a seat he was to represent until 1918.

In 1894 Gladstone became PM for the last time. Asquith was asked to move the motion to remove the Salisbury government. Much to his surprise Gladstone then appointed him to the Home Office at the age of only 39.

He was an efficient minister and was clearly a potential leader. He introduced a Factory Act allowing inspectors to review premises for safety, but, in a taste of future conflicts, an Employers Liability Bill was destroyed by the House of Lords. He introduced regulations on the use of Trafalgar Square for meetings. His use of troops and the Metropolitan Police to maintain order in Featherstone resulted in two deaths. It would mar his relations with Labour politicians in the future.

A favourite Liberal cause, although not one that greatly interested him, was the Disestablishment of the Welsh Church. He could not take any action. However, it was his first encounter with the rising figure of Welsh Liberalism, a young solicitor, David Lloyd George.

When Gladstone retired, Lord Roseberry, a Liberal Imperialist became PM. When eventually the government fell, there was a dual leadership of sorts between two rivals who had no great love for one another, Roseberry and Harcourt. Asquith could have staked a claim for the leadership then, but at that time MPs did not receive a salary, and his earnings at the bar, probably twice the salary of a cabinet minister, were too much to sacrifice with a young family.

When his first wife died in 1894, he married Margot Tennant, who became a personality in her own right. Although Margot had a private income, without his earnings at the bar he could not have maintained his lifestyle. When he took office, she gave up her fox hounds and horses. Campbell-Bannerman (popularly known as C-B) emerged as the new leader. As you can read in my previous article, C-B was a man who was often underestimated.

The Unionist government led by Balfour was finding itself in increasing difficulty. Although there was a tide of jingoism over the Boer War, the reports of the abuse of civilians in concentration camps turned public opinion against the government.

When Joseph Chamberlain decided to resign from the Colonial Office to advocate tariff reform, it was a gift to the Liberals. The Unionists were accused of wanting to tax the working man's loaf. With his legal training Asquith became the most effective spokesman on free trade. C-B would summon Asquith to speak, 'Send for the Sledgehammer.'

In the 1905 election the Liberals won a massive landslide. Asquith, Edward Grey and Haldane plotted to force C-B to accept a peerage and, in effect, place Asquith in the pivotal role as leader of the parliamentary party. C-B faced down the revolt. Asquith became Chancellor and heir apparent.

Sir Edward Grey became foreign secretary and Haldane was appointed to the War Office.

Asquith was an efficient Chancellor. He reduced taxes on basic commodities such as coal, tea and sugar, and the basic rate of tax from one shilling to nine pence. For the first time there was a graduated income tax with higher earners paying more. His budgets paved the way for a non-contributory system of Old Age Pensions.

Asquith was the natural successor to C-B, who was dying, although still holding on to office. He called Asquith 'the greatest gentleman I have ever met.' C-B finally resigned on 1st April 1908, too ill to be moved from Downing St, where he died three weeks later. The King did not want to interrupt his holiday In Biarritz. He summoned Asquith, who travelled by scheduled transport and without any officials, the first time a British PM was appointed outside the UK.

Lloyd George replaced Asquith at the Exchequer, otherwise the government continued. As PM Asquith did not interfere with his ministers, in much the same manner as Baldwin. Like Baldwin he also ensured he had his periods of relaxation away from Westminster, especially on the continent. He enjoyed a rich social life and read widely. He also enjoyed golfing holidays, often with political opponents such as Balfour and MacDonald. On one golfing holiday a suffragette attacked him. He did not have any police protection and had to fight her off with his daughter's help.

He thought of combining the posts of Chancellor and PM but decided against it. However, because of the death of C-B he delivered the 1908 budget, noteworthy for the introduction of the Old Age Pension. Lloyd George has received most of the credit, but really it was Asquith's achievement.

Although the Liberals had a large majority, they did not control the House of Lords. The Conservatives were prepared to use their majority to thwart Liberal reforms.

Bills on Licensing; an education act to address Nonconformist grievances against the Balfour Act; and a parliamentary reform bill; were all lost. The Liberals knew a confrontation would come, but perhaps did not anticipate it would come over the 1909 Budget.

This was a big issue so Asquith had to tread carefully. The King asked him to restrain his more vociferous ministers such as Lloyd George and Churchill. Two elections in 1910 produced largely the same result, a stalemate between the two main parties, but with the Liberals able to stay in office with support of the Irish Nationalist and Labour parties.

This created a new problem. The price of that support would be Home Rule for Ireland, an issue that would affect the whole Empire and potentially lead to a civil war in the northern Unionist counties.

Asquith stayed calm and played on fears of a mass creation of Liberal peers to pass legislation. Rather unfortunately he used the expression 'wait and see,' which was to haunt him with charges of indecision during the war. Eventually the Lords gave way. The Parliament Bill reduced the Lords' Powers to delay for a maximum of two years. It was Asquith's greatest political achievement and established the supremacy of the Commons.

