

DESERT ISLAND TIMES

Sharing fellowship in
NEWPORT SE WALES U3A

No. 9

16th May 2020



BY JUDITH NASH

*A MISCELLANY OF
CONTRIBUTIONS
FROM OUR MEMBERS*

News Update

We have had a sad fortnight with the death of two of our members, Joan Dawes on 2nd May and June Bennett on 8th May; and also on this day of Angela Platt, wife of our member Greg Platt and, until recently, the visiting tutor of our Creative Writing group. Gill has sent cards to all three families.

None of these deaths was, as far as we know, related to Covid-19 and, so far and touching wood, we seem to have avoided that particular issue. That probably says much for our membership being willing to rigorously follow the instructions to stay at home. We have not heard any news of other illness amongst our members, but please do report anything you know of. Our Welfare department is still operating!

I'm afraid I can offer you no positive news regarding resumption of our meeting at Shaftesbury Street. With stringent social distancing measures in place we would find it extremely difficult to hold meetings there. Our larger groups tend to fill their allocated rooms to capacity, with everyone sat normally in rows or at least closely adjacent to each other. At best we could accommodate a small group of members in the larger rooms but we still have issues over the "shared" facilities (the kitchen, foyer and usual offices!)

I would remind you that some groups are still operating online and some further activity may be possible. If you would like to join an operating group or would like to find out if anything is going on, please contact the relevant convenor. This can be done via our website or by emailing me.

We are sharing Desert Island Times and some online learning with members of other U3As and I would encourage you to share at least DIT with absolutely anybody – U3A member or not – who might benefit from having something else to fill at least some of the time they have on their hands.

Finally, I welcome all of the new contributors to this edition – we are all delighted to have you sharing your material with us. I cannot always promise to include contributions immediately for varying reasons, but it is all held in a "forward" folder for future use! To you, and to all contributors, please keep the material coming in. To those of you who might not yet have felt inspired to contribute, please do so – we would love to hear from you!

A Musical Treat

We are very fortunate to have in our U3A Choir many really excellent singers, including one who has recorded a CD of popular songs from musicals. Stephen Williams is one of our tenors who has a distinguished past in acting and singing, having been particularly active with both Newport Playgoers and Cwmbran Operatic societies.

Stephen wanted to contribute to DIT – and what better way of doing this than by letting us hear him four of the songs from his CD! Although inevitably the choice is personal – his favourite pieces from the collection – I am sure that you will enjoy them as well. Two of them would certainly be on my (long) list of well-loved songs – but I'm not going to say which two!

Broken Vow	Walk Away
Some Enchanted Evening	Anthem

The audio links to these songs will be found in two separate emails which will follow the main distribution email.

My Earliest Country Walk and other Post-war experiences by Colin Salmon

It was this recent Easter weekend TV schedule and recent contributors to Keith Rackhams' weekly blog that set me thinking about my initial Walking experiences. The TV sessions with Cameron in his hot-air Balloon drifting over familiar Lakeland Landmarks followed later by a Shepherd collecting his flock of sheep from the upper slopes and craggy cliff faces on England's highest mountain Scafell Pike. I got my maps out and Wainwright guides and thoroughly enjoyed the evening reliving the experience.

Having been born in 1932 and brought up in Blackburn 'till 1950, I spent several holidays and weekends in the Lake District, mostly with the Boy Scouts to whom I owe a lot for my character and physical development. At the age of 14, I participated in a group YHA Hostelling Tour which I can remember in amazing detail. I had an ex-commando frame rucksack, far too big for me, army boots and a cycle cape.

ITINERARY

Train to Kendal

Hike to Crosthwaite YHA (now defunct)

Hike to Coniston YHA via Bowness ferry

Hike to Duddon Valley YHA including climb Old Man in rain

Hike to Eskdale, climb Scafell Pike, via Cam Spout & Mickeldor. Return to Duddon for a second night.

Hike to Grasmere YHA

Hike to Patterdale YHA including Dollywagon Pike, Helvellen & Striding Edge

Hike to Troutbeck YHA.

Hike to Kendal for train to Blackburn

I reckon about 60 miles in total

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In 1947, the Scouts set up Summer Camp at Powerscourt Estate between Dublin and Bray (sea-side). We feasted on meat and bacon since their food was not rationed like the UK was until 1954 (I was surprised by this late date.) My mother requested that I take home some desiccated coconut which had not been available at home for 5 or 6 years. During the course of this camp, Two of us were allowed to go off with a small tent and climb the prominent "Sugarloaf" mountain (fig.1) and visit the historical monument of Glendalough Monastery (fig.2) and gain an adventure badge.

Other adventure forays involved cycling with tent and ropes & ladders for potholing and caving in the country around Ingleton.

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Harvest Camp. (Job Experience)

During the war years and recovery, The Grammar School organised a tented camp staffed by teachers and Hearty Food provided on the outskirts of Blackpool for at least a month to assist the farmers to reap the harvest to also earn some pocket money. We had our bikes with us to go around the local farms and seek casual labour.

Mostly the work was in the fields following a tractor pulling a "Binder" machine that cut the crop and bundled it into sheaves tied with twine and spewed out in a line. These had to be picked up 2 at a time and stood on their stalks "A" with 3 pairs built into a free standing "Stook" with a tunnel to let the breeze blow through. After a few drying days they were loaded onto flat wagons and pitchforked into a covered barn awaiting threshing – more man-handling.

The lunchtime break was a welcome interlude with the farmer's wife and/or daughter visiting with a picnic basket with sandwiches, cake and flask of drinks.

In sustained wet weather, inside jobs were offered such as the cleaning & disinfecting of battery hen cages (horrible job) or mucking out the Milking Parlour. Some farms harvested Potatoes and Peas.

Easypeasy Cryptic Crossword Clues No. 8

There are a dozen types of Cryptic Crossword Clues and today I'm going to revisit the Hidden Word Clue which I featured in our Summer 2019 Newsletter. It is the simplest cryptic clue to solve because the answer is concealed in it. Ignore the surface meaning of a clue: it rarely makes any sense!

The Hidden Word Clue consists of a DEFINITION of the answer, a HINT that it is a Hidden Word Clue, and a word or expression that contains the answer hidden in it. Some expressions that 'clue you in' that it is a Hidden Word Clue are... partly, used in, held, spotted in, features, reserves, found in.

e.g. Dog/ used in/ seCURity work (3). = Cur.

The Hidden Word may be found in two or three consecutive words.

e.g. A canopy/ partly/ drAWN IN Good weather (6). = Awning.

Try these - the answers are on page 8.

1. Chess piece/ held/ by outcast leper (6).
2. Electric lamps/ have/ a firm hold (5).
3. Bend features in architrave (3).
4. Regret in his cruel behaviour (3).
5. Wake up in the carousel (5).
6. Bird flew into second ornithologist (6).
7. Minister in the President's pad, remember? (5).
8. It's uncommon in extra revivals (4).
9. Sitcom for TV features support (7).
10. Maiden hugged assistant (4).
11. Young chap spotted in glade (3).
12. Island involved in formal talks (5).
13. It's carved from the wedding cake (5).
14. Chameleons camouflage sign (3).
15. Sequence from J S Bach I eventually accomplish (7).
16. In Scandinavia grandpa discovered potent drug (6).
17. Limb trapped in cattle grid (3).
18. Choose to be somewhat delectable (5).
19. Inventors' Fair allows in fresh air device (4).
20. Fall Guy - he seems too gentle at heart (6).

Contact me at valdemos2@gmail.com if you would like to receive my group's easy weekly crossword with hints and answers.

Four-way answer smash - films, songs and books submitted by Jackie Stevens

The answers to each part of the question share a word or part of word with the following answers (sometimes they may completely merge into the other titles).

