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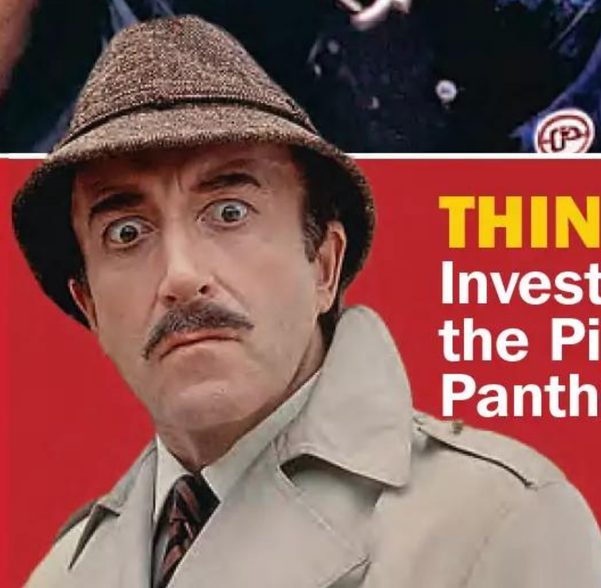

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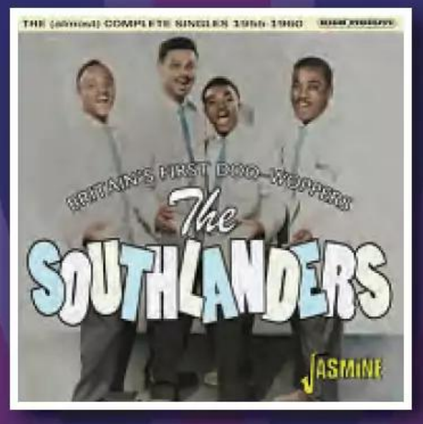

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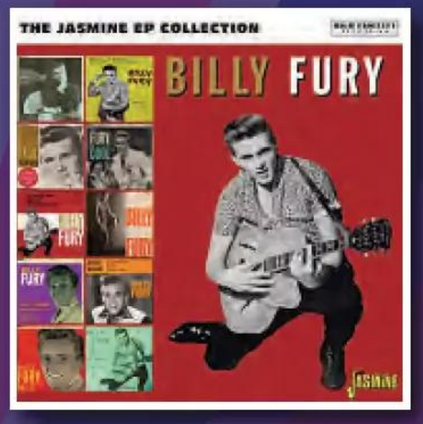

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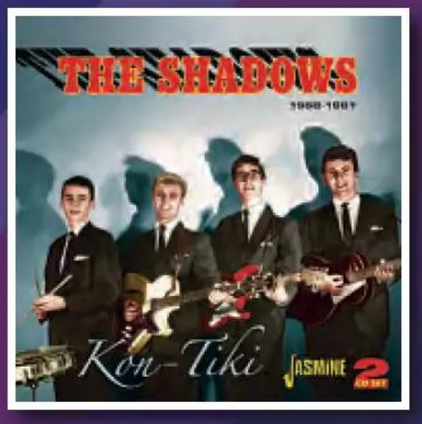

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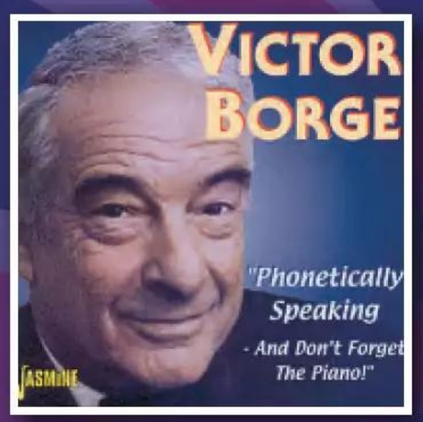

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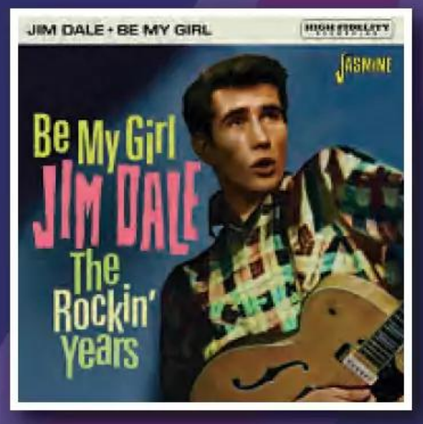

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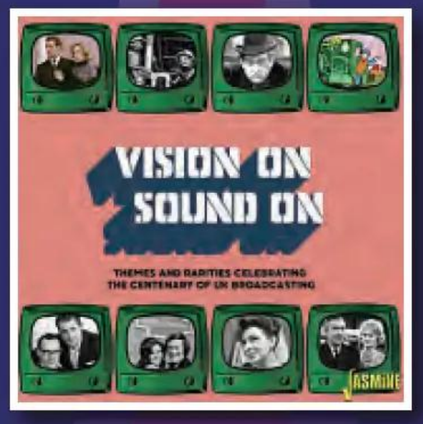

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EDITORIAL

GREETINGS, GRAPPLE FANS

While some will have fond memories of World of Sport for its horseracing coverage, many more will remember it as the place to go to watch professional wrestling. Predating World of Sport by a decade, and continuing for another three years after its demise, ITV's wrestling coverage brought fighters such as Big Daddy, Giant Haystacks, Jackie Pallo, Mick McManus and Kendo Nagasaki into our homes and, for some, our hearts.

Big Daddy, especially, was much-loved by the British public and for much of the 1980s was hard to miss. A regular fixture on children's TV, appearing on shows such as Tiswas, he also fronted an advertising campaign for Daddies Sauce. As well as having his own comic strip in Buster, Big Daddy even helped Dan Dare defeat the Mekon at a press event to relaunch The Eagle.

While the American WWF – which made its UK debut on ITV in 1987, two years before finding a home on Sky – looked a lot slicker than its British counterpart, it will come as no surprise to you to discover that "our" wrestling was just as choreographed.

A friend, whose first job was working behind the scenes at a local entertainment venue, got to meet Big Daddy when he appeared as part of a wrestling show there. As my friend was putting out the chairs for that evening's entertainment, he witnessed Big Daddy and his opponent going through their moves prior to the venue opening.

Practice makes perfect, they say. But I do wonder what effect it actually had on his opponent, as it must have been unnerving to know that, at some point during the bout, you were going to be on the receiving end of Big Daddy's signature moves, including that quite impressive belly-splash.

Simon Stabler

ON THE CADGE

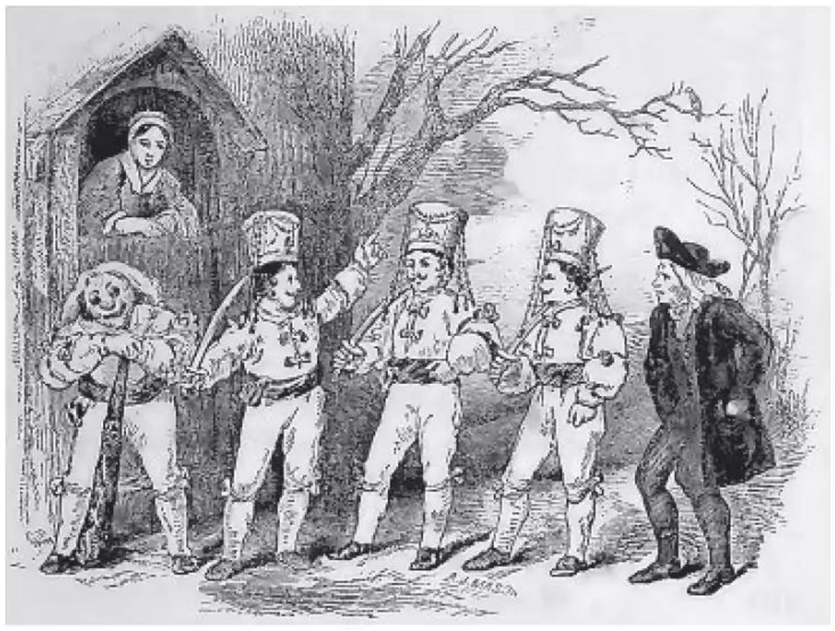
Cardinal Cox plays mummeries and dadderies

Before the 12 days of Christmas, there was a long festive period that stretched from Stir-Up Sunday at the end of November all the way to Candlemas at the beginning of February. During these months, when work was scarce and hunger plentiful, poor folks might go on the cadge round ale houses, performing mummers' plays.