Unlike most PMs Asquith was not active in foreign affairs, which he left in the hands of Sir Edward Grey. When there was a crisis over the Home Rule Bill and the threat of army officers refusing to coerce the Unionists, Asquith took control of the War Office himself. Haldane, by then Lord Chancellor, was his main adviser. As Britain edged towards war, he surrendered to press pressure and appointed Lord Kitchener, on leave from Egypt, Minister of War.

Most thought the war would be short lived and the troops would be home by Christmas. Asquith was not comfortable as a war PM but he certainly had no intention of resigning. He was held responsible for the "1915 Shell Crisis".
[The army was using the wrong types of shell on the WW1 battlefields and there was a major shortage of the more effective high-explosive shells, resulting in battle defeats inflicted by the Germans, such as at the Battle of Aubers in May 2015. Details about the 1915 Shell Crisis can be read here:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shell_Crisis_of_1915 – Ed].

Asquith was forced to agree to a coalition, although the big jobs were still filled by Liberals. Increasingly there was discontent, stoked by Lloyd George who wanted to run the war with a small group of ministers outside the cabinet. In a speech Lloyd George repeated the words 'too late.' It was a bid for power that no PM could accept. When Asquith resigned, he probably expected to be reappointed. He was never to hold office again. He had hoped to be invited to join the British delegation to Versailles after the war, but really, he had ceased to count politically and Lloyd George could not contemplate a rival, who was technically his party leader, at the conference.

The Liberal party was in an awkward situation. Asquith was still leader, and effectively leader of the opposition to a government of which his own party was a member. In opposition he changed his stance on women's suffrage and supported votes for women.

His faction came into conflict with the government over the Maurice Debate, a suggestion Lloyd George had given misleading figures on troops available for France. Some say the split led to Liberal losses in the next election. Those who had opposed Lloyd George faced a coalition candidate.

Asquith himself had two sons in France. His eldest, Raymond, regarded as his natural heir, died in service. Nevertheless, Asquith continued as leader of a very divided party. Lloyd George offered him a place in the coalition as Lord Chancellor, which would mean leaving the Commons. He fought the 1918 election as a Liberal outside the coalition. His group of 'wee frees' was reduced to 29 with him losing his seat in East Fife. He was, however, returned to parliament in a by-election as MP for Paisley.

It was clear Liberalism was in decline. Baldwin fought the 1923 election on tariff reform, possibly as a ploy to unite the Liberals and destroy the coalition for good. The Liberals were increasingly pushed to the fringe, depending on the two larger parties for any hope of power. Although Lloyd George accepted Asquith as leader, he kept control of his political fund, accrued during the coalition. This increased the personal hostility towards him throughout the party.

In 1924, having lost his seat at Paisley, he accepted an earldom and the Garter. There was already an Earl of Oxford, so he assumed the title Earl of Oxford and Asquith, in recognition of the importance of the

university to him. It was a personal blow when he was not elected Chancellor of Oxford University, losing to a rather undistinguished Conservative, Lord Cave.

From 1924 he led the party from the Lords. He clashed with Lloyd George over the General Strike. Like most Liberals, Asquith regarded the strike as a challenge to public order. Both he and Edward Grey condemned the strike on radio. When Lloyd George produced his own plan for coal and was more sympathetic to the miners, Asquith suspended him from the shadow cabinet.

Finally, having suffered a stroke, he reluctantly resigned as leader in 1926. Unlike Lloyd George he did not become rich in office or earn very much from his memoirs. When he died in 1928 his estate was worth only £9,345. Until her death in 1945 his widow, Margot, relied on earnings from writing, and financial support from her family, and friends such as Lord Beaverbrook. His son Anthony became a well-known film director. His younger daughter, Lady Violet Bonham Carter, once considered a suitable match for Winston Churchill, was a popular radio personality and remained an active Liberal. The actress, Helena Bonham Carter, is the best-known family member today.

Over the years Asquith's reputation has fluctuated. As the last leader of a Liberal government and a long serving PM he is well regarded among fellow Liberals. His biggest achievement is probably the Parliament Act establishing the supremacy of the Commons over the Lords. He kept the Liberals united at a time when social change was undermining its political base. He moved towards social reform, but like Lloyd George he saw the inevitability of the rise of Labour as the alternative to the Conservatives.

He is overshadowed by his contemporaries, Lloyd George and Churchill. Unlike them, his memories are not boastful or sensational.

Since the publication of Roy Jenkins' biography his reputation has probably suffered from the publication of his numerous affectionate letters to young lady friends, in particular Venetia Stanley. When she married one of his colleagues, he was quite disturbed, particularly as she would be converting to Judaism to preserve his inheritance. The terms of the letters are surprisingly intimate, although there is no evidence that he ever had, like Lloyd George, indulged in extra marital affairs. It is surprising that these letters were written during crises and in meetings and often discussed sensitive political matters. This tends to undermine him as a war leader, seemingly unable to concentrate on the important issues.
Liberalism struggles even today to resolve its identity crisis between Asquith and Lloyd George followers. In the 1960s Jo Grimond, whose wife was related to Asquith, remarked that even then there was still a division within the party.