Example - FOUR films, smashed together: Which classic musical starring Gene Kelly, about a man and his autistic brother, is a reboot of the 'Superman' franchise, and gave Julia Roberts her first Oscar nomination?

Answer: Singing in the rain man of steel magnolias

1) Four films smashed:

What was the first bond and the latest unreleased bond, where a man shouts yipee ki yay, whilst a river floods a town.

2) Four films smashed:

They used a lasso of truth to examine a house that belonged to a dead woman that rode a stallion that a village girl used to save her father from a scary creature.

3) Four films smashed:

A juror in a murder trial slowly manages to convince the others to change their minds about a secret agency fighting aliens to save the world in lots of helicopters and nearly 100 US Army Rangers to nab the top two lieutenants of a Somali warlord. Meanwhile the Crawley's prepare for a visit by the king and Queen to their big house.

4) Four songs smashed:

Reg Dwight thought it would be a long long time till touch down of his movie, so he got some rapid eye movement sleep, if you believe what happened in 1969. Oh dream maker, you heart breaker, wherever you're going, I'm going for breakfast at Tiffany's with Ike and Tina who had a rag doll, the only rag doll they ever owned, my oh my.

5) Four songs smashed:

Richie and Ross declare something for one another, they feel it in their fingers, they feel it in their toes, the daft punk's say it hundreds of times, a new age has begun, for rugby.

6) Four songs smashed:

You got mud on your face, you big disgrace, but Roy will get you anything you need, anything at all. He could get a Swedish pop duo to lay a whisper on your pillow and winter on the ground, but watch out for the Beatles that will always be true, so pleeeeeeaaase...

7) Four books smashed:

A 15 year-old boy, Christopher investigates the mysterious death of his neighbours pet and calls John first, a lawyer to help him with his case as his friends were fascinated with saying 'boo' to his neighbour while Sebastian tells a tale going back and forth from the 70s to world war one.

8) Four books smashed:

You've got to ask yourself one question: 'Do I feel lucky?' Well, do you, punk?, asked a young wizard in his fourth year at school, trying to solve the mystery surrounding the entry of his name into a Tournament, in which he is forced to compete. He is told, you GOT to enter into the history of the House of Targaryen, and play with lots of dragons. Then play like twins separated at birth in a Liverpoolian West Side Story.

9) One book, two films, one song smashed:

Mary Anne Evans wrote eight volumes, set just before the 1832 reform act about the south pole journey of emperors narrated by a Freeman. An animated girl and her emotions, including fear and joy, take her brains to another dimension to find another race. She sounds like a Prodigy.

10) One book, two songs, one film smashed:

A young girl falls through a rabbit hole into a fantasy world to find her mother of the free, Vera. The boss says they will pass you by in the wink of the young girl's eye. So Tom didn't Trickle, but raced to get together with Nicole.

Compiled by Jackie's son-in-law, Richard. Answers on page 8

Some Music About the Second World War by Stephen Berry

As we were denied the pleasure of congregating to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of V E Day, the nation as a whole made the best of what it was allowed to do – and, each in his or her own way, celebrated rather more quietly and personally. Inevitably a number of the “songs that won the war” were played and enjoyed – good, stirring tunes with uplifting lyrics that, though dated, have never gone out of favour.

I heard very little other music, though – music written about specific subjects or aspects of the war. These too capture the spirit of the time and are well worth listening to.

In no particular order I would recommend:

633 Squadron (Ron Goodwin)

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

Battle of Britain Theme (Ron Goodwin)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtBMgAUQQS8>

Great Escape Theme (Elmer Bernstein)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYLm5w5o10Q>

Dam Busters March (Eric Coates)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baAqOQu7p7o>

Spitfire Prelude and Fugue (William Walton)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVS_m_f7bO8s

Y Tangnefeddwyr (Eric Jones, words by Waldo Williams)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McO5Nf7VZsY&list=RDbdUUZ7rWvml&index=8>

The last, a very moving song, might be considered unusual – the title means “The Peacemakers” and is the personal recollections of the author as he looked from afar at the bombardment of Swansea. In it he reflects on the futility of war and of his upbringing with parents who taught him the ways of peace.

I am being very self-indulgent here – this is not necessarily the best recording of this piece, but it is my favourite performance of it, because I was closely involved in teaching it to Caldicot Male Voice Choir, who are performing it – in Welsh - on this video. Look closely at the pianist as well – you might recognise him!

50 Mile Challenge – Hereford by Mike Brown

This day out is on our agenda every summer. We travel to Hereford on any sunny Friday during the schools' summer holiday. Approaching the city, at the junction of the A49 from Ross on Wye and the A465 from Abergavenny we take the minor right hand exit into Hinton Road and park opposite the King George Playing Fields. We walk through them and then cross over the River Wye on the historic Victoria Bridge into Castle Green. We make a diagonal beeline across this park to an exit into Castle Street and turn right to Castle House Hotel. Here we can sit in their delightful garden overlooking Castle Pool and watch it's wildlife whilst having morning coffee.

After making use of the facilities we explore the narrow back streets before making our way to the Cathedral where we have a light lunch in the beautiful Chapter House Garden. This secures our seats for the weekly Summer Jazz performance between 13:00 and 14:15 before the crowds assemble. This is a very pleasant event in such an attractive setting.

Afterwards we walk back through the Cathedral and head for the city centre for some retail therapy or a visit to a museum before making our way back to the car via the old bridge in Bridge Street. We turn left onto the River Wye footpath and back to Victoria Bridge. (1 hour level walking)

I know one of two of you don't like Jazz ☐!! There are alternative events, though: check out www.visitherefordshire.co.uk. We can recommend the tour of the Cathedral's private gardens. These include the Deanery, Cloister, College and Bishop's Gardens, which are only open under the National Garden Scheme or a private group booking.



Cryptic Crosswords (page 4) - Answers

1. Castle 2. Clamp 3. Arc 4. Rue 5. Rouse 6. Condor 7. Padre 8. Rare 9. Comfort 10. Aide 11. Lad
12. Malta 13. Hewed 14. Leo 15. Achieve 16. Viagra 17. Leg 18. Elect 19. Vent 20. Stooge.

Some Medical Howlers submitted by Brenda Welsh

Allegedly, these are sentence exactly as typed by medical secretaries in NHS Greater Glasgow:

1. The patient has no previous history of suicide.
2. By the time he was admitted, his rapid heart had stopped and he was feeling better.
3. Patient's medical history has been remarkably insignificant with only a 40 pound weight gain in the past three days.
4. She has no rigors or shaking chills, but her husband states she was very hot in bed last night.
5. Patient has chest pain if she lies on her left side for over a year.
6. On the second day the knee was better and on the third day it disappeared.
7. The patient is tearful and crying constantly. She also appears to be depressed.
8. The patient has been depressed since she began seeing me in 1993.
9. Discharge status:- Alive, but without my permission.
10. Healthy appearing decrepit 60-year old male, mentally alert, but forgetful.
11. Patient has two teenage children, but no other abnormalities.
12. She is numb from her toes down.
13. While in ER, she was examined, x-rated and sent home.
14. The skin was moist and dry.
15. Occasional, constant infrequent headaches.
16. Patient was alert and unresponsive.
17. Rectal examination revealed a normal size thyroid.
18. She stated that she had been constipated for most of her life until she got a divorce.
19. When she fainted, her eyes rolled around the room.
20. The patient was in his usual state of good health until his aeroplane ran out of fuel and crashed.
21. Examination of genitalia reveals that he is circus-sized.
22. The lab test indicated abnormal lover function.
23. Skin: somewhat pale, but present.
24. Between you and me, we ought to be able to get this lady pregnant.