Mummers' plays have a small range of stock characters: St George, a doctor, Father Christmas, a Turk, a fool, a policeman, etc. A play may include a fight. If there is, whoever is killed may well be brought back to life. It all ends well, and a hat is passed round for a penny. If you haven't got a penny, a ha'penny will do. If you haven't got a ha'penny, well God bless you.

There is no one text of the play. Variations are found in fragments from neighbouring parishes. And it is mostly fragments. The oft-quoted Revesby Play from Lincolnshire, dated to Halloween 1779, though performed by morris dancers, shares little in common with the mummers' plays. When John Clare transcribed a Northamptonshire neighbour's memories of the village play (in the 1820s), the old actor was recalling something from 40 years previous.

So, for myself as a writer who has suckled at the mummery gland, it is this porous nature of the mummers'



play that has attracted me. For about a decade, with some fellow poets, I performed at the annual Straw Bear Festival in Whittlesey (held around Plough Monday in January).

The Straw Bear Festival was banned in 1909 for drunkenness and riotous behaviour. Then it was resurrected in 1980. A festival of folk dance and music, it is marked in the town by the amount that the pubs take over the weekend (some traditions never die).

As we poets were indoors depending on the weather, we might attract a fair-sized audience. For a couple of years, I wrote our own version of the mummers' play with topical references included.

They may be but "rude mechanicals" but in their heart they preserve a centuries old tradition. So, if you have a mummers' play in your locality, please remember to drop a coin into the hat or box that is proffered to you.

Next issue: Spangles

BEST OF BRITISH
PAST AND PRESENT

www.bestofbritishmag.co.uk
Best of British,
Mortons Media Group Ltd,
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Horncastle LN9 6JR Tel: 01507 529529
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Mortons Media Group Ltd,
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Horncastle LN9 6JR Tel: 01507 529529
subscriptions@mortons.co.uk
Monday-Friday 8:30am - 5pm

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DESIGN

Druck Media Pvt. Ltd

NEWSTRADE DISTRIBUTION

Seymour Distribution Ltd,
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT

PRINTING

Acorn Web Offset Ltd,
Normanton, West Yorkshire

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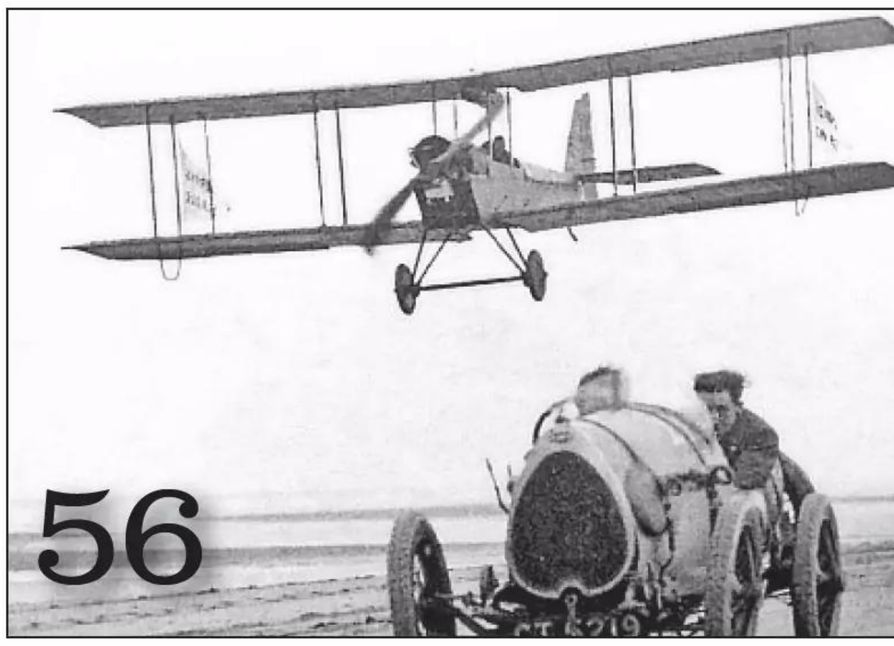
ISSUE 342

Welcome to Britain's favourite nostalgia magazine

Cover: Wrestler Big Daddy meets some of his fans in April 1982.

Photograph: Brian Bould/Daily Mail/ Shutterstock (Restored and coloured by Stuart Humphryes)



Postbag

The Editor welcomes letters for this section. Pictures are appreciated. Letters may be edited so that we can include as many as possible

A Greater Significance


Gosforth War Memorial.

Dear Simon,

In the November edition of Best of British, you included an article on war memorials by Michael Foley (In Memoriam) which was very good.

In the north-east of England, we have been recording war memorials for 35 years. Between the Tweed and the Tees we have recorded over 5,000 war memorials, mostly from the two world wars.

While the Great War was raging, the government realised very soon that it would be impossible to bring the bodies back. The wealthy offered to pay the cost of bringing back their own dead, but the government said: "No, everybody will be treated the same." The government entered negotiations with the relevant countries to pay for the burials where the men fell.

The wealthy wanted to pay for a headstone for their sons, and again were refused. The result is those amazing war cemeteries which have a serenity in total contrast to the reason for their creation. Men and women who are buried in this country died here, having been sent home with very severe wounds or were on leave and died from other causes. They were given the same headstone.

Remembrance caused several problems at home. The Cenotaph, which had been made of wood for the peace celebrations was now, by public demand, rebuilt in Portland stone in time for the burial of the Unknown Warrior. But for some, London was too far away and was as difficult to visit as the cemeteries in Europe.

The government passed an act in 1923 which allowed local authorities to levy a rate of no more than one penny in the pound towards the cost of a local memorial. Any other funding was to be raised locally.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that this provided a source of occupational therapy for local people who were feeling the bewildering results of the war which should have been over by Christmas 1914.

Under normal circumstances, when somebody dies, there is a funeral at which the bereaved say their goodbyes. The body is disposed of in a place which could be visited whenever people wished. This was denied to most people whose relatives had died abroad. Special services of remembrance were often held by local churches.

Local committees held meetings to ask the public what they wanted as a memorial. Some preferred a monument. Others thought that, since these were difficult times, the money should be spent on something which would be of local use. This helps to explain why people chose to create hospitals, clinics, or community centres which bear some kind of plaque bearing the names.

Sometimes the memorial was placed in the local parish church. Often, non-conformist churches placed a memorial in their own building to commemorate former members.

Funding was also a matter of local decision. Some thought that people should simply give their money, others

The Victory Arch in Blyth Market at the 1919 peace celebrations.

Photographs: (Blyth) Beamish Archives, (Gosforth) Creative Commons/Anthony Foster

raised their funds by holding special events.

The fundraising also often paid for something to give to those who returned. There might have been a special event at which they were welcomed back, and often were given a gift, with something also being given to the families of the bereaved.

The information on memorials varies according to local decisions. One can find memorials bearing the names of those who served as well as those who fell. Sometimes the names could be listed in alphabetical order, or by sphere of service, sometimes by rank or regiment, or even date of death. Some included women's names as a matter of course, others listed them separately. Some families chose to commemorate their loved ones separately.

There are a few "thankful villages", places where memorials were erected giving thanks for the safe return of all their people who went to war.

Family researchers looking for ancestors may not find the name they are seeking. There could be several reasons for this. The erection of the memorial often took some years to fulfil. A man's parents may not have been able to accept the idea that their son could be dead, and held on to the hope that he would turn up one day. Other people may have had to move because of their circumstances. A widow might have remarried and moved away. It could be that there was no family left to submit a name. To have a name added now involves getting the relevant permission.

People who could not afford a headstone under normal circumstances could offer their son's name to go on to the memorial.

After the 1939-45 war, people either added the names to the existing memorial, or created a different one. There could well be a feeling of: "How often is this going to happen?"

The result of this is that war memorials, whatever their shape or form, are also surrogate tombstones. The unveiling became the funeral people had been denied. They could visit any time they wished, as if they were visiting a grave. The thoughts of those people who returned from the war and attended the unveiling are totally unknowable.

Whatever the reason for the building of whatever memorial is in any town or village, its significance is a lot greater than just a memorial.