He might have achieved greatness in another era. Sadly, it was his failure to inspire the nation during the war that has led to his eclipse by his successor, David Lloyd George.

Famous Artists and Composers Quiz (page 5) – Answers

1. Henri de Toulouse Lautrec	a. Ralph Vaughan Williams
2. Henri Matisse	b. Felix Mendelssohn
3. Pablo Picasso	c. Antonio Vivaldi
4. Gustav Klimt	d. Georges Bizet
5. Jan Vermeer	e. Franz Liszt
6. Edouard Manet	f. Frederic Chopin
7. Claude Monet	g. Richard Wagner
8. Pierre Auguste Renoir	h. Giuseppe Verdi
9. Edvard Munch	i. Henry Purcell
10. Hans Holbein	j. Achille Claude Debussy

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

2. Medium

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

3. Hard

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

4. Evil

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

A New Challenge

As you have not had a challenge for some while now a new one has been suggested – another good idea from Gerald! Can you please submit a short (or long!) piece on your memories of the 1960s and/or 1970s? What was school or the workplace like then and how different from now? Two quite major events were the hard winter of early 1963 and the three-day-week of the mid-1970s, but there were others as well.

The Sea in Music by Neil Pritchard

I'm sure like me you're looking forward to a time when you can go on holiday. I must say I greatly miss those wonderful views along the Welsh coast, taking in the views out to sea. With that in mind I have conjured up a series of music inspired by composers' love of the sea. I hope this will transport you to the coastal delights of this country and European destinations. For as long as classical music has existed, composers have attempted to capture the sea in music. The ocean embodies all the moods that inspire composers in their symphonies, tone poems, operas and ballets—the tempestuous storms, the blissful calms, the surging waves, and the rippling, glistening textures emerging from the ever-changing nature of the weather. For some composers the sea has proved descriptive; in the 18th century Vivaldi called one of his Violin Concertos "La Tempesta di Mare" (storm at sea) and he focused on the volatile idea of a storm in music. For other composers a single event determined their approach. Mendelssohn's tour to Scotland produced The Hebrides, also known as Fingal's Cave, a romanticised evocation of his journeying. Whilst Mendelssohn's music was based on an actual voyage, the main character in Richard Wagner's 'sea-going' opera, The Flying Dutchman, is a figure of legend. Wagner uses a recurrent theme, known as 'leitmotiv', throughout, associated with a particular person, idea, or situation. In the overture to his opera he doesn't fail to illustrate the drama of the seascape and the wind, features that are especially popular for composers. The sea tends to encourage composers to use a great amount of orchestral colour, vitality of rhythm and genuine excitement. Although a later generation of composers did employ this approach, many also turned to the stillness and mystery associated with the sea.

The impressionists, led by Debussy in La Mer, created symphonic sketches of great breadth, using a large orchestra to explore a wide range of sounds and textures, from dawn stillness through evocations of the lapping waves, to a final interplay of wind and sea. This dazzling exploration of the sea's immensity and its mysterious stillness appealed to composers. The English composer John Ireland explored the sinister aspects of the sea in some of his piano pieces, Arnold Bax celebrated its drama in the orchestral tone poem Tintagel. Benjamin Britten's Four Sea Interludes (from his opera Peter Grimes) compare the world of nature, unexpected and dangerous, with the turmoil of a man's mind. Composers such as Frank Bridge and Ralph Vaughan Williams have also explored the symphonic implications of the sea, utilising calm, passion, storm in their music whilst hinting at mystery, and the unknowable chasms between the world of the human and the world of the sea, which elsewhere include whales, mermaids, and submerged cathedrals amongst other things. Of course, songs celebrate the sea too. There are many sea shanties and art songs—John Ireland's "Sea Fever" is one of the best known. This is an example of poetry going along with windswept music to heighten the drama. Given that we are an island with a large coastline, it may come as no surprise that a number of the pieces I have chosen are by British composers. The sea continues to exert its hold on composers to this day, whether in isolated songs, or in the use of all the forces of the modern orchestra and its possibilities for surging opulence. Let's hear one of the earliest examples of a storm at sea depicted in music, the Vivaldi Violin Concerto "La Tempesta di Mare":
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7zP4kvkRcE