ANSWERS - Four way answer smash (page 5)

- 1) Dr no time to die hard rain
- 2) Wonder woman in black beauty and the beast
- 3) Twelve angry men in black hawk Downton Abbey
- 4) Rocket man on the moon river deep mountain high
- 5) Endless love is all around the world in union .
- 6) We will rock you got it must have been love me do

- 7) The curious incident of the dog in the night time to kill a mockingbird song
- 8) Dirty Harry Potter and the goblet of fire and blood brothers
- 9) Middlemarch of the penguinside out of space
- 10 Alice in wonderland of hope and glory days of thunder

The Gift – a Short Story by Martin Vaughan

Tony wasn't coping too well with retirement. Well, he had had a demanding job, using private equity to make or break (and it was usually break) companies. He was no-nonsense man – if a firm couldn't cope with restructuring and shedding surplus labour (and there always was surplus labour to shed) well he'd damn well bring a dynamic young management team in who'd soon weed out the underperformers (and there always were under-performers) and cut the fat back – right to the bone.

But his wife Judy just wasn't helping in the slightest. She'd spent a whole fifteen minutes bitching about the top of the range motorbike he'd just bought.

'Where will you be able to ride it?' she'd whined, 'this is plain old suburbia.'

A typical woman comment – what could you expect from someone her age? And he's hadn't yet shown her the new leather gear that he'd bought. You couldn't ride a bike like his new pride and joy in any old rubbish!

She'd been throwing him some odd glances recently. Still, once he'd had his hair transplant she'd change her tune after running her fingers through his flowing locks. And if she didn't? – well there were lots of women out there who'd jump at the chance.

Just one thing was stopping him – should he go for a youthful blond look or rebellious jet black? If she had the nerve to moan about the cost of whichever transplant he finally went for – well maybe it would be time he reminded her that there were always new models that she could be exchanged for.

Still it looked like she'd taken the heavy hint that he dropped that he wanted that limited edition rare single malt for his birthday. Only ten bottles produced – should he drink it at once or wait for the price to go up? *Always think of the Bottom Line, Tony my boy*, he reminded himself. *OK – no point in waiting. Let's see if the old bat taken the message.*

Maybe he should have spelled it out using brightly-coloured crayons!

The parcel was on the table. Judy had gone out – as usual, she couldn't bear seeing him enjoying himself. He looked at the parcel: it had to be the whisky – the box was the right shape, although a little wide.

With an expectant grin he tore off the wrapping.

No fancy box inside – strange.

His grin faded a bit but he removed the lid.

His grin became fixed.

His grin disappeared completely. His eyes widened and then seemed to bulge. Finally his jaw dropped.

Inside the box, instead of the rare single malt – was a pair of slippers.

Carpet slippers.

Soft, woolly carpet slippers.

And on top was a small note with a single word on it:

GOODBYE.

CYCLING IS BAD FOR THE ECONOMY



Hilarious but true too

A cyclist is a disaster for the country's economy -
He does not buy the car & does not take a car loan -
Does not buy car insurance - Does not buy Fuel -
Does not send his car for servicing & repairs -
Does not use paid Parking - Does not become Obese

Yes,.....and well, damn it !! Healthy people are not needed for economy. They do not buy drugs. They do not go to Hospitals & Doctors. They add nothing to country's GDP. On the contrary, every new fast food outlet creates at least 30 jobs - 10 Cardiologists, 10 Dentists, 10 weight loss experts apart from people working in the outlet. Choose wisely: A Cyclist or a KFC ? Worth thinking about!!

PS: Walking is even worse. They do not even buy a bicycle!!

sun-gazing.com
INFINITY

**THEY SAID A MASK
AND GLOVES WERE
ENOUGH TO GO TO
THE GROCERY STORE**

**THEY LIED,
EVERYBODY ELSE
HAD CLOTHES ON**

SEQUAH THE INDIAN by Glyn Sutton

Our family history is quite unremarkable yet many years ago, as children, we occasionally picked up snippets of an interesting story.

My grandmother was a Hawkes. She came from an old Swansea family and lived with her 12 brothers and sisters in the terraces behind St Mary's Church in Garden Street. Her father was a carpenter by the name of Robert Thomas Hawkes.

The beginnings which set the stage for the story go back to 1870, just after Tom was born. At this time, the Wild West Show was becoming very popular with the masses in Victorian Britain. A copy-cat show emerged some 15 years later and resulted in what today would be called a cult following. The Sequah Medicine Company put together a spectacle that was simple, yet brilliant in its conception. It gave the crowds what they craved – that is, miraculous cures, affordable medicines and a lot of Wild West Entertainment.

Once the crowd had been warmed up with the music and various acts, the underlying objective of the show would then materialise – that is, the purveying of patent medicines.

Sequah was actually a Yorkshireman by the name of William Henry Hartley. He adopted the long haired Native American Indian look to add colour to his act. This stage identity incorporated a persona akin to "The Last of the Mohicans" and the assumed name was derived from a Cherokee Indian called Sequoyah. During the performances, he wore a gold chain and a head torch with his dubious collection of dental tools transported atop a golden chariot.

From its humble beginnings in Portsmouth, the show gradually took off all over the country and built its regular following. The Wild West aspect was achieved by the use of painted wagons with assistants dressed up as Cowboys and Indians. Together with the music from a brass band the spectacle gave the audiences everything for which they lacked in their menial lives. The displays of speed dentistry would whip the onlookers up into a frenzy of cheering but the climax in the performance arrived when a few poor souls were helped onto stage in various states of debilitating rheumatism before exhibiting an incredible recovery following the application of the much-vaunted Prairie Flower Oil onto their joints. The astonishing healings took on an almost biblical quality. Together with Sequah's Oils and Immediate Relief, all potions were portrayed as miracle cures with the advertising posters claiming the patent medicines successfully treated Rheumatism, Liver Complaints, Indigestion and all Blood Disorders. To quote the sales poster :-

"The chemists everywhere say, there never were Medicines which gave greater satisfaction or which had so large and phenomenal a sale."

In one of the shows in the north of England, one of the supporters who experienced the benefits of the extraordinary oils was a Michael Casby of Sheffield. He claimed he had suffered from rheumatism for the last 16 years. He was an outdoor labourer and worked on the Duke of Norfolk's Sheffield Estate. He shuffled up onto the stage. The oils were rubbed into his joints. The pain soon disappeared – so effectively it seems, that Casby and Sequah were reported by the local press to have immediately afterwards danced a jig together.

Was it a complete con or did Casby simply become fully embroiled in the excitement of the performance and the feelings of euphoria that it generated? The most probable answer is a combination of both!

At the same time, Sequah was cleverly working his way into the good books of influential people by supporting charities in their communities. Advertisements and testimonials were placed in local newspapers and agreements made with pharmacists and grocers to hold stocks of the oils, which would continue to be sold once the jamboree had moved on. To maintain interest, a penny newspaper called the Sequah Chronicle was published weekly. It contained advertisements, short stories and jokes.

In spite of this seemingly universal adulation there was one group, unfortunately, with whom Sequah was not at all popular – that is Medical Students. In 1888 at Waverley Market in Edinburgh the show was greeted by a considerable number of young men with jeers and cries of “Quack”. One of them struck Sequah with a cane and all hell broke out as show members retaliated. The police whisked away a number of students.

Shortly afterwards in 1889 during one of the “thanksgivings” a man was invited on stage with others to sing the praises of the treatment he had received. Instead, he started to tell the audience that the whole enterprise was a complete scam. This inflamed the partisan crowd who turned on him and wanted to lynch him. The police had to spirit him away for his own safety.

By the end of the century, the authorities had cottoned onto the practice of selling patent medicines and the practice was duly made illegal. Reports from eminent chemists of the day suggest that the medicines being offered were merely a mixture of whale oil, turpentine and camphor.

So to bring the story to a conclusion, what was the role of my great grandfather in this intriguing tale?

First of all he was a cornet player and found himself roped into the brass band. Secondly, our family history claims a close affinity between Tom Hawkes and Sequah. After all, Hawkes mouthed backwards gives the name Sequah.