Janet Brown
Chair, North East War Memorials Project
newmp.org.uk

I Do Believe It

Dear Simon,

Congratulations on the 30th anniversary of Best of British. When so many magazines fold, it is an achievement to you and your predecessors that it is still here and much loved.

Martin Broadribb's letter (Postbag: Better Than Bond, November) made me think of the 1950s when my hometown had two cinemas and I went to both of them every week with my friend from work. I wasn't concerned whether they were British or American but we certainly had value for money with two films, a trailer and newsreel. And you could sit through it all again if you wanted.

I remember The Good Old Days from Leeds City Varieties (My Good Old Days), while the feature about Hannah Gordon and Victor Meldrew (Loving Hannah) made me smile. I wrote a poem about him, called I Don't Believe It which I read out in his voice at an exhibition in Croydon Clocktower.

I did enjoy watching One Foot in the Grave. The older you get, the more you get like Victor.

The Top 30 – well, apart from 1994, I seem to have all the other issues.

I'm so pleased to be part of the anniversary issue. Thank you for printing my letters.

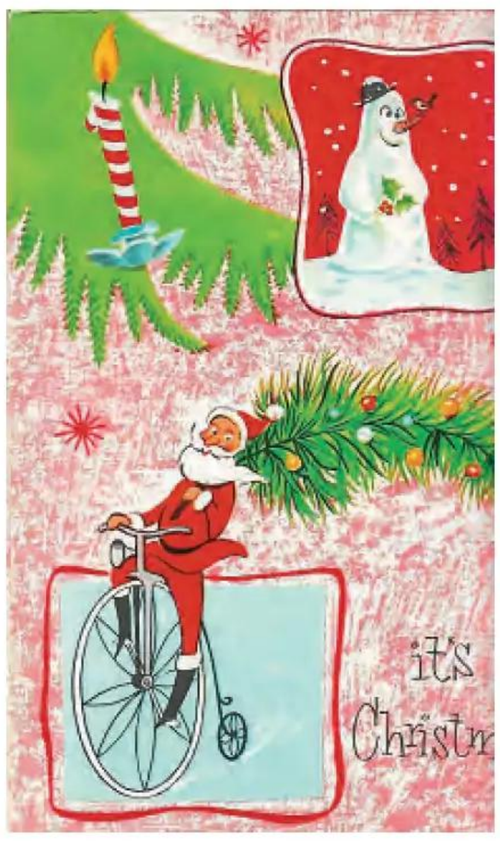
Maisie Dance
Purley, Surrey

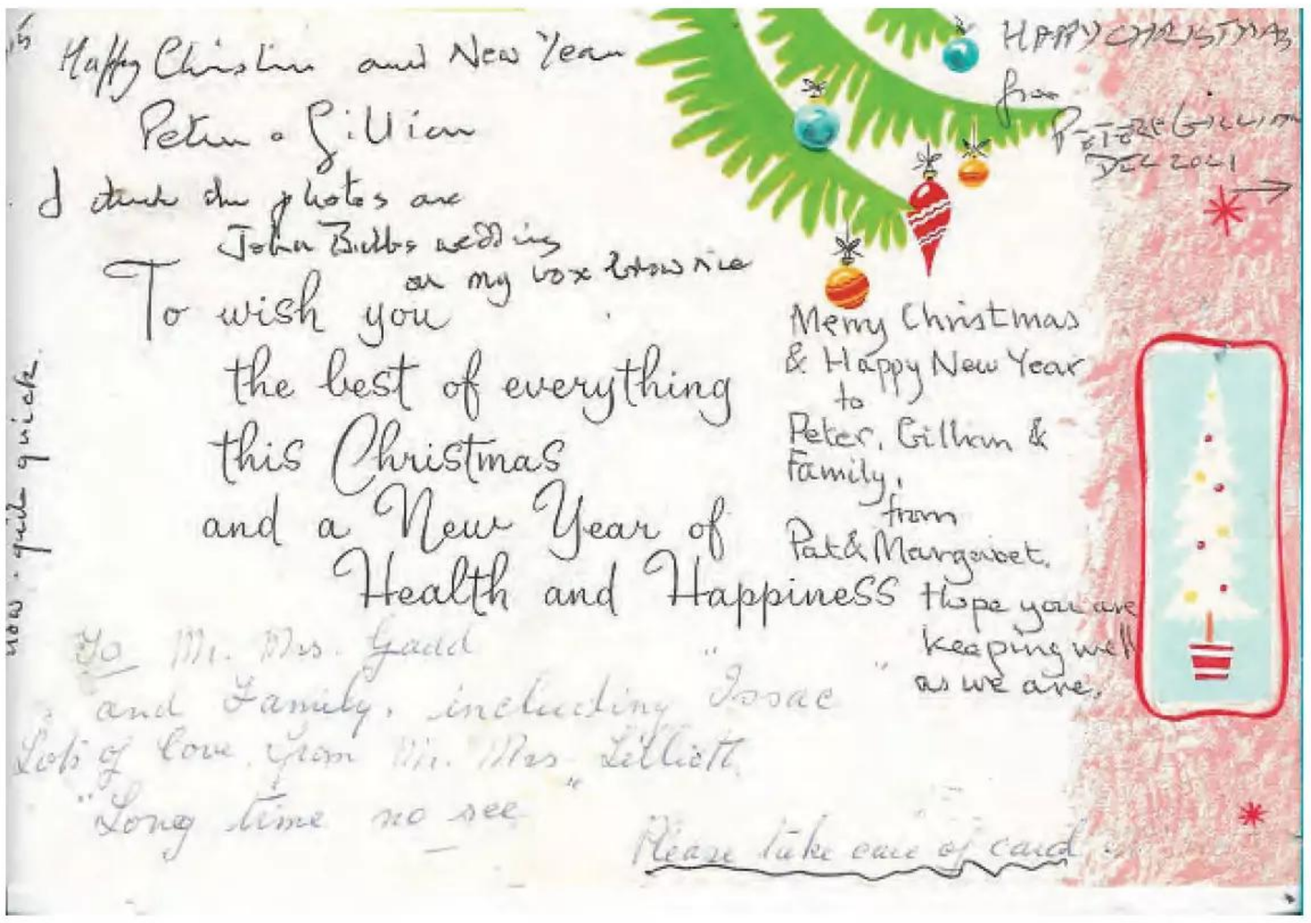
What a Card

Dear Simon,

For reasons which have been lost in the mists of time, my friend Peter Gadd and I use the same Christmas card every year. We run two cards, so each of us receives a card, which is retained for the next year. Here's one of them.

Pat Lelliott





Contrasting Constructions

Dear Simon,

I feel that I must contest the claim made in the article A Capital View (December) that the old and new buildings in London "blend together seamlessly". The same problems affect the London skyline as can be seen widely elsewhere, that of a lack of respect for context and for the scale of existing structures.

So many of the new and relatively new London buildings are excellent designs but do not seem to fit well with those already there, partly I suspect because their designers intended them to stand out. Their overwhelming height is possibly the biggest problem, and the cityscape of the capital seems to be gradually becoming another "anywhere city" of tall buildings competing for attention.

When you consider how planning officials are so particular about householders' applications to carry out even minor alterations to their properties it seems ironic that buildings unsuitable to their locations – and equally thousands of houses on farmland – are allowed to be constructed so easily and so widely.

Martin Broadribb

Sterling Memories

Dear Simon,

Once again two articles in the October issue of Best of British took me back in time.

First, The Collector, Lyndon Parker and his earthenware ginger beer bottles. When I was a very young boy in the late 1940s, after going to St Anne's Hill, Surrey to play, we would go to a local shop and get a bottle of ginger beer. We would go outside and sit in an open front hut to drink them.

Next, Michael Foley telling us the story of the Sterling machine gun (Forties Post: Sterling Work). This took me back to my National Service days. Although being in the Army Catering Corps, you still had basic training to do before going to the School of Cookery. We had a lesson with the Sterling submachine gun, when we had to strip it down and reassemble it. We had to lay out the parts in a certain order. Then, without looking, we would reassemble the gun. We were told this was if we had to do maintenance on the gun in the dark.

Yours
Bobby Knottley
Newthorpe Common, Nottinghamshire

The Short Arm and the Law

Dear Simon,

On my first day as manager at my new supermarket in Sidcup, Kent in 1966, I turned up nice and early to open up. I had not been there before, but I noticed to my horror that the glass entrance door had three separate locks – top, middle and bottom.