It's interesting to note that until the romantic period in the 19th century, composers were not generally drawn to works invoking nature, including seascapes. But this changed as composers travelled more beyond their own borders to sea-bound destinations, drew on poetry and prose for inspiration and used enlarged orchestral forces to convey the natural world within their music. Felix Mendelssohn in fact was a great traveller and his Hebrides Overture is an early example of how music and the seascape he witnessed come together in original dramatic music. Mendelssohn was 20 when he went to Scotland for the first time. He went to Fingal's Cave on the island of Staffa in the Hebrides and was seasick on the journey there and back. But on his return to the mainland, he wrote his Hebrides Overture - Fingal's Cave. First a word about the cave itself. Three features combine to make Fingal's Cave perhaps the best known of all caves. Firstly, its structure is unique. Nowhere else is there a sea cave formed completely in

hexagonally jointed basalt rocks. Its appeal lies in the size, the sounds, the colours, and the remarkable symmetry of this 227 foot cavern, and by fractured columns which form a crude walkway just above high water level, allowing exploring visitors to go far inside. Secondly, the evergreen popularity of Mendelssohn's overture provides a continuous stirring reminder of this wonder of the world. Thirdly, the impact of the cave on all those who enter it, and especially on those who do so alone, is likely to be remembered for life.

Mendelssohn set out on the newly introduced paddle steamer service to sail round Mull calling at Iona and Staffa, returning down the Sound of Mull to Oban. The day was wild and all the passengers were ill. His travel companion Klingemann tells of the arrival at Staffa: "We were put out into boats and lifted by the hissing sea up the pillar stumps to the celebrated Fingal's Cave. A roar of waves surely never rushed into a stranger cavern, its many pillars making it look like the inside of an immense organ, black and resounding, and absolutely without purpose, and quite alone, the wide grey sea within and without". Conditions were so bad that the little craft had only reached the cave at nightfall, and Mendelssohn can hardly have enjoyed seeing Fingal's Cave since he was so seasick. However, the visit to Staffa, and the sight and sound of the Atlantic swell tumbling into the Cave, made a profound impression on him. Apparently, Mendelssohn came up with the opening theme as soon as he saw the cave, and later jotted it onto a postcard with a note to his sister that read: “In order to make you understand how extraordinarily the Hebrides affected me, I send you the following, which came into my head there.”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdQyN7MYSN8

Of all the Romantic composers it's fair to say that Wagner was one of the most dramatic in his representation of nature, as you can see in his many operas. The Flying Dutchman is a good example. I must admit I do find some of Wagner's opera's quite a struggle, but having seen The Flying Dutchman at the Millennium Centre a few years ago I was very impressed by the way the opera came over, as both an absorbing story, and as music of the finest quality. The magic of this fantastic opera lies in its ability to satisfy Wagner fans and those who, more attached to the Italian style, prefer the work of Verdi or Puccini. It's clear that The Flying Dutchman, Wagner's first masterpiece, is haunting. The music is dominated by the sound of waves as soon as the curtain rises, a sound that grows irresistibly in your mind. The drama unfolds relentlessly, based on a story that never fails to fascinate even those who do not believe in legends. Using a number of leitmotivs (musical themes) that he presents, hides, transforms, and draws out, with great effect, Wagner takes his audience on an amazing journey, where the Dutchman, an otherworldly, supernatural being, seeks redemption through the love of a faithful woman. It is a breath-taking story of sacrifice, punctuated with fantastic monologues, dizzying duets, rousing choruses and accompanied by an orchestra that is much more than a background for the voices, always in the forefront of the drama.

To summarise the action: every seven years, the Flying Dutchman, who is condemned to roam the sea for having defied God, is cast ashore and can seek redemption in the form of being saved from sin. Only the love of a faithful woman, willing to sacrifice her life for him, can release him from his curse. Tempted by his wealth -and unaware of his destiny - a Norwegian sailor named Darland agrees to give the Dutchman his daughter Senta’s hand in marriage. Betrothed to Erik, Senta nevertheless remains fascinated by the legend of the Flying Dutchman. When her father introduces the stranger she immediately promises to be faithful to the mysterious man forever. However, Erik's bitter argument with Senta causes this new relationship to unravel. Convinced he has been betrayed, the Dutchman reveals his curse before setting sail on his ghostly ship in his eternal quest for redemption. Desperately in love, Senta throws herself into the sea, thus saving the Dutchman’s soul. It does sound a bit grim, but apart from being a new type of opera at the time of composition, it grips you from the very start, as you'll hear in the overture. So let's 'big it up' for Wagner:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ezqen5-UxlQ

Another composer who used his music to depict the sea in a dramatic way was the Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. In 1888 he composed Scheherazade, an exotic, ravishing, timeless, evocative fantasy brimming with drama and sheer wonder based on the "1001 Nights", a collection of ancient Arabian legends. The 1001 Nights, or The Arabian Nights, has a fascinating history. Indian, Persian and Arabic sources have been suggested for individual tales, and the first references to collections of "One Thousand Nights" are found in documents from the 10th century. The earliest surviving manuscript comes from 14th century Syria, which Antoine Galland freely adapted to create a French version, introducing the Nights to Europe for the first time in the early 18th century. It was a translation of Galland's version that inspired Rimsky-Korsakov. The individual stories of the Nights are famously unified by an enticing story: the cruel Sultan Shahryar, convinced of the faithlessness of all women, takes a new bride every night only to have her executed at dawn, until one, Scheherazade, saves herself and wins his heart by telling stories, being sure to end each night in the middle of a tale. Rimsky-Korsakov would name his suite after her.