To put the situation into some sort of perspective, the most engaging family memories are those relating to the asides between Sequah and the band.

Sequah claimed that he could remove troublesome teeth from anyone in the audience and they would not feel a thing. Once he had put a volunteer into the “dentist’s chair” and the lamp illuminated on his forehead, he was reputed to have turned to the musicians and out of earshot of the audience to have instructed them as follows - instructions which would seem to give some real insight into what was actually going on :-

“You can start playing now, but when I begin to take out the teeth of this poor wretch blow your instruments..... as hard.....and..... as loudas you damn well can!”

Notes about Mountebanks.

Some people called these entertainers “mountebanks”. There were a number of itinerant performers peddling their medical wares off the back of various entertainment shows. They worked with confederates who were in on the trick. The confederates may have had fake teeth so that when extractions were carried out the procedure appeared painless.

'Warning' by Jenny Joseph, submitted by. Joyce Hoad

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple
With a red hat which doesn't go and doesn't suit me
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves
And satin sandals and say I've no money for butter.

I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells
And run my stick along the public railings
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.

I shall go out in my slippers in the rain
And pick flowers in other people's gardens
And learn to spit!

I can wear terrible clothes and grow fat,
And eat three pounds of sausages in one go
Or only bread and pickle for a week
And hoard pens and pencils and beer mugs
And things in boxes.

But now we must have clothes that keep us dry
And pay the rent and not swear in the streets
And set a good example to the children.

We will have friends to dinner and read the papers
But maybe I ought to practice a little now
So people who know me are not shocked and surprised
When suddenly I am old and start to wear purple.

The funny thing is since the lock down I feel like doing several of these things now – in fact I think I already am! But just keep smiling and perhaps people won't notice! Think it is time for me to have my glass of red wine now. Keep smiling!

Keep Your Spirits Up by Ros Lee

Corona, Corona, you've got us on the run,
To stay in every day, really isn't fun.
We do our best and exercise to keep us all fit.
Some of us even sew to make scrub kits.

Keep your distance and obey the instructions.
It's for our safety, keeping us from destruction.
Look on the bright side, de-junk and clean.
Every room will be fresh with a gleam.

When it's time to show our faces
Our houses and flats will be sparkling places
The pubs and parks will be there for you.
A walk, a meal, meeting your friends too.

Until then, we must all keep to the rules.
Keeping children at home, to school.
One day, we can be free and roam around.
So, stay safe, exercise, don't get down.

The Different Moods Music of Spring by Neil Pritchard

No season deserves to be celebrated in music like Spring, as there is nothing like seeing the flowers bloom and the warming rays of the sun, particularly now in our trying times. Many of the popular songs about spring are about falling in love. Some of them specifically mention the season of spring, others reflect on its revitalising effects after the winter months or look forward to summer. There's also a rich assortment of music inspired by Spring in the classical repertoire. In fact, there's so much music for this season it's quite a challenge narrow things down.

Let's start with some 14th century music "Ecco la primavera" by Francesco Landini. I bet this is as new to you as it is to me? It's a real joy!

Landini (1325-1397) was a Florentine composer and poet writing just before the period we now call the Renaissance. He was the son of a painter, but when he lost his sight from smallpox as a child, he decided to pursue music. His 'Ecco la primavera' (Spring Is Here) is a joyful song to the awakening of warmth and love. The recording features a bowed lute type instrument with a tambourine and flute solo in the middle.

Francesco Landini: - "Ecco la primavera" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8aw7Wvivsv4>

That's the earliest Spring inspired piece I have come across, but what a little gem!

One of the most well-known pieces inspired by spring is the first of Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons'. Over the years it has become one of the most popular classical works. Vivaldi was an 18th-century composer associated with the Baroque period of music. His best-known work is the set of violin concertos entitled *Le Quattro Stagioni*, or *The Four Seasons*. Written around 1720, this work is composed of four concertos of three movements each, each concerto representing one season of the year. To maintain a compelling composition, each concerto's three movements is organised into a pattern of fast-slow-fast.

In the first movement violins mimic the sounds of chirping birds and babbling brooks, but then change mood as a thunderstorm arrives. The orchestra imitates thunderclaps; after they recede, the little birds return.

Movement two is slow and dignified, describing a goat herder sleeping in a flowering meadow with his dog at his side. The scene is tranquil and idyllic, capturing the peaceful idleness of spring.

The third movement portrays a rustic peasant dance. The poem describes nymphs and shepherds dancing to festive sounds. The orchestra presents an upbeat melody as well as the sounds of a joyous gathering of people.

Thus is a superb version played on original instruments, in contrast to the more usual performances for full string orchestra. This was the way Vivaldi would have heard it. and in this video a group of 14 musicians "Voices of Music" play it in a way you may never have heard it before. They do so in glorious fashion!

Vivaldi: - Four Seasons (Spring) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LiztfE1X7E>

We move on the early 19th century and Joseph Haydn's *The Seasons*. It's not as famous as Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* but well worth a listen. Impressed by the Handel works that he heard in London, Haydn felt the need to compose oratorios. First came 'The Creation' which met with resounding success; then Baron Gottfried van Swieten proposed to Haydn an arrangement of James Thomson's poem 'The Seasons'. Initially, Haydn was little attracted by the text, which deviates from the classic oratorio based on a

religious text, but subsequently let himself be convinced. The result, for three soloists, chorus and an orchestra, is a vast picture of Nature. It was one of Haydn's last major works and depicts the yearly cycle of life in the countryside through the eyes of three peasants, providing us with music of thrilling vitality and creativity.

Haydn - The Seasons, Spring part 2: The Happy Peasant <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STglr1jvTKY>

Schumann wrote his First Symphony in 1841. Inspired by the poetry of Adolf Böttger, he twice revised the "Spring" Symphony, eventually deciding to omit any reference to the poetry. Nonetheless, the character of Böttger's "Melodies of Spring and Love" influences each movement of the symphony. The rhythms of the trumpets and trombones that open the first movement of the symphony echoes the call in the poetry: "O turn, o change your course—In the valley spring begins to bloom."

The symphony was premiered on March 31 1841, conducted by Schumann's friend Felix Mendelssohn. It is an intensely optimistic work and is the most frequently performed of Schumann's four symphonies. In this performance by Leonard Bernstein and The Berlin Philharmonic, the first movement comes over as really impressive.

Schumann - Symphony No.1 "Spring", (First Movement) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFvNriIDLrs>

We move onto the 1880's with music by the "Waltz King" Johann Strauss II (1825 – 1899). For more than half a century he captivated not only Vienna but also the whole of Europe and America with his abundantly tuneful waltzes, polkas, quadrilles and marches. He composed Operettas and more than 500 orchestral compositions, including the most famous of all waltzes, The Blue Danube (1867).

In the winter of 1882/83 Johann Strauss was invited to compose a vocal waltz for the coloratura Soprano, Bianca Bianchi (1855–1947), an acclaimed member of the Vienna Court Opera Theatre. Strauss, after his success with choral waltzes, was excited by the challenge of writing a waltz for solo voice. The librettist, Richard Genée, signified his willingness to provide the text to the waltz. In the event he was responsible also for the vocal setting of the new work, contributing significantly to the perfect interplay between voice and orchestra while the work was being written. It resulted in the Frühlingsstimmen (Voices of Spring) Waltz. I've chosen the performance given by the Jakarta Concert Orchestra conducted by Avip Priatna with Isyana Sarasvati, Soprano. What a wonderful performance this is!