The trouble with being on the short side, I could not reach the keyhole at the top, and at 6am there was nobody about to help me. However, I espied what I thought was the answer.

Three doors away, a freshly delivered crate of milk had been delivered and was sitting outside the premises. I borrowed it and was just about to place it at the foot of the supermarket's door and step on it when I was stopped abruptly by the words: "Hello, hello, hello... and what do you think you're doing?"

Turning round, I found myself staring up at a policeman. He had a twinkle in his eye, and after a quick explanation, he told me to put the milk crate away and that he would unlock the door for me.

Putting this embarrassing moment to one side, this store was one of my happiest managerial appointments ever.

Colin Macleod
Beauly, Inverness

Photograph: (London) Creative Commons/Steve Daniels

Windsor Change

Dear Simon,

I love the magazine and it's great that you quote "Middlesex" as the county in Window on the Past. However, the picture of Uxbridge in the December issue was actually taken on Windsor Street, not Windsor Road.

Thanks
Ian Goldsworthy

The Ryde of My Life

Dear Simon,

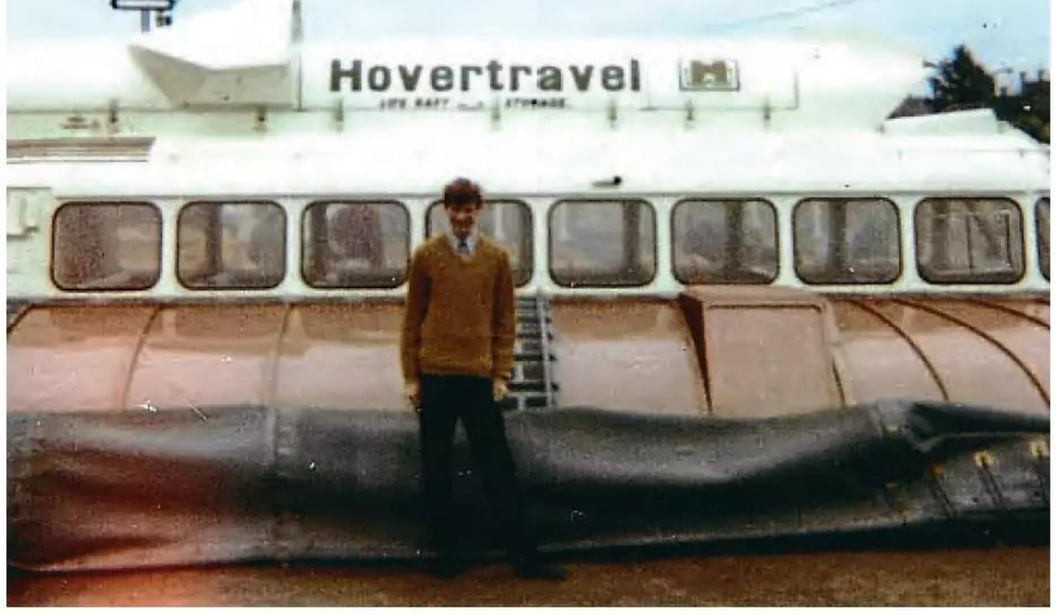
The article by François Prins (On a Cushion of Air, June) chronicled the history of the hovercraft and its inventor Sir Christopher Cockerell.

There was a regular hovercraft service operating between Ryde, on the Isle of Wight, and Southsea, Portsmouth.

I have enclosed a photograph from the summer of 1966 when I was staying at Brambles Chine Holiday Camp (sadly now gone) near Yarmouth. The photo shows me standing beside SRN6 and the front of the hovercraft at the Ryde terminal. A great innovator and still giving service.

Keep up the good work of letters and articles.

Yours sincerely
C Martindill
Paignton, Devon



Can you help?

New Zealand Tel: 09 443 8080, Email: smlhosn@xtra.co.nz

Does anybody know the whereabouts of Peter Bonner who went to Warren School in Chadwell Heath, 1984-85. He's got a brother, David Bonner, and his friend was Ian Stanley.
Sarah Reynolds (nee Cook), 11 Tavistock Close, Harold Hill, Romford RM3 8HF

I am very interested in Leyland Super Comet lorries and am trying to track down anyone who might have photos of the lorries that they could supply me with.
Michael Clancy, 18 Hampshire Avenue, Slough, Berkshire SL1 3AQ

Does anyone have any information of a Dutch football team called KMVZ, a club from Amsterdam. In particular, there was a tour hosted by KMVZ and including my local team, Barkingside FC, in 1966, along with Witney FC. Any information on KMVZ and this tour would be greatly appreciated.
Rob Meyers, 123 Ashurst Drive, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1HA

My father, Henry Baker, was born in Sittingbourne, Kent in 1914. He arrived in Wellington, New Zealand during the end of 1943. I would love to hear from anyone who knew my dad's brothers – who I believe were George, Stephen and James – and sister Lydia.
Steve Baker, PO Box 40-469, Glenfield, Auckland 0747,

Information and photos are sought on the families who once lived in the Layerthorpe area of York, an area that has changed beyond recognition. If you once resided or worked in this area or had relatives who did, we are looking to add to our archive and at the same time preserve these photos for future generations.
Jane Burrows – Tang Hall Local History Group, Tel: 07522 402945 Email: tanghallhistory@gmail.com

My wife and I are planning to visit London, Kesgrave, Ipswich, Banbury, Aberdeen, Turriff and Shetland in 2026. We would love to have Christian married couple penpals from those cities to go for a meal and learn more about those cities.
Pastor Joseph and Mrs Serene Culp, PO BOX 202, Pickerington, Ohio 43147-0202 US Email: joseph.captainscotland.culp@gmail.com

Requests for information, friends and family searches and reunion announcements can be included here free of charge. Send any requests, written as concisely as possible, to Can You Help?, Best of British, Mortons Media Group Ltd, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Linconshire LN9 6JR or by email to info@bestofbritishmag.co.uk

Blowin' in the Wind

Dear Simon,

Between 1952 and 1959, after leaving school, I played local league football for three teams in the Poole, Dorset area: Poole Grammar Old Boys, Creekmoor, and Aish Sports.

I was average (very), and if the team had a reserve side, I was in it.

We normally played our matches on council pitches, three or four matches side by side. However, one day we went to Blandford Forum where they had a stadium. As I left the coach and entered the door marked "Players' Entrance", I felt like a professional. But I'm afraid I didn't play like one.

In the winter of 1953, while playing for Poole Grammar Old Boys, we had an away match at Sixpenny Handley, a village in Dorset.

When the game started, it was windy. Not gale force but very strong. We had wind advantage in the first half, but they were the better side. By half-time it was about 2-1 to them.

The second half, however, was like no other game I had played in.

Our opponents now had an extra player. Not a person but the wind, which was now gale force. I had never known a wind like it and we lost 10-1. The only time we had got into their half was when we kicked off after they had scored.

When they shot and missed, the ball went so far, it was a long time before the goalie was back with it. Luckily, the referee didn't add this wasted time on to the 90 minutes or we would have lost by a far greater score.

As the wind increased, it became impossible to take a goal-kick. Once the ball was in the air, the wind took it off like a balloon back over the goalie's head. The teams would have to compromise, or the game would have to be called off.

It was agreed that the player taking the goal-kick would be allowed to side-foot it all along the ground so the wind would not take it off. by doing this, we managed to get the ball out of the penalty area. The game was back on Our opponents stayed well outside the area to give us the chance to get the game finished.

At the time, I was 17 years old. I was very skinny, weighing about 7 stone. In 1953, the football boots were heavy with hard toes. If I hadn't been wearing these boots, I might well have been blown off my feet.

David Sim
Normanby, Middlesbrough

Friends Reunited

Dear Simon,

As I sit on the balcony of our retirement apartment on the promenade St Annes on Sea, my mind reflects over the last few years – how Ruth and I came to live here.

The view of the beach, golden sands and the sea beyond, not forgetting the glorious sunsets, makes me realise how fortunate we are to have found such a special location. The view of the bandstand and pier reminds me how, as a child, I visited my aunt, uncle and cousins regularly from my home in Liverpool.

To further my career, I moved to the Midlands in the early 1970s. However, after deciding to retire, we decided to move back up north. Ruth originally hailed from the north-east close to the sea. We started to take a few short breaks in St Annes. We felt the warmth of the community and made new friends.