He recalled composing it in his memoirs: "The program I had been guided by in composing Scheherazade consisted of separate, unconnected episodes and pictures from The Arabian Nights, scattered through all four movements of my suite: the sea and Sinbad's ship, the fantastic narrative of the Prince Kalandar, the Prince and the Princess, the Baghdad festival and the ship dashing against the rock with the bronze rider upon it. I meant these hints to direct, but only slightly, the hearer's fancy. All I had desired was that the hearer, if he liked my piece as symphonic music, should carry away the impression that it is beyond doubt an oriental narrative of some numerous and varied fairy-tale wonders and not merely four pieces played one after the other." The one tale that Rimsky-Korsakov definitely wrote into the score is the first story, which is vividly depicted through music. The suite begins with a growling depiction of Shahryar and Scheherazade, represented throughout the suite by a solo violin. She is often accompanied by a harp, evoking the centuries old traditions of poets accompanying themselves with this ancient instrument. She then conjures images of "the sea and Sinbad's ship." The waves are evoked by a gently rocking accompaniment in the cellos as the violins play an evocative melody in the key of E major. As a composer who associated musical sounds with colours, Rimsky-Korsakov heard the key of E major as the deep, dark blue of the sea. This depiction of the vast, beckoning ocean was also inspired by Rimsky-Korsakov's time as an officer in the Russian navy, during which he sailed as far as Brazil. In this version the work is introduced by the conductor of the Fairfax Orchestra, a regional orchestra in the US, based in Fairfax, Virginia.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sp1i4uufu8

Another memorable and dramatic musical sea picture was realised by the French composer Claude Debussy, in his three symphonic sketches La Mer. This broke new ground in the way it used the orchestra. Debussy began La Mer in 1903 and completed it in March 1905. The first performance was given in October of that year in Paris. Although Debussy's parents once planned for him to become a sailor, La Mer, subtitled Three Symphonic Sketches, proved to be his greatest seafaring adventure. Debussy once said that if he hadn't been a musician, he would have become a sailor; he loved the sea. He once persuaded a ship's captain to take him and his companions out in the face of a fierce storm off the coast of Brittany, but it must have cured him of the urge to be a sailor. After his youth spent dreaming of becoming a sailor, he eventually became armchair sailor instead, and later in life, he said that he preferred the seascapes available in painting and literature. Debussy's childhood summers at Cannes left him with vivid memories of the sea, "worth more than reality," as he put it at the time he was composing La Mer, some thirty years later. La Mer was written in the mountains, where the sea was no closer than a memory. When Debussy's own score was printed, he insisted that the cover include a detail from 'The Hollow of the Wave off Kanagawa', the most celebrated print by the Japanese artist Hokusai, then enormously popular in France. We also know that Debussy greatly admired the work of the English painter Turner. His richly atmospheric seascapes recorded the daily weather, the time of day, and even the most fleeting effects of wind and light in ways utterly new to painting, and they appealed directly to Debussy.

In 1902, Debussy went to London, where he saw a number of Turner's paintings, he enjoyed the trip but hated actually crossing the channel.

The name Debussy finally gave to the first section of La Mer, "From Dawn to Noon on the Sea", might easily be that of a Turner painting made sixty years earlier, for the two shared not only a love of subject but also of long, specific, evocative titles. There's something in Debussy's first symphonic sketch very like a Turner painting with the sun rising over the sea. They both reveal those magical moments when sunlight begins to glow in the near darkness and when familiar objects emerge from the shadows. From "Play of the Waves", the second sketch, is all suggestion and shimmering surface, fascinated with sound for its own sake. The final "Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea" (another title so like Turner's) captures the violence of two elements, air and water, as they collide. At the end, the sun breaks through the clouds. "We must agree," Debussy writes, "that the beauty of a work of art will always remain a mystery, in other words, we can never be absolutely sure how it's made." La Mer was controversial even during rehearsals, when, as Debussy told the Russian composer Stravinsky, the violinists tied handkerchiefs to the tips of their bows in protest. The response at the premiere was mixed, though largely unfriendly. However, it's generally recognised that La Mer paved the way for a new kind of music which influenced countless composers in the succeeding generations. This is a brilliant performance of the work:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrLRZCbN3Eg