(Check out the lyrics at: <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/frühlingsstimmen-spring-voices.html>)

Johann Strauss II - Frühlingsstimmen <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmjhbSQ8UGA>

We now have some British music! Frederick Delius composed a beautiful tone poem 'On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring' in 1912. Different instruments imitate the natural sounds of the cuckoo, including the oboe, strings, and clarinet. At the centre of the work is an old Norwegian folk song called 'In Ola Valley', which is stunningly beautiful in its own right. For Delius' lovely arrangement, we have the eccentric Australian composer Percy Grainger to thank, as he brought it to Delius' notice in the first place. Following its British premiere in 1914, it became a favourite, helped by its regular promotion by Sir Thomas Beecham the conductor and great friend of Delius, It is just possible that Beecham and Delius were already familiar with 'In Ola Valley' prior to Grainger's encouragement, having spent the summer of 1909 rambling in the Norwegian mountains together, no doubt ears permanently pricked for any musical titbits. Today, it feels like a Delius original. It's played here by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham.

Delius - On hearing the first Cuckoo in Spring <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFQAR8rb8pE>

Gerald Finzi is not a household name but he "Springs to Mind" when it comes to seasonal nature music. In particular his "Intimations of Immortality". Not a very catchy title, but don't be put off, it's a real beauty.

A series of tragedies profoundly affected Finzi's early years. His father died just before his eighth birthday, and by the time he was eighteen he had lost his three elder brothers and his much-loved teacher, Ernest Farrar, who was killed in action in the First World War. This dreadful sequence of events, and the appalling losses of the war that formed the backdrop to his adolescence, gave Finzi an acute awareness of the impermanence of life, further heightened when at the age of fifty he discovered that he was dying of leukaemia. These experiences may well explain the underlying hint of melancholy in his music, heard particularly the Ode Intimations of Immortality.

His music springs from his love of literature and the English countryside - the same sources that inspired Elgar and Vaughan Williams. Like them he found writing songs and choral music particularly satisfying.

Intimations of Immortality was first performed at the Three Choirs Festival, Gloucester, in September 1950. It is one of Finzi's most substantial works and is scored for full orchestra, tenor solo and chorus. Wordsworth's Ode, subtitled 'from recollections of early childhood' is a lament for the lost joys and intuitive wonder of childhood. Finzi uses the tenor solo, chorus and orchestra in many subtle combinations, rather as an artist might mix his colours in varying shades, reflecting the constantly changing nature of Wordsworth's evocative poem. Listen in the first instance to the first 3 verses and if your hooked give the whole piece a go! The third movement ("Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song") has a reference to the Spring time of the year. This performance of the whole work is by the tenor Philip Langridge with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir conducted by Richard Hickox. It's blows my mind!

Gerald Finzi - Intimations of Immortality <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lCma6FaWto>

Now for some more French music that takes us to the 1930's, and a composer with a great sense of humour - Darius Milhaud. He's best known as one of Les Six, the post-World War I French group whose other five members included Poulenc, Honegger, Auric, Tailleferre (the only woman), and Durey. Early on in his career Milhaud flirted with "way out music" but rather quickly settled into a more approachable style, one not without its own eccentricities however. His music is generally busy, often playful and nonchalant, and almost always colourful. Much of the writing is in the upper and lower registers of instruments, often simultaneously, giving the sound at times a unique quality. Milhaud, very much aware of all the artistic fashions of the day, remained content to go his own, ultimately conservative way. His symphony no 1 composed in 1939 is light and colourful, assured in orchestration, and tuneful and rhythmically appealing throughout with a definite "Spring in its step". It's one of the shortest 3 movement symphonies ever written but non the worst for that - it's a little gem!

Milhaud - Petite Symphony No 1, Spring - Spring <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsUk1tcLnU>

Just a final word to all you Spring Lovers:

Evergreens might not mind winter, but for all the other trees, spring is a great re-leaf!

Time and Tune by Gerald Lee (with an appendix by Stephen Berry)

Today we have music on demand. It was certainly not true for those who remember the 1950's and 1960's. Not every home had radio or television, never mind a record player. In schools, music came mostly from a series of BBC broadcasts, which gave all children access to many of the famous songs we know from our childhood.

Before the current crisis Stephen and I used to chat between classes about our recollections of schools music. Stephen suggested asking members to share memories of the songs they remembered.

My primary school in Belfast was comparatively small, with just one class to each year. The main radio receiver was in the Principal's office. She had to be asked to switch on the radio. Then someone had to carry a large speaker to the classroom. Although I mentioned music, other programmes covered history and stories about faraway places. Sometimes, if we were a bit early, we might even catch the end of 'Music while you work.'

This type of broadcasting began during the war. Each series had a name. The only one I remember is 'Time and Tune.' Each term had its own small book. We shared in twos to sing along with the broadcast. The songs were very varied, coming from every part of the United Kingdom. From Scotland came 'A Hundred Pipers;' from Wales, 'Hope the Hermit' and 'Men of Harlech;' from England 'John Peel,' 'The Lincolnshire Poacher' ('Tis my Delight on a Shining Night), and from Ireland 'The Harp that once Through Tara's Halls.' Some songs I can only remember in parts. Perhaps some readers can help me. A song that used to give us a bit of humour, although it was a bit sad, was about a man who had run out of his favourite snuff. The chorus ran, 'I like the best as you may suppose, Only the best suits my poor old nose.'

Another related the dilemma of a young girl about to choose her husband. 'Take the gardener for your groom, one said, But the tailor I do love instead, He will stitch me fine new dresses, fine now when we are wed.'

'Michael Finnegan' was sung with real gusto, even if it described an unlikely event. 'The was a man called Michael Finnegan, He grew whiskers on his chin again, the wind came out and blew them in again, Poor Old Michael Finnegan.'

And there was the dilemma on the Dutch wagon master on his way to the market in Altmarkt. The young men started to fight. The young ladies, however, started to sing. Understandably the lyric went, 'That is why I only shall be having young ladies on my wagon, Trot, Neddy, Trot.'

As the books included the sheet music, classes could practise between broadcasts, provided there was someone of musical ability able to play the songs. Stephen has mentioned his own school days when he was summoned to play whatever they had heard on the previous broadcast.

Although I have studied music, I freely admit I have absolutely no musical ability. My friend Denis Nelson was the opposite. Even at 10 or 11 years old he could give a beautiful rendition of 'Mary's Boychild.' He would also sing some of the current pop tunes, maybe not fully understanding the words. His favourite was the Lana Sisters hit, 'Seven Little Girls, Sitting in the Back-Seat, hugging and a-kissing with Fred.' Does anyone remember the name of the international star who was a 'Lana Sister?' I shall tell you at the end. Whenever the school had a visitor, Denis was asked to sing, sometimes for a reward of sixpence.

I used to go to music lessons on a Monday evening. Sometimes my sister, who came after me, would tell me Denis had called and could I call to see him on the way home. 'It was not about the homework.' In fact, it always was. While I showed him how to do the homework he sat and played the pieces I was supposed to learn for the following week. His mother gave me fourpence, I recall. Other times on the way home we would stop at his house. It was very adventurous. While his parents were out, we would have a cup of tea and listen to Connie Francis records on his Dansette record player. Simon Dee once read an extract about this from a letter I wrote when he was presenter of 'Sounds of the Sixties' in 1988.

After the Eleven Plus we went to different schools and eventually lost touch. I traced Denis once on the Internet. He went on to study music and made a career in musicals.

Schools music on the Light programme introduced British school children across social and class divisions to the joy of music performed for pleasure. Through the broadcasts children all over the country could share the different musical traditions of the United Kingdom. There were even some tunes from other parts of Europe, my first introduction to modern languages. Otherwise children from Belfast such as myself could never have enjoyed 'Men of Harlech,' or sing along with sea shanties such as 'Donkey Riding.'

And the well-known member of the Lana Sisters? Pop Trivia lovers will know it was Dusty Springfield.

Appendix (SJB)

We Time & Tune in the Infants' school and Singing Together and Rhythm & Melody in the Junior school. This is a list of the songs I remember – can anyone add more titles? I can't remember any Christmas items!