We went through the difficult process of making decisions, weighing-up the pros and cons.

We were really focused and had all the usual headaches of selling our house and looking for a suitable apartment and eventually moved in September 2022.

We both feel very happy and relaxed about being back among our "ain folk" in the north. We have made new friends and welcome visits from old friends we left behind in Solihull. Each day we are discovering new places of interest locally and of course all the coffee shops and a variety of eating places etc. Within an hour or so we can reach the Lakes, Preston, Manchester and, of course, Liverpool, my hometown which is remembered nostalgically for my early days, family and friends.

As a hoarder of memorabilia, letters, photos, postcards and books it was a difficult decision to discard many of these treasured items. However, it was partially achieved. One day, while sorting out some papers, I came across a letter dated 1976 from Grange-over-Sands from a former next door neighbour in Liverpool thanking me for a condolence letter following the passing of his late wife.

This couple had two daughters, Susan and Penny, Susan was my sister's age and Penny my age. So, I had fond memories of them from a very early age.

I decided to do a little detective work to trace these childhood friends and discover what happened to them. A hotel in Grange was recommended to us by friends in St Annes.

During our stay, we drove to the address on the letter dated 1976. It was a large, detached house on a steep hill overlooking Morecambe Bay. No one was around, so determined to find out who lived there, I enquired across the road with a neighbour and showed him the letter. He confirmed that Susan, the elder daughter, lived there and Penny lived further up the hill nearby. He duly provided Susan's telephone number.

As a result, after 60 years or so, we made contact and met with both sisters for tea and spent two hours reminiscing. They were really pleased and amazed about my story of how we found them after all these years.

We have all agreed to meet up again before too long. So, in addition to making new friends, and discovering new places of local interest, we are meeting old friends and rekindling really happy memories of our youth at the same time.

Yours sincerely
Stephen Abrahams
Lytham St Annes, Lancashire

Runners and Riders

Dear Simon,

Back in the late 1960s/early 70s, I was working as a management tutor for the Post Office, teaching basic skills to students at our training school at Rodwell House in the City of London.

I spent some two years there and found it very rewarding, making plenty of good friends including Mrs Elsie Sims – a dear lady who was troubled by a gammy leg. Her role for us was as a bookings clerk, responsible for calling the students and dealing with their paperwork. Her writing was first class and her ability was second to none. The Post Office had no qualms about keeping her on, although nearing her 70s, and left it to her when she wanted to call it a day.

We became good friends and, despite my constant teasing, she was always pleased to see me each morning.

She loved pot plants but, as she had no garden at her home, she grew quite a variety of plants on her windowsill, and they were her pride and joy. One day, I presented her with a fresh pot and said: "This is a colourful plant that you must keep watering." She expressed her thanks and said she would treasure my gift.

After a couple of weeks, Mrs Sims said to me: "Mr McGill, your plant is very unusual because it is climbing up my window in and out of the Venetian blinds."

"Give it time," I said, and left it at that.

Then, one day, she came into my office and said: "I have small red flowers all over my plant and when I touched one, it fell off and I have a small runner bean. How could you do that? I now have beans all up my window and people keep asking me why am I growing them on my blinds."

I realised I had to do something to repair my friendship with the dear lady, and I remembered she once told me her dearest wish was to go to an actual racehorse meeting. I suggested if she made her way from her home in Bexleyheath to Woking, I would meet her there and take her to Goodwood.

Mrs Sims was over the moon for her day out. She made it to Woking and I drove off with her down to Sussex. She loved the ride in the beautiful countryside and was fascinated by the sight of "Glorious Goodwood" and on a fine sunny day at that.

I gave her £5 to bet on whatever she wanted, and, in one race, she chose a horse called Lousy Times. The odds were 40-1 and all I could say was: Good luck and goodbye to my money."

Well, Lousy Times proved to be a star – first out of the gate, never headed and won by three lengths. Suddenly, Mrs Sims had near £50 in her hand and could not believe her luck (nor could I). It was the first time she had won anything in her life – what a moment.

Ron McGill
Guildford, Surrey

Question Time

Tunnel Vision

Q The Ealing Studios comedy The Ladykillers features Mrs Wilberforce's (Katie Johnson) house above the south portal of Copenhagen Tunnel, a mile north of King's Cross station. But when the Major (Cecil Parker) and other members of the gang arrive, the background is clearly Argyle Street to the south of St Pancras station and its clock. Do you know which house, presumably at the other end of Argyle Street, was actually used?

Mike Hanscomb

The white lines running up to Mrs Wilberforce's front door show that the footage pointing towards St Pancras station was filmed in the middle of the road.

A Best of British says: Despite being ranked by the BFI as the 13th greatest British film of all time, and regularly scoring close to 100% on review aggregators such as Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic, the view from the front door of Mrs Wilberforce's house rankles with anyone who is familiar with the King's Cross area of London.

A piece of stained glass from the porch of Mrs Wilberforce's house was placed in front of the camera to show this shot of Mrs Wilberforce returning home with a police escort.

Using a combination of photographic blow-ups, back projection and even a piece of stained glass placed in front of the camera to show the view from the door, the camera looks to have been set up in the middle of Argyle Street, roughly adjacent to the junction with Whidborne Street.

ASK US! **If you've got a question, the Best of British staff will do its best to find the answer. Occasionally we get stuck and look to our readers for assistance. Whether you've got something to ask, can provide an answer, or want to add to the information provided, please email or write to us at the address on page 4.**

The Retro TV Times

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Talking Pictures TV
talkingpicturestv.co.uk

SKY 328 | FREEVIEW 82
FREESAT 306 | VIRGIN 445

Cinderella: The Shoe Must Go On (1986)
(Wednesday 1 January, 3pm)
Comedy. Director: Jon Scoffield. Starring: Danny La Rue, Roy Kinnear, Cheryl Baker and Jimmy Cricket. Written by Barry Cryer and Dick Vosburgh, Danny La Rue plays Cinderella's wicked stepmother in this hilarious Christmas pantomime.

A Message from Mars (1913)
(Saturday 4 January, 10am)
Sci-Fi. Director: J Wallett Waller. Sharing a theme with A Christmas Carol, a Martian visits earth to cure a selfish man. The first British science fiction feature, this silent movie is presented with a new score.

The Big Job (1965)
(Sunday 5 January, 8.55am)
Comedy. Director: Gerald Thomas. Starring: Sid James, Dick Emery, Joan Sims, Sylvia Syms, Jim Dale and Lance Percival. A gang of crooks are caught on a big job. Fifteen years later, they find their loot is now buried under a police station.

The Leather Boys (1964)
(Monday 6 January, 10.55am)
Drama. Director: Sidney J Furie. Starring: Rita Tushingham, Colin Campbell and Dudley Sutton. A marriage crumbles after Reggie becomes more involved with his biker friends, especially the eccentric Pete.

* Followed by Back to the Ace With Rita Tushingham (2024), an exclusive documentary where Rita Tushingham returns to to the Ace Cafe, where she shares insights in the production of The Leather Boys.

It Always Rains on Sunday (1947)
(Thursday 9 January, 10.45am)
Drama. Director: Robert Hamer. Starring: Googie Withers, John McCallum and Jack Warner. Rose wants to escape the drudgery of her daily life when an old lover escapes from prison.

Crooks in Cloisters (1964)
(Friday 10 January, 4.40pm)
Comedy. Director: Jeremy Summers. Starring: Ronald Fraser, Barbara Windsor, Bernard Cribbins and Wilfrid Brambell. After pulling off the smallest train robbery, Little Walter and his crew decide to get out of London.

iPLAYER
bbc.co.uk/iplayer

100 Years of BBC Northern Ireland
Why Don't You? Children from Northern Ireland present ideas for games, fun and activities in a 1981 episode of the classic children's television series Why Don't You?

Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em
Meet Frank Spencer, an eager young man trying to find his way in the world. He's enthusiastic, well-meaning... and disaster-prone.

Alice in Wonderland
Adaptation of Lewis Carroll's classic novel Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Starring Ann-Marie Mallik, Michael Redgrave and Peter Sellers. Directed by Jonathan Miller.

itvX
itv.com

Pat Phoenix: Against The Odds
Sue Johnston stars in this intimate drama exploring the life of Coronation Street star Pat Phoenix. Follow her affair with fellow actor Tony Booth in the 50s that ended in heartbreak, and what eventually happened to the pair years later.