Another French composer, a contemporary of Debussy, was Maurice Ravel. He loved the coast of his homeland, and again was inspired to write music based on his experiences. After four failed attempts to win a coveted Prix de Rome music award from the Paris Conservatoire, Ravel was comforted by an invitation in 1905. His friend, Alfred Edwards a journalist, and his Russian wife and pianist, Misia, invited him to join them on their yacht for a seven-week cruise. The couple were well known in Paris, and their apartment was a special gathering place for writers, artist, and musicians. That same year, Ravel was also working on his Miroirs a suite for piano solo in five movements, which included a third piece titled "Une Barque sur l'Océan" (a boat in the ocean). It's musical impressionism at its finest; the opening of this piece is compelling in the suggestion of a small boat bobbing around on a glittering sea. It's a scene that Ravel would have witnessed many times personally when he was growing up on the Atlantic coast in the extreme north-western corner of France, or on his annual summer holidays when he returned to the seaside resort of St. Jean-de-Luz. These days there's a museum in the town, paying tribute to his connection and enduring love for his native Atlantic coast. Ravel wrote; "What music there is in all of this! I mean to make good use of it…." His vision of water was also fed by a little automatic toy, which sat on his piano. Within a glass bell was a little boat on cardboard waves which would toss the boat about when turning a hand crank. Among his large collection of toys, this was said to be one of his favourites. He prided himself as having the child in him all his life and his toys were a special comfort to him.

In Miroirs Ravel paints the ocean on a vast canvas, sweeping across enormous areas of the keyboard, reflecting the endless space of the ocean. Throughout, the boat (represented by the theme), rocks and sways within exquisite musical textures and changing harmonies. Adding to the swaying effect is Ravel's direction for fast changing rhythms for the theme and the accompaniment. "Une Barque sur l'Océan" was dedicated to his friend, the painter Paul Sordes. After the opening serenity the ocean stirs into a storm, leading to a huge, overwhelming, crashing climax. Dynamics (the variation in loudness between notes) are used to illustrate the unpredictability of the ocean. At one point, Ravel writes sudden contrasts as the boat survives the storm in a slower paced section, set within the lower notes of the piano. A soft recollection of the opening brings "Une Barque sur l'Océan" to a peaceful closing. One year after the piano version, Ravel orchestrated his piece. On the only occasion when the orchestral version was performed in the composer's lifetime, the critic Gaston Carruad of La Liberté noted; "It was like a succession of colours imposed on a drawing barely sketched - the view changes every moment. It is a confusing kaleidoscope and we cannot even tell what kind of weather prevails on the ocean." This ambiguity is exactly what Ravel intended. I prefer the piano version which is imposing in the way it stretches the range of the keyboard

to new extremes rarely heard before.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3C4w43sdTM

As you might imagine, with this country being made up of islands, the sea has held a fascination for British composers over the years. Would you believe that the coast stretches for 11,000 miles, taking in the numerous small islands in Scotland! When you look at the relatively close proximity of the coastline to a lot of composers, it's not surprising that from time to time they attempted to depict the seascape in their music. One such person was Ralph Vaughan Williams who, incidentally, studied for a short time with Ravel. He had a deep love of nature, and when he and Gustav Holst travelled the country in their search for folk songs, they were continually aware of the land and seascape. This was reflected in Vaughan Williams exhilarating and powerful first symphony subtitled "The Sea". Completed in 1910 for soprano, baritone, chorus and orchestra, this striking symphony hailed the arrival of Ralph Vaughan Williams as a powerful new voice in English music. Vaughan Williams was trained as a historian. He graduated in history, along with composition, as an undergraduate at Cambridge, and in his perspective of the history of music in England, developed his personal musical language— language that found its first large scale expression in 'A Sea Symphony'. In 1892, Bertrand Russell recommended Walt Whitman's poetry to a fellow undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge: the aspiring young composer Ralph Vaughan Williams. Whitman's poetry was well known in Britain by that time.

Vaughan Williams recognised at once that Whitman's celebration of the big outdoors was exactly what he needed in order to escape from the world of polite oratorios, cantatas, and anthems that made up the bulk of British choral music in the 1890s. While his teachers Charles Villiers Stanford and Charles Wood had tentatively begun setting Whitman's poetry at the end of the nineteenth century, Vaughan Williams' passionate love of this verse (he carried a pocket volume of Whitman into the trenches during the First World War) resulted in a series of visionary scores. His choral song "Toward the Unknown Region" was successfully performed at the Leeds Festival in 1907. Three years later, his massive and original choral symphony 'A Sea Symphony', was premiered at the same festival, conducted by its nervous composer on October 12th 1910, his thirty-eighth birthday. Despite the precedent of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Mahler's Second and Third Symphonies, there was no choral symphony as such by a British composer when Vaughan Williams began to sketch "A Sea Symphony" in 1903. Unlike its German predecessors, the chorus and vocal soloists were integral parts of Vaughan Williams' conception of all four movements from the beginning and pervade the texture of the music throughout. This is the dramatic third movement "The Waves":
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ooh4vDcWUmU