Andulko the Goose Girl	Johnny Todd
Animals went in two by two	Keeper did a-shooting go
Bells of Aberdovey	Lilibuluro
Berwick Bridge	Lincolnshire Poacher
Billy Boy	Linden Lea
Blow the man down	Loch Lomond
Bobby Shaftoe	Marching through Georgia
Boney was a warrior	Marianina
Bound for the Rio Grande	Men of Harlech
Bread we have none for supper (The neighbours)	Men of Morgannwg
British Grenadiers	Mermaid
Cakker Herrin'	Michael Finnegan
Campdown Races	Migaldi, Magaldi
Clementine	Miller of Dee
Cockles and Mussels	Minstrel Boy
Dashing away with the smoothing iron	My Bonnie lies over the ocean
David of the White Rock	O No, John!
Down in Demerara	Oak and the Ash
Drummer and the cook	Oh dear, what can the matter be?
Early in the morning	Oh! Soldier, Soldier, Won't You Marry Me?
Early one morning	Pearly Adriatic
Elsie Marley	Polly-Wolly-Doodle
Farmer and his wife	Road to the Isles
Farmer's three pigs	Secluded Merioneth
Fire in the Galley	Shenandoah
From Lucerne to Weggis on	Shepherd and His Dog
George the Blacksmith	Silent worship
Good sword and a trusty hand	Skagerrack
Great bear	Swansea Town
Green grow the rushes, oh!	Turn the Glasses Over
Gypsy Davey	Uist Tramping Song
Harp that once through Tara's halls	Vicar of Bray
Hope the Hermit	Waltzing Matilda
Horses, horses	Westering Home
Hunting the Hare	What shall we do with the drunken sailor?
Inkety-dinkety poppety pet	Wi'a hundred pipers
John Peel	Widdicombe Fair
Johnny come down to Hilo	Ye banks and braes

Feeling Hungry? asks Janine Gibson

Decode the following to give a choice of three dishes in each course – answers on page 21

SOUP

An animal and a short story:

Example: Oxtail

Welsh emblem:

Capital of Portugal:

FISH

Pay on delivery:

A married woman's symbol:

A fruit and part of a shoe:

GAME

Crowning glory:

What moaners do:

Chicken costing over £1:

ENTREES

A follower of Mary:

What Eve was made from:

An English essayist:

VEGETABLES

A dog and a bloom:

How old the taxi is:

A vehicle attacked by rust:

DESSERTS

I make a noise in fright:

A small amount:

The vicar's busiest time:

DRINKS

What sailors long for:

Cry of complaint:

Bacon joint:

JUST WORDS – Alan Barrow

No proverbs
Just Words
for saying something during Shut Down.

1 It's quite concerning
with passion burning,
neither the male nor the female
show a lack of yearning.

2 when you count your toes
make sure the ones you
count are yours.

3 people in glass houses
should always wear trousers.

4 It's a wending whining road
that has no ending
but I have friends
who say,
it's the road without bends
that never ends.

5 What happens
when there are
too many foremen
for few men?
A foreman
cannot afford
to be the No Man.

6 If life makes you weep,
just think of it as something
you do when you
cannot sleep,
or if you please
just think of it as
a sexually transmitted disease.

7 I agree that marriage can be nice
but I would not advise
to try for the same thing twice.

8 I was told the world
was my oyster,
it turned out to be a lobster,
consequently, I became a mobster monster.

9 If you want to say
something in the wine world
that is O.K.
you could say
the wine is O.K.
but not better
than the bouquet.

In another time it is fine
to say the bouquet is O.K.
but not as good as the wine.

Then you will be
regarded in time
as an expert in wine.

10 We are told
when you get angry,
count to five
before you reply.

It always works for me,
I don't know why
for my interest was
never in Maths just Poetry see.

11 The trouble with words,
I know it seems uncouth,
but in truth,
with words fat or thin,
you don't know
what mouth they have been in.

Have no fear for help is near
Words can be beaten
and are often eaten.

Let there be no pretense
as any word is better than silence.

What We Were Doing This Week.- Two Years Ago reported by Angela Robins

On 10th May 2018 many of us attended 'The Party' at Lysaght's Institute to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Newport U3A.

The fun started for the organisers at 7.30am dressing the tables and blowing up balloons. When the members arrived they were delighted by the spectacular sea of blue and yellow in the ballroom. There were speeches from the National Chairperson Pam Jones and from a retired Honorary Consul of France, Madame Claude Annick Rapport. We were then entertained by local journalist Richard Roblin who interspersed his talk about his career with performances of his own songs and poems to guitar accompaniment.

After a delicious buffet lunch and some celebratory cake we were all let loose on that famous dance floor to strut our stuff to the New Orleans Hot Potatoes jazz band. We ended the fun with some line dancing and a Conga.



ANSWERS TO "FEELING HUNGRY?" (page 19)

Soup: Oxtail, Leek, Pea;

Fish: Cod, Herring, Lemon Sole;

Game: Hare, Grouse, Guinea Fowl;

Entrees: Lamb, Ribs, Bacon;

Vegetables: Cauliflower, Cabbage, Carrot;

Desserts: Ice Cream, Trifle, Sundae;

Drinks: Port, Wine, Hock

Sudoku

By popular demand I have doubled the number of puzzles included this week!

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

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

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

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

Each row and each column has to contain numbers 1 to 9 once only; each large square of nine smaller squares likewise. Do not guess numbers! Work out each by elimination.

For quizzers or cryptic crossworders - submitted by Pam Cocchiara

Find the place names in Great Britain according to the cryptic clues

1. Masculine meadow
2. Cleopatra's is said to have been of asses milk
3. Sources of water
4. Affectionate weight
5. This could be a pocketful!
6. Cattle river crossing
7. This woolly keeps you warm
8. Spoil the field's entrance
9. Home of the tarts?
10. Sounds like a highwayman's instructions as to what to do with your valuables.
11. Raise a stone here for the departed
12. Sounds slightly burnt to me!
13. Does the Sheriff live here?
14. You wouldn't want this in your water pipes!
15. Morse's sidekick

Ada Wareham Moore Keal – by Malcolm Keal

Ada Wareham was born on 6 January 1866 in St James Bristol to Henry Wareham a shipwright, and Mary Matilda Merchant. Her parents had eight children, Ada was the fourth. She was Christened in Bedminster Bristol when she was ten years old.

Ada became a kitchen maid and worked in Clifton, Bristol. She then met Henry Edward Moore; he was a ship stoker. She married him on 28 January 1885, when she was nineteen years old, in Bristol Register Office.

Ada and Henry had four children - Daniel, born 1886; Nellie, born 1888; Harry, born 1890; and Ada, born 1892. Henry died on 1 September 1892 of chronic dysentery. He was 29 years old.

Ada was left alone to bring up four children, so she decided to take in a lodger to make ends meet. The lodger was John Keal. They developed a relationship and eventually married on the 24 February 1895 at St Augustus Church, Bristol.

My grandfather, Albert John Keal, was born on 30-October-1895. Albert became a boiler maker. Ada and John Keal moved to Newport and lived in Hoskins Street, where my grandfather's brother, George Henry Keal was born on 26 November-1897. They later had a daughter, Alice Maud Keal who sadly died in infancy.

John Keal continued with his work as a boiler maker where he lost an eye in an accident at work. Ada's brother and sister in law died in tragic circumstances, so they adopted their son, Harry. They then moved to 63 Malpas Road Newport.

Both my grandfather Albert and his brother George Henry become boiler makers like their father.

Ada's daughter, Ada, by her first marriage died aged 14 of Meningitis. John Keal died at age 71 in 1937, of prostate trouble. Ada died suddenly aged 74, at 63 Malpas Road Newport.

High Flight – a poem by J G Magee, submitted by Rob Wilkinson

The writer was working for the Canadian Air Force when he was involved in an aviation accident, I think in 1940, at the age of 19. What a waste of talent!