Twelfth Night
Alec Guinness, Ralph Richardson, Tommy Steele and renowned Shakespearean actress Joan Plowright star in this merry on-stage mix-up of lives, loves and close relationships.

The Vice
Ken Stott and Caroline Catz star in this gritty crime drama about a London Vice squad. Wading through a world of prostitution and pornography, the team doggedly pursue their targets.

Photographs: (Alice) BBC

LEGEND

FREEVIEW 41, SKY 148,
FREESAT 137, VIRGIN 149

Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires (1974)
(Friday 3 January, 11.05pm)
While lecturing in China, Professor Van Helsing (Peter Cushing) agrees to help seven kung fu trained siblings reclaim their ancestral mountain village, now the domain of seven powerful vampires and their army of undead slaves. Co-directed by Hammer stalwart Roy Ward Baker and Hong Kong director Chang Cheh.

The Twilight Zone
(Sundays, 8.30pm)
Residing in the world of fantasy and science fiction, The Twilight Zone has become the role model for TV anthologies, brilliantly exploring the foibles of humanity in metaphoric ways unseen in conventional drama. Casts have included Robert Redford, William Shatner, Burt Reynolds, Robert Duvall, Dennis Hopper, Carol Burnett, James Coburn, Charles Bronson, Lee Marvin and Peter Falk. The series were nominated for seven Emmy Awards and four Hugos and won three of each.

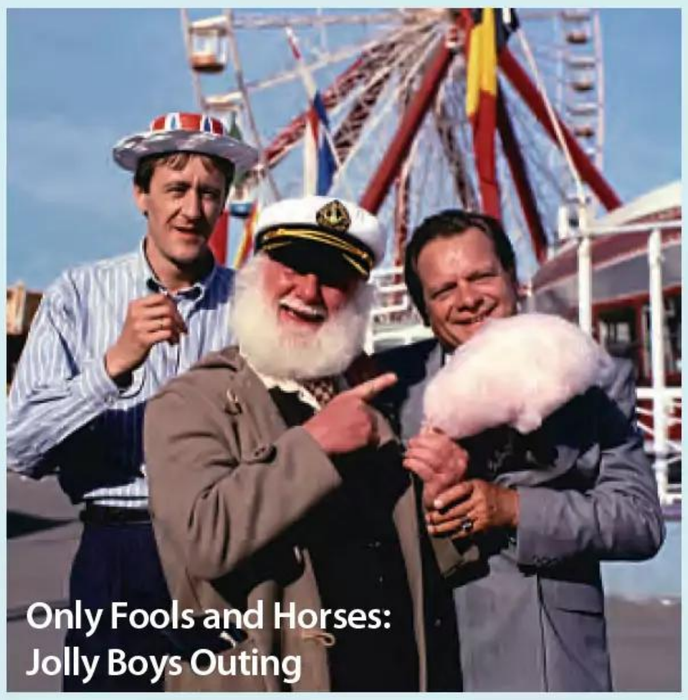
The Wild Geese (1978)
(Thursday 9 January, 9pm)
Richard Burton, Roger Moore, Richard Harris and Hardy Krüger star as a team of ageing mercenaries hired by a wealthy industrialist for one final mission: Recruit and train a squad of desperate commandos, parachute into an unstable African nation and snatch its deposed president from a maximum-security army prison.

We Still Steal the Old Way (2016)
(Thursday 30 January, 10.55pm)
Regarded as the best in the business, the Archer Gang are back in this explosive follow-up to We Still Kill the Old Way. When the infamous 70s underworld legends are tasked with robbing Britain's richest banker, they are caught mid-heist and sentenced to do time in Britain's toughest prison. Once inside, they encounter their old nemesis Slick Vic Farrow (Billy Murray) who is intent on murdering the gang. Also stars Ian Ogilvy, Lysette Anthony, Steven Berkoff and Julian Glover.

U&GOLD

SKY 110, VIRGIN 124,
TALKTALK 310, NOW TV

Only Fools and Horses
(Wednesday 1 January, 4.30pm)
Jolly Boys Outing The classic 1989 Christmas special of the beloved sitcom. Del, Rodney and Uncle Albert take their mates from the Nag's Head on a disastrous trip to Margate.


Only Fools and Horses: Jolly Boys Outing

Blood Actually: A Murder, They Hope Mystery
(Friday 3 January, 11.20pm)
Sian Gibson and Johnny Vegas return for a festive special. Gemma and Terry are in a village hosting a Santa contest, when competitors start being killed in warped and festive ways.

U&DRAMA

FREEVIEW/YOUVIEW/BT/
TALKTALK 20, SKY 143,
VIRGIN 130, FREESAT 158

Pride and Prejudice
(Wednesday 1 January, 2pm)
Colin Firth sets the female viewing nation's hearts racing in all six episodes of the much-loved dramatisation of Jane Austen's classic story of social mores. Jennifer Ehle also stars.

New Tricks
(Wednesday 1 January , 10pm)
Old and Cold Another adventure for our eccentric bunch of middle-aged detectives. The team are approached by a tabloid newspaper editor, who claims a celebrity chef murdered her husband.

U&YESTERDAY

FREEVIEW/YOUVIEW/BT/
TALKTALK 27, SKY 155,
VIRGIN 129, FREESAT 159

Bangers & Cash
(Wednesday 1 January, 3pm)
Paul's on a big day out collecting a 1971 Jaguar E-Type and a 1933 Morgan three-wheeler Supersport but first there's a flock of 300 chickens to negotiate before he can load up.

Antiques Roadshow
(Friday 3 January, 6.10am)
Portchester Castle The roadshow travels to Portchester Castle in Hampshire, where treasures include punk clothing, and paintings by 20th-century Indian artists.

Watch Dave, U&W, U&Yesterday and U&Drama shows on demand with U (u.co.uk) and catch up on your favourite programmes.

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BRITAIN NOW

TOPICAL SNIPPETS FROM AROUND THE NATION

Not the End of the Line

Historic railway equipment destined for the scrapyard has been saved by three groups of enthusiasts in Northumberland. As part of Network Rail's multi-million pound upgrade of the Northumberland Line, which will restore passenger services between Ashington and Newcastle for the first time in over 60 years, signalling will no longer be controlled from lineside signal boxes but instead from a state-of-the-art centre in Newcastle. While kit that could be used for spares in other locations was sent into storage, older pieces of equipment were destined to be lost from the railway – until the three groups stepped in. Woodhorn Narrow Gauge Railway and Choppington Parish Council received a diagram and a sign respectively from Marcheys House signal box, while a diagram from North Seaton signal box was donated to Northumberland Line Heritage Community Group.

"While we can't keep or donate every piece of equipment that comes out of now-redundant signal boxes," said Network Rail's Fiona Blyth, "we're always thrilled when we can pass items over to groups who will lovingly preserve them."

Volunteers from Woodhorn Narrow Gauge Railway with the diagram from North Seaton signal box, which was donated to them by Network Rail.

Photographs: (Chalk, Cherries and Chairs) Paul Heath, (Corfe) National Trust/Richard Gregory, (End of the Line) Network Rail

Power to the People

A decision to close a much-loved Edinburgh museum during the autumn and winter months has been reversed following public backlash. The People's Story Museum (0131 529 4057, edinburghmuseums.org.uk/venue/peoples-story-museum), which offers an insight into the lives of Edinburgh's working-class from the 18th to the late 20th centuries, shut its doors in August due to increased budget challenges. However, following outcry from local residents and the Edinburgh-born author Irvine Welsh, the City of Edinburgh Council worked to secure the necessary funding and resources to reopen the attraction. Bringing to life the authentic voices of Edinburgh's people through oral histories and written accounts, the museum, which is open seven days a week, includes displays of Friendly Society regalia, banners, and materials that reflect the city's rich, diverse communities.

The Royal See

The Kings' view platform within the keep at Corfe Castle offers unparalleled views of the Purbeck countryside.

A tower built for King Henry I has been opened to the public for the first time since the English civil war. Partly destroyed in 1646, a conservation project at Corfe Castle in Dorset (01929 481294, nationaltrust.org.uk/corfe-castle) resulted in the construction of a viewing platform, allowing visitors access to the former royal living quarters. Offering unparalleled views of the Purbeck countryside and a window on to the world of kings, the viewing platform is built to stand alone without any impact on the castle and is anticipated to be in place for a year while conservation work is ongoing. Ticket sales from the platform, which includes an option for a guided tour, will help with fundraising for the extensive conservation project.