Elgar wrote a lovely song cycle which conjured up images of the sea. His "Sea Pictures" for contralto and orchestra was commissioned in 1899, by the Norwich Festival with the request to "write a piece for a vocal soloist." Elgar was born on June 2 1857 in Lower Broadheath, a small village near Worcester and was the fourth of seven children. His father William was a piano tuner by trade and owned a music store where he sold sheet music and musical instruments, as well as being a professional violinist. His mother Ann had a keen interest in the arts and encouraged an interest in music with all of her children. Elgar spent many hours with his father, and by the age of 8 he was taking both piano and violin lessons, though he also taught himself to play other instruments. He began composing at the early age of 10 when he composed the music for a play written and performed by the Elgar children. Elgar attended the Littleton House School until the age of 15, all the while studying every music book and organ instruction manual he could get his hands on. He learned German in the hope that when he finished school he would further his violin studies at Leipzig Conservatory but his father was unable to afford to send him. Elgar took up a position as a clerk at a local solicitor's office which he disliked, so he would spend every spare moment reading. It was around this time that he first performed in public as a violinist and organist. After just a few short months at the solicitor's office Elgar decided to embark upon a musical career, teaching piano and violin, as well as helping out in his father's store on occasions. Elgar and his father were both active

members of the Worcester Glee Club and it was here that he accompanied the singers on violin, and composed works for them. In 1882, seeking to gain more orchestral experience, Elgar took up a position playing violin with William Stockley's Orchestra in Birmingham and for the next seven years he would play in every concert performed.

In December 1883 the orchestra performed one of Elgar's compositions for the first time. Though it was a boost to his career to finally have his music performed, the road to recognition as a composer was often hard, and despite numerous trips to London to try to sell his compositions, most of them fruitless, Elgar was often low on funds. Though it took considerable time and effort Elgar began to build a reputation as a composer during the 1890's, with several pieces being performed publicly. Critics began to accept him as a composer of note, although their reviews were often polite rather than enthusiastic. He was now in demand as a festival composer but his inability to make any significant income from his composing made Elgar depressed. His friend August Jaeger, in an attempt to cheer Elgar up, told him "Your time of universal recognition will come". Jaeger was correct and in 1899, at the age of 42, Elgar wrote the Enigma Variations which were then premiered in London, conducted by the German Hans Richter. His work gained positive reviews, and finally Elgar got the recognition he had long sought, being dubbed the British composer of his generation. As he composed his Sea Pictures, he had in mind the booming low notes of contralto Clara Butt. Sir Thomas Beecham once noted that "On a clear day you could have heard her across the English Channel!" She sang at the premiere in 1899, in a dress which represented a mermaid—quite a spectacle from a woman who stood 6 feet 2 inches tall! Sea Pictures was written in the summer of that year, in the weeks after the successful premiere of his famous Enigma Variations had brought Elgar to national prominence. The piece is in an unfamiliar form for the time, a song cycle for voice and orchestra, on poems by different authors. This is a performance of the complete work:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4_riDzFkxw

Many film composers have written dramatic scores that represent the changing moods of the sea. In particular this often involved the impact of the oceans on those who have historically explored far flung lands or engaged in battles at sea. These composers have often been called upon to depict both the joys of sea travel and the unpredictable nature of the sea and the depths below, as in James Horner's score for the 1990s film Titanic. But for me one score stands out above the rest, Erich Wolfgang Korngold's 1940 music for the "Sea Hawk" starring Errol Flynn. Korngold began his career, in Vienna, as one of the most astonishing child prodigies in musical history, and reached maximum fame writing film scores, in Los Angeles, in the nineteen-thirties and forties. A master of late-Romantic opulence, Korngold shaped the musical world of the Golden Age of Hollywood. He is generally acknowledged to be the greatest film composer, with his influence on other film composers stretching far and wide. Korngold, the son of a leading Viennese music critic, was himself something of a miracle. By his mid-teens, he had not only acquired total technical command of the art of composition but had also developed an unmistakable voice. Although he knew his Puccini, Mahler, and Richard Strauss, he was far more than a clever imitator.

Like many child prodigies Korngold had a bumpy transition to adulthood. His opera "Die Tote Stadt," (The Dead City) which had its première in 1920, when the composer was twenty-three, was a great success and promised a long and triumphant operatic career. But it wasn't to be, his next opera, "Das Wunder," which was first performed in 1927, met an unhappier fate. Although the initial response was strong, the composer's music seemed dated to audiences. Performances of "Das Wunder" in Berlin aroused a savage press reaction. Korngold completed only one more opera—the entrancing but dramatically weak "Die Kathrin," from 1937. Korngold was Jewish, and the Nazi takeover of Austria forced him into exile. He had begun establishing himself in Hollywood as early as 1934, and therefore never faced the economic struggles that other émigrés encountered. Still, his vitality as a film composer, evident in such Errol Flynn swashbucklers as "The Adventures of Robin Hood" and "The Sea Hawk," damaged his reputation as a "serious" composer. After the Second World War, when Korngold attempted to resume his concert

career, he was deemed hopelessly 'backward looking' by the modernist standards of the day. He died young, at the age of sixty, in 1957. Only in the nineteen-seventies did interest in his work reawaken - in part because John Williams paid homage to him in the main-title theme of “Star Wars,” a re-creation of the 'Korngold style'. Here's the opening credits and a few extra sections of The Sea Hawk to give you a flavour of his superb scoring for the film. The music was performed in a 1972 studio recording, and was then synchronised to the film (replacing the original) to improve the sound quality, 32 years after the original film was made.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsgPC0R4PXI