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings,
Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds- and done a hundred things
You would not have dreamt of...wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlight silence. Hovering there,
I've chased the shouting wind along and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.....

Up, up the long delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or even eagle flew,
And while with silent, lifting mind, I've trod
The high un-trespassed sanctity of space
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

Fox – a poem by Rob Wilkinson

One moment a deadly mission to the chicken run
And rapid return to hilly bank and home.
But a dual drive divides.....a sudden light, a sudden death
Blood stains the fangs
The body dislocated in death.

At dawn I find this almost perfect body,
The brilliant chestnut fur still shines,
Black points striking in their distinction
Youthful beauty destroyed in a moment's indiscretion.

I feel your furriness and fold you
In leaves and grass along the verge
For others to feed on your slim glossiness.
In darkness....and in light.....
They'll furrow in fields of brownness
And burrow amongst your neat young shape.

Place Names Quiz (page 23) - Answers:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Mansfield | 9. Bakewell |
| 2. Bath | 10. Andover |
| 3. Wells | 11. Gravesend |
| 4. Darlington | 12. Chard |
| 5. Rye | 13. Nottingham |
| 6. Oxford or Cowbridge | 14. Ayr |
| 7. Cardigan | 15. Lewes |
| 8. Margate | |

Per Ardua ad Cymru by John Murray.

It was a day I remember well. It was a Wednesday. It was 15th October 1958. I was 15. The sky was overcast, not particularly warm, there was a slight breeze and Lonnie Donegan was singing "Times are getting hard boys" on the Light Programme as I left home to catch the 7.35am workman's special to Victoria. The train was packed with sullen face workers on their daily commute. All seats were taken, and a significant number of passengers had to stand, including me, I was not concerned; my legs were capable of supporting me for the thirty minute journey. My arrival at Victoria was followed by a scramble for a seat or standing room on the Underground to Paddington, again my legs took the strain.

Paddington Station was awe-inspiring. It was huge, it was loud, it was smoky and it was thronging with people coming and going. I had time to spare so I walked along Platform 1 and marvelled at the big snorting monster that was the "Red Dragon" What a magnificent beast, gleaming black and red and green paintwork, big shiny wheels, smelling of oil and coal and spitting steam from hidden parts as smoke dribbled from its short stubby chimney. It oozed raw power. The coal blackened faced driver brighten my day with a smile.

Time to find a seat so back the way I had come, passing a number of boys obviously making the same journey. A seat was found in a non-smoking compartment, through its misty window I watched a thousand farewells unfold on the platform. Parents offering last minute advice to their bored offspring, doting mothers holding back tears, reminding them to write often. Proud fathers puffed out their chest in a final attempt to impart their years of wisdom and experience to their departing sons. A boy with watery eyes not wanting to let go of his mother's hand, face reddened with embarrassment when he saw me looking at him. I spared him further blushes by checking my joining instructions.

A whistle blew and boys began to scramble to get on board. Mothers released the tears they had been holding back. Another blow of the whistle, a puff of smoke and a short deep-throated whoosh, followed by another, then another and the shiny wheels of the "Red Dragon" began to turn. My journey had begun.

Three boys opened the compartment door, "are these seats taken?" one asked. I replied "No" but I was too late, they had already seated themselves. A futile attempt was made at conversation, we were all too young to have developed the art of talking to strangers about nothing in particular so we did the next best thing, we remained silent. I opened my copy of the Daily Mirror, not interested in the news of the day I turned the pages until I found the Garth and Jane comic strips, I was in love with Jane. I think I even had a smile at the antics of Andy Capp.

Once read I passed the paper to the other boys, it did not receive the attention I had given it, but it provided them with another reason to remain silent.

I was accompanied on my journey by a small brown case, which I later learned was made of compressed cardboard. It had been purchased from the Co-op the day before so my mother could get her 'divi'. There was not much in it, my birth certificate, joining instructions, N.I.Card, a change of underwear and my washing kit. Wrapped in greaseproof paper was an egg sandwich. My mother was trying to be posh by cutting it on the diagonal.

"I can't offer it around" I said, "there's only one."

"That's OK" said the smallest of the three boys, "would you like some chocolate?" taking a bar of Fry's Five Boys' from his pocket.

"No thanks" I said, it did not seem right me eating his chocolate and him not having a bite of my egg sandwich. I ate in silence, looking out at the passing houses and fields and the occasional river. Smoke from the mighty 'Red Dragon' sped past the window. More fields and more houses. Soon the lights came on and then darkness outside as we sped under the River Severn. It somehow seemed exciting going under a river in a train. Then it was time for the 'Red Dragon' to take a rest in Cardiff, just long enough for us all to get off.

The platform became a mass of boys looking for a place to go, I joined them. A voice echoed from the Tannoy telling us to go to platform 4. Like well-trained sheepdogs RAF personnel appeared and began to herd us towards the train waiting to take us to Gileston. The final part of my journey in the back of a Bedford truck. For those who are unfamiliar with this mode of transport it is a high canvas topped vehicle and entry to the rear is by dropping the tailgate and pulling yourself up on a knotted rope. This produced a number of grazed shins and knees as the less athletic among us struggled to get aboard. Waiting RAF personnel were on hand to push any overhanging backsides into the confines of the truck before closing the tailgate.

My first view of RAF St. Athan was a disappointment, this was not in the shiny brochure that had enticed me to join. Row upon row of wooden huts each with a large painted letter and number covered the Welsh landscape. It had the look of a Concentration Camp. Later that day I learned that Hut J10 was to be my new home for the next eighteen months.

After joining the first of many queues I was relieved of my Birth Certificate, N.I. Card and joining instructions. I watched as my name was ticked off an official looking list. Then a group of us were politely asked if we would like to collect our bedding so we could begin the process of settling in. A smart looking airman escorted us to a wooden hut, appropriately marked 'Bedding Store' in big white letters. I joined my second queue of the day and waited for my turn to come. A bored looking Corporal dumped on the counter pillows, two, pillow cases, two, mattress cover, one, sheets, two, blankets, four, china mug, one, knife, one, fork, one, spoon, one. He barked out each item like a well-oiled machine gun. A signature was required for each item. On the return journey to our huts it began to rain, many a blanket and sheet finished up on the wet ground.

Being first into the hut I took the corner bed space and after selecting the softest mattress I could find from the waiting pile began to assemble the metal frame that was to be my bed. Other boys arrived. Some got stuck in, others looked bewildered at the task facing of them. I had completed making my bed when I encountered my first person from Yorkshire. A tall, spectacled, spotty face lad held out his hand to me.

"My name's Mick Prime, come from Sheffield. Dad makes guns for Navy, won cup in rally." At least I think that is what he said. I shook his hand, told him my name and helped him make his bed. It would be some weeks before I fully understood what he was saying.

We were asked to "follow me" by another smart looking young airman. Outside the light was fading and rain was still falling as we followed him to the cookhouse. My third queue of the day snaked from the servery out into the rain. I was ready for some food, the benefit of my single egg sandwich had long worn off. This was to be my first encounter with "enormous Norma" as the queue moved slowly up to the servery. Taking a wet plate from the waiting pile I was rewarded with a greasy fried egg for presenting it in the prescribed manner. What I think was a sausage was placed beside it as company but the relationship was spoiled by the spoonful of greyish brown beans plopped on top of them. Now I faced "enormous Norma" She looked at me with an evil glint in her eye. It was obvious to see how she had earned the nickname "enormous." I moved so I was not directly in front of her. The pressure on the button of her shirt was so great that when it popped it would take an eye out of one of the many boys who were ogling her. I did not want it to be mine. She shovelled some soggy chips onto my plate covering everything that had gone before. I found a seat at a table with some other boys then joined yet another queue to fill my china pint mug with tea from the row of waiting tea urns. Even with two spoons of sugar, the tea tasted funny: it had a strange gritty taste which explained the sediment at the bottom of the mug when I had finished. I later learned that bromide was put in the tea to curb "male urges." Whether this was true or not I do not know, but I will say at that particular moment in my life, "male urges" were the last thing on my mind, besides, I had just met "enormous Norma."