Chalk, Cherries and Chairs

A five-year initiative dedicated to the conservation, restoration, and celebration of the central Chilterns has concluded, leaving a lasting impact on the landscape and its communities. Launched in 2019, the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership Scheme was created to celebrate the central Chilterns, revitalise local heritage, restore vital habitats, and deepen connections to the area to ensure that this unique landscape will be enjoyed by generations to come. The scheme, made possible by a £1,996,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund as well as several other funders, saw more than 3,000 hectares of chalk grassland, woodland, and hedgerows restored, improving habitats for a range of species, including the chalk hill blue butterfly, barn owls, and pyramidal orchid.

Through workshops, festivals, and demonstrations, the scheme celebrated and revived the region's cultural heritage, including traditional orchards, lace making, strawplaiting and chair-making; while hands-on volunteering activities empowered local people to become stewards of the central Chilterns landscape.

"This has been a transformative project for the central Chilterns," said project manager Anna Foster. "The achievements of Chalk, Cherries and Chairs reflects the passion and commitment of the communities who live and work here, as well as the enduring importance of conserving and celebrating our landscapes. Thanks to Chalk, Cherries and Chairs, future generations can experience an enhanced central Chilterns area and will be able to help continue this for years to come."

Volunteering activities as part of the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs scheme empowered local people to become stewards of the central Chilterns landscape.

Community members have been invited to stay involved through volunteering with local conservation and heritage groups and taking part in workshops, and events that will continue to uphold its mission. Visitors can enjoy discovering the area through walking routes, wildlife and museums, all within reach of a tube station.

For more information about ongoing activities and opportunities to contribute to the future of the central Chilterns and beyond, visit chilterns.org.uk/chalkcherrieschairs

Top of the Bill

Mark Willerton shares some vintage window cards from the Burtey Fen Collection

The Burtey Fen Collection (burteyfen.co.uk) in Pinchbeck, Lincolnshire is a purpose-built music hall which houses two cinema organs and vast displays of 1950s and 1960s theatre memorabilia.

Among the permanent displays are 15 x 10-inch window cards, also known as lobby cards, which were displayed in theatre foyers to promote future shows, as well as being hung in shop windows around towns and cities.

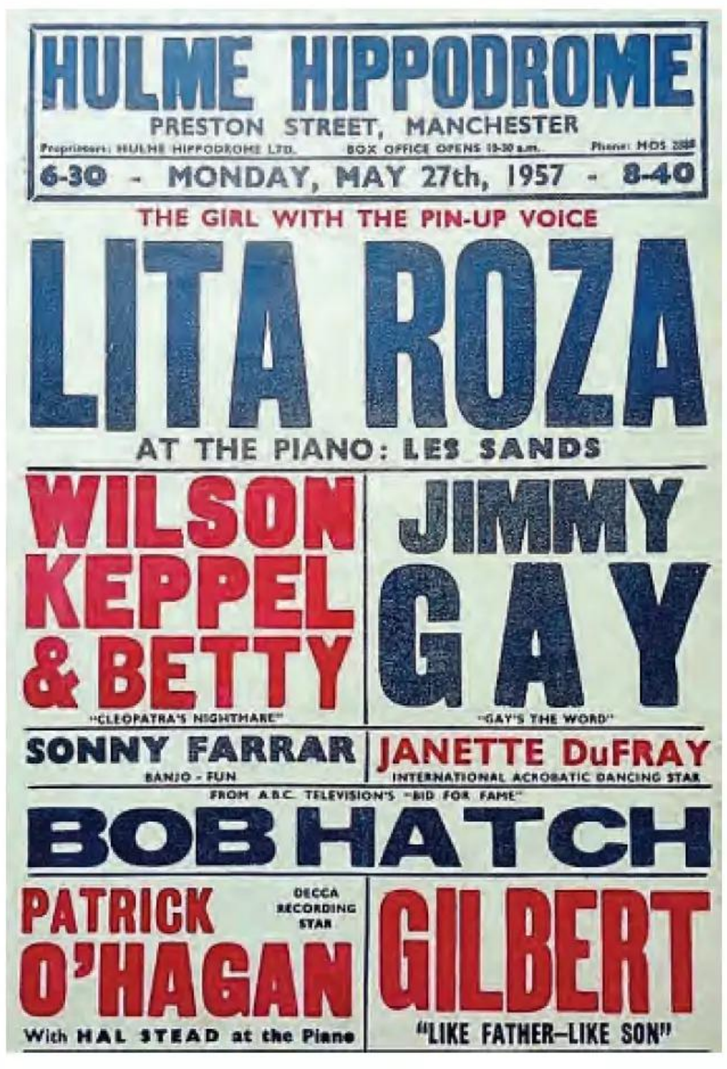
Electric (Modern) Printing Ltd and Tribe Brothers Ltd seem to have had the monopoly on printing window cards – with the artists' names featured within a distinctive boxed design, with the text originally in red and navy blue. Into the 1960s, full colour was used more often – but this obviously meant an increase in printing costs.

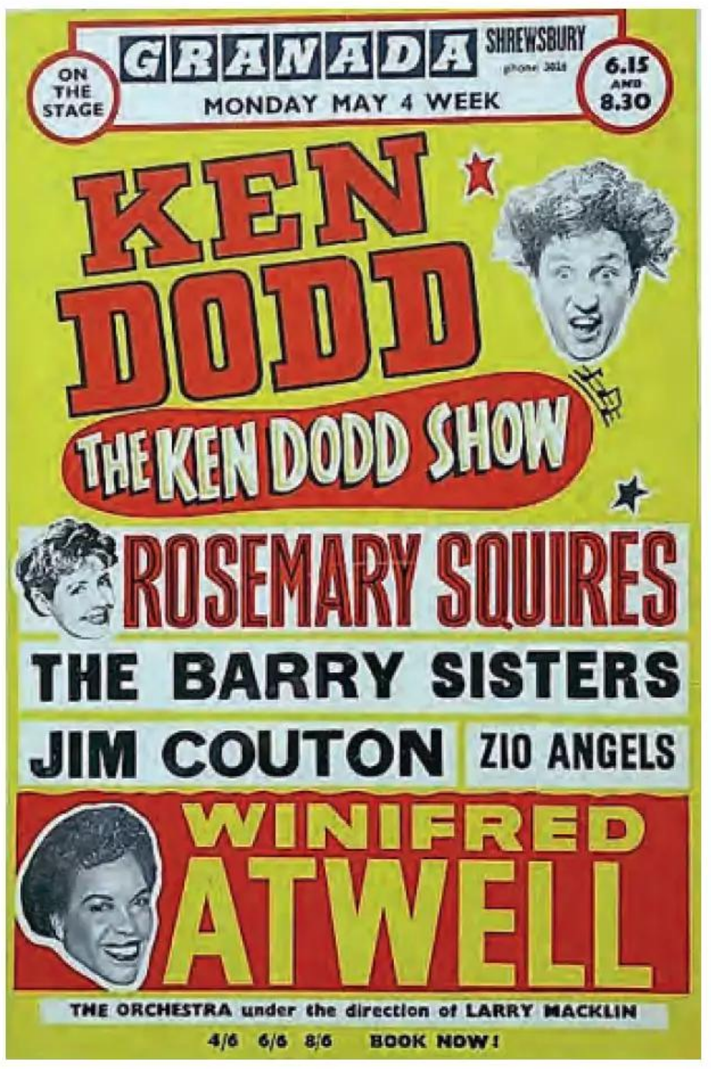
Typically, the show was in a variety format, with a big name "crowd puller" as top of the bill. Supporting performers would usually include a magician, dancers, a comedian, a ventriloquist, an impressionist and novelty acts such as plate spinners, puppeteers and trapeze artistes. There would often be an animal act with trained dogs or doves and even chimpanzees. A variety show that catered for the whole family.

Many future names that were just starting out initially saw their names in small print at the bottom of the bill – Des O'Connor, Roy Hudd, Morecambe & Wise, Larry Grayson and Gerry Dorsey (who later became Engelbert Humperdinck) to name a few.

Many of the UK's largest theatres, such as the Finsbury Park Empire, the Birmingham Hippodrome and the Liverpool Empire were owned by Moss Empires Ltd. After the week was over, the show would move to another Moss or Granada owned theatre in a different town or city. The window cards and posters would be taken down and replaced by a poster of the next show.