I've decided to end with my personal favourite sea music: Benjamin Britten's Four Sea Interludes from his opera "Peter Grimes". Benjamin Britten wrote some of the most appealing classical music of the twentieth century. As a boy he began by setting favourite poems to be sung by family and friends. Later, his life partner, Peter Pears, who was a singer, provided inspiration for him for almost four decades. It is not surprising then, that Britten is best known for his music for the voice: choral works, songs and song cycles, and, above all, a series of operas among the most engaging ever written. His first success was with Peter Grimes in 1945. This great work helped to revive opera in English. Britten was also a master of orchestral writing, as his two most familiar works, the Four Sea Interludes and Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra, make clear. He was equally committed to writing music for children and amateur performers, as he was for leading soloists of the day, such as cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. From the outset, Britten was the modern composer who did not want modern music to be just for ‘the cultured few’, so aimed always as he said - to be ‘listenable-to’. Just to show you how productive he was, he composed: 16 operas, including 3 Church Parables and operas for children; one full-length ballet, The Prince of the Pagodas; 15 song-cycles; and more than 60 folk songs. Also nearly 80 works of incidental music for film, radio and theatre and chamber music, choral music and works for orchestra. But his finest work, and one of the greatest operas ever written, was undoubtedly "Peter Grimes".

The sea is a constant presence in the opera, which is set in the Borough, a Suffolk fishing village, where the fisherman Peter Grimes is hounded from the community after his two apprentice boys die in mysterious circumstances. The opera can be seen as an allegory of how society deals with misfits - a theme which appealed to Britten’s own sense of alienation. In the opera, the interludes are played with the curtain down and are almost self-contained; to make them into concert pieces, only minor editing by the composer was required. The four interludes begin with Dawn (Prelude to Act 1): The opera starts with an indoor Prologue, this interlude then introduces the sea, the North Sea in this case. Sea Interlude 2: Sunday Morning (Prelude to Act II): The sky is now blue, the waves are stronger, the sea-birds louder and the church bells ring out. Sea Interlude 3: Moonlight (Prelude to Act III), the music reflects the stillness of the cold moon and the waters are almost calm. This interlude is the emotional core of the opera, when after the death of the second apprentice boy, Grimes knows that his time is up. Sea Interlude 4: Storm, in the opera this occurs in Act 1, between Scenes 1 and 2 and provides some truly terrifying moments when we are in the eye of the storm. Britten is portraying not simply bad weather but the tension between the outcast Grimes and the rest of the Borough community. This work sums up perfectly all the various facets of the sea that composers have tried to portray in the music I have chosen. In doing this they have given us some of the finest pieces of music ever composed:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ht9mQE6X0C0

Cryptic Puzzle Pyramid (page 11) - Answers

CRYPTIC PUZZLE PYRAMID ANSWERS
1. C : 0 (larado) 2. R. O. C. 3. (Min) orca 4. Actor. 5. Captor 6. a p R 1 cot. 7. Tro P.I. Cal. 8. Pictorial

Talking Points (started by Stephen Berry!) – Responses to DIT 35

It seems as though this pair of photographs were of places rather more difficult to identify than I thought!

The first is of Corporation Road, just past the railway bridge between Vivian Road and Dudley Street. The railway line, known as the Nettlefolds Branch, ran from the main line where it crosses Wharf Road to serve the "Chem", Wards Wagon Works in Coverack Road and the Newport Power Station amongst other industries. Following closure of the line in 1974 the bridge and embankment were removed and, to the left of the view, Telford Street with its large Council depot were created. Out of sight on the left was Alex Thom, the Reliant car dealer.

The second photograph, from the 1920s, shows Gulley's coaches outside the Pavilion Theatre (opposite the main entrance to St Woolos Hospital). Next to the Pavilion was a garage; after the show, you could exit the theatre via the garage. It seems as though the coaches were provided to take patrons back to the town centre after performances.

… and this edition's challenge!

This edition's photograph (just one for a change) is of a fairly easy-to-recognise location. It is partially changed but some features remain. As always please let us have any memories you have of the buildings, the area in which they are or were situated – and any other observations, particularly the occasion.

Dave Woolven has transcribed the Newport Directories for 1897, 1914 and 1937 and can make these available to anyone interested. He also has the registers on CDs of 6 Newport schools - £5 each for PTA funds. Please contact me for details.