Sleep did not come easy that first night. I was tired and normally had no problem dropping off. The sound of boys sobbing kept me awake till long into the dark hours.

The next day began at six o'clock. A burly Corporal turned on the lights and invited us to get out of bed immediately. We did. "Breakfast is at 0700 hours" he barked before leaving us in a state of shock.

Breakfast was almost a repeat of yesterday's tea except the chips were replaced by streaky bacon and fried bread. The tea still tasted the same, but the queue was not as long.

Today was the day we were to enlist. We assembled in what used to be an aircraft hanger and formed into queues in alphabetical order. I was in the middle and had to wait.

In groups of four we were called into an adjoining room. The door was closed behind us with a sound of finality about it. In the sparsely furnished room a young officer sat behind a desk, decorated with four copies of the bible. A Sergeant sat at a small table, in his hand a rubber stamp. He called our names, gave us each a piece of paper which he had stamped with some numbers and told us to hold the bible in our right hand, raise our left hand and repeat the Oath of Allegiance after the officer. We all did without hesitation. I now had a number to go with my name.

A different door was opened, and another a room awaited us. Eight boys were waiting. Another cup of strange tasting tea was being drunk by all as we listened to Connie Francis singing "Whose sorry now" on the Bakelite radio. An ill omen I thought as I realised I was now the property of Her Majesty for the next twelve years.

Suddenly a Corporal appeared. "Right you lot, follow me" he barked, not giving us time to finish our tea. I now had a name, a number and was part of a 'lot', I had come a long way in a day I thought as my life in the RAF was about to begin.

Again we were led to another wooden hut, sparsely furnished with five chairs.

"Five of you take a seat" barked the Corporal. Five boys did. I watched in horror as the two white coated men began their work. To call them barbers would be an insult to an honourable profession, they were just men with clippers and scissors. They started at each end, it was very obvious they were having a race to be the first to reach the middle. My turn came. It had taken me a long time to produce a passable DA and a Tony Curtis curl, within seconds they were on the floor. The man, for that was the politest term I could think of, smirked and informed me that "what's under your 'at is yours, what aint is mine, and you don't 'ave an 'at."

With my head now feeling the cold air of South Wales it was time to be issued with my uniform. But first I had to join a slow-moving queue. My turn eventually came.

"What size feet?" asked a pot-bellied sergeant. "Eight" I answered, "No eights, try nines, you'll grow." Two pairs of black boots were banged on the counter. I moved along and received Her Majesty's finest socks, shirts, collars, draws cellular, vests, pyjamas, towels and a beret. Fortunately, a kitbag to put them all in was provided. Then I was measured for my uniform. It was more guess work by a bespectacled dwarf of a man who called out my size, without measuring me to an untidy looking member of the WRAF. After recording the details she issued me with two pairs of khaki overalls to wear until my 'bespoke' uniform was ready. I was now issued with my greatest treasure, a greatcoat. I returned that same greatcoat twelve years later, aged 27. It fitted then; can you imagine what it must have looked like on a 15-year-old boy.

Fully laden I returned to Hut J10 where I was introduced to Corporal Broadhurst, a rat faced man with a Hitler moustache. There was pleasure in his voice as he informed his captive audience that he had been bestowed with the honour of looking after our welfare. Before that could begin, we were to strip down to nothing but one of our newly issued towels and to form yet another queue outside the room at the end of the hut. There were some funny scenes as embarrassed boys struggled to undress without anybody seeing their 'privates'. Soon we were all in a line holding a towel about our waist. The RAF was paranoid about personal hygiene and this was to be my first of many Free From Infection inspections. The queue move slowly. Boys went into the room and re-appeared some minutes later red-faced. I went in and closed

the door behind me. There before me stood an extremely attractive woman doctor smartly attired in WRAF uniform. I understood the red faces now.

"Name and number" she asked in a bored tone. I knew my name but struggled with my newly acquired number.

"Lift your arms," I did. My towel fell down and I went to retrieve it.

"Leave it."

She proceeded to examine my armpits.

"You can put your arms down now," she said as she reached for a torch.

"I need to check that that you haven't any bugs, fleas, crabs, little hidden pets or livestock, rashes, scabs or sores secreted about your person." She shone her torch on my privates. "Legs apart and lift it" I felt my face turning a dark shade of red that had yet to be discovered. My girlfriend had not seen it yet and here she was having a free viewing by the light of a torch beam.

"Bend over" came next. The same procedure.

"You can go" she said as she ticked my name of her list. I moved to the door. "Don't forget your towel." Out I went, head bowed, red-faced, just like the rest.

My face was still red as I made my way to the cookhouse for dinner. I picked up a plate which was filled with a spoonful of mince, cabbage and carrots were soon added, then I faced "enormous Norma" Her buttons still struggled to keep the contents of her shirt restrained. From her over generous mouth came an old forces song "Bless 'em all" only she was not singing the word "bless" it was something more basic than that, as she banged her ladle on the top of the large pot of mashed potato causing its contents be ejected onto the waiting plate. I am sure she used extra force as the dollop of mashed potato took the plate from my hand causing it to finish up in pieces on the floor.

"Clear it up and go to the back of the queue" she smirked. I had dinner that day without mashed potato.

The afternoon began with learning the basic rudiments of drill. Corporal Broadhurst took us to the Parade Ground and after forming us into three ranks we were called to 'Attention.' A person could be heard crunching across the Parade Ground towards us. The ground shuddered as he banged his right foot hard into the ground when he came to a halt. He was clearly a man who liked the sound of his own gleaming black boots. His head was covered by a cap, the black shiny peak forcing his head up to reveal two black beady eyes. The creases in his uniform were razor sharp. His left breast displayed a row of medal ribbons and a winged brevet with the letters AG. This man was no slouch I thought, not many Air Gunners survived the war. He looked at us, walked slowly along each rank before resuming his position in the front. Then he spoke, loudly.

"My name is Sergeant Mathews, but you may call me bastard. You might have broken your mothers heart but you won't break mine. From now on I am your mother and your father and when I say jump you say, "how high, how high" and you don't come down till I tell you, is that clear." There was a muted "yes." He yelled louder. "Is that clear." The response was more positive this time as we all called "yes Sergeant." I'm sure I heard one boy shout "yes bastard." Sergeant Mathews must have heard the same thing. He marched up to a boy who looked in fear of his life.

"What's your name laddie?" he barked at the top of his stentorian voice. The boy began to answer, nervously. "Shut up when you speak to me, Corporal Broadbent take this boy's name." That was the moment when I doubted my sanity and the wisdom of what I had let myself in for. It was too late now.

“Thoughts come clearly while one walks”

Thomas Man, Novelist

“Walking connects you to the land, it sews a seam between you and it, that is very hard to unstitch”

Kelly Winters, Writer

“Part of the pleasure of any kind of walking for me is the very idea of going somewhere, by foot”

Ruth Rudnes, Writer

“If you would grow great and stately you must try and walk sedately”

Robert Louis Stevenson, Novelist

“In every walk with nature one receives far more that he seeks”

John Muir. Naturalist & Writer

“Whatever is going on in your life, walking is like opening your skull and blowing fresh air into your mind”

Jamie Owen, BBC Broadcaster

and finally.....

“Before you criticise someone walk a mile in their shoes

Then when you do criticise that person, you'll be a mile away and have their shoes!”

Frieda Norris, Writer

..... and finally



Two swans and their family of seven cygnets on the canal at Cwmbran
Photographed by **Marilyn Gregory**