The window cards weren't intended to be saved – they were only meant to be displayed for a couple of weeks and then disposed of. But those that did survive provide an interesting insight into the world of entertainment, back in the days when a variety show could sell out twice nightly.





Dusty Springfield headlined a package tour of Odeon and Granada venues in 1964. This traditional boxed design poster in red and blue is unusual as it includes the year, 1957. Ken Dodd took his show on the Granada Theatre circuit in 1964.

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1ST TAKE

The Big Daddy of Them All

Colin Allan takes it "Easy! Easy!" as he celebrates the World of Sport

Four o'clock on a Saturday afternoon in the late 1960s could mean only one thing: professional wrestling on ITV's World of Sport. Sitting on the living room sofa with my mother, I couldn't wait for the half-time football scores to finish and see Mick McManus enter the ring and give us a reason to bawl at the screen.

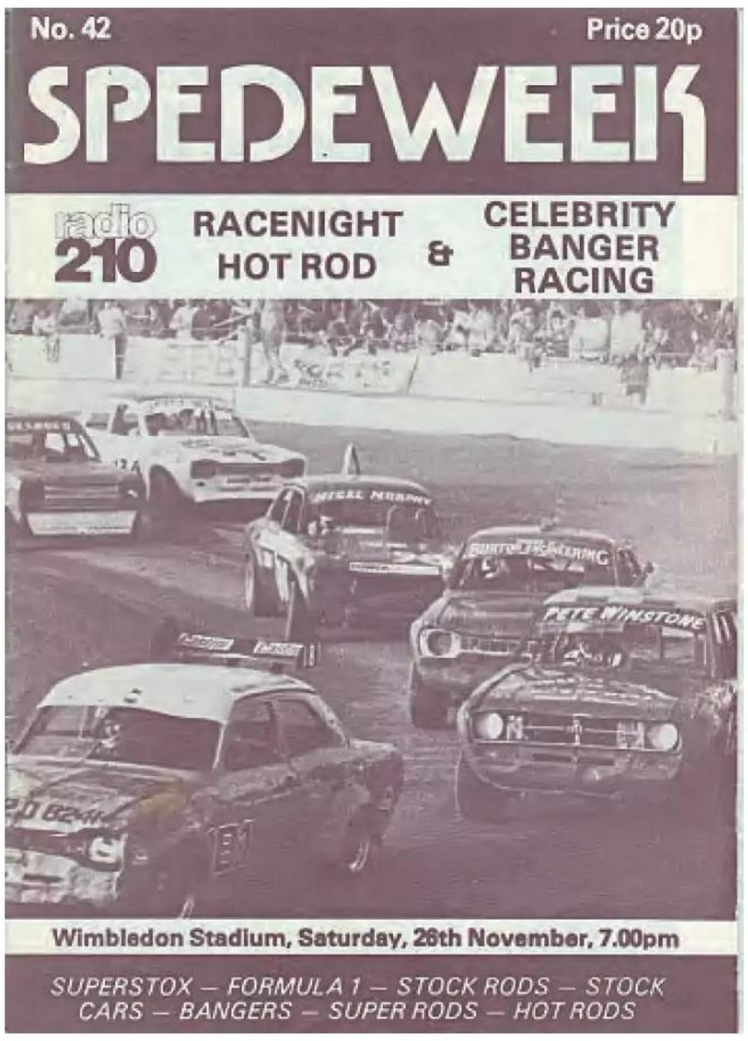
For my mother, otherwise graceful and mild-mannered, would soon get enraged at the antics of "the man you love to hate". You see, McManus assumed the role of a "heel" (the bad guy) in his grappling bouts. He would resort to all sorts of dubious moves and tricks against his "blue eye" (good guy) opponent. His behaviour invariably enraged the ringside spectators, especially the many women in the audience.

With his dark hair and in his black trunks, he was ideally suited for our black-and-white television. But, unlike many future wrestling stars, he wasn't big. He was only 5ft 6ins tall and his usual weight was a mere 12 stone 7lb. However, that didn't stop him having a successful 20-year career in the ring.

Over time, he was replaced in the public's imagination by two massive grapplers: Big Daddy and Giant Haystacks. Big Daddy (real name Shirley Crabtree Jr) was a larger-than-life character who literally filled TV screens in the 1970s and early 80s. He first appeared on World of Sport in 1972. To be christened Shirley may seem strange today but when he was born in 1930 it was an accepted name for boys. It was only with the advent of the precocious actress Shirley Temple that Crabtree started to be teased and bullied at school. Maybe that gave him the incentive to stand up to his tormentors and led him

Top: Dickie Davies was the face of World of Sport from the summer of 1968 until its demise in 1985. He had originally been assistant to the first anchorman Eamonn Andrews.

Photographs: ITV/Shutterstock



Left: One of the less well-known sports covered by World of Sport was banger racing in which competitors collide with opponents to knock them out of the race. Right: Big Daddy was a larger-than-life character who filled TV screens in the 1970s and 80s.

into wrestling. Eventually, he fought in the super heavyweight class, being 6ft 6ins tall and weighing around 26 stone.

Big Daddy was a real showman. He would enter the arena to strains of We Shall Not Be Moved, soon taken up by his adoring fans as he progressed to the ring. He would wear a sequinned cloak and a glitter-covered top hat. His popularity took off when he reverted from a "bad guy" to a "good guy" in his contests. Giant Haystacks (real name Martin Austin Ruane) was a man mountain, standing 6ft 11ins tall and weighing anything from 31 stones to an amazing 49 stones. He debuted on World of Sport in July 1975.

Throughout World of Sport's wrestling coverage (1965-1985), the man behind the mic was Kent Walton, an ex-disc jockey with Radio Luxembourg. His silky voice and serious delivery gave the sport an air of respectability. How much of the wrestling was genuine and how much pure entertainment was up to the viewer to decide but Walton always took it as the real McCoy. The bouts would proceed with a mixture of half-nelsons, body slams, forearm jabs and throwing an opponent on to the corner supports. Under World of Sport coverage, professional wrestling became very popular with a peak of 12 million viewers. Even the royal family were said to be fans.

Along with horse racing, wrestling was World of Sport's main feature. Unfortunately for ITV, the rival sports programme, Grandstand on BBC, had already secured the rights to broadcast several mainstream sports. Consequently, World of Sport had to concentrate on covering minority sports such as stock car racing and hockey. They did, however, share the FA Cup Final and England versus Scotland football internationals with the BBC.

> **"Professional wrestling became very popular, even the royal family were said to be fans."**

World of Sport was introduced to television audiences on 2 January 1965. The first anchorman was affable Irishman Eamonn Andrews of This Is Your Life fame. Richard Davies was his assistant until taking over in 1968. Football pundit Jimmy Hill persuaded him to be known as "Dickie" Davies and he was to prove the perfect fit to be a sports anchorman. He always appeared as a dapper, cheerful chap whose innate optimism and well-delivered introductions made every sport seem exciting.

World of Sport covered a whole range of less well-known sports. One of the strangest was banger racing. This consisted of numerous cars racing several laps around a circuit with not only the intention of reaching the chequered flag first, but also colliding with as many opponents as they could to knock them out of the race. A seven-minute clip of a World of Sport broadcast of a race from the 1970s can be viewed on YouTube.

Eventually, World of Sport introduced an international sports section, showing sports which the British public had never seen before. World of Sport assistant editor Richard Russell soon realised the popularity of the coverage: "I've lost count of the number of times people tell me how much they've enjoyed one of our items." Truck racing from Canada, stunt motorcycle jumps, indoor and ice speedway, and even the frisbee world championships were pioneered on the programme.

One of the finest presenters of the football sections was ex-Scottish international and Liverpool star Ian St John. He soon adapted to his new role as presenter of On the Ball. He came to relish the challenge of live TV: "I get this tingle of excitement that I got as a player. It's just like the preparation for a match. I can't help feeling I'm fortunate to have found a job that gives me that." Later in his television career, St John was to team up with Jimmy Greaves for the very popular Saint and Greavsie programme.

Horse racing was the other staple sport, and its most well-known and respected presenter was John Rickman. His trademark habit and introduction was to doff his trilby hat at the viewers. In October 1969, World of Sport inaugurated its ITV Seven feature under the title "They're Off". The ITV Seven was also the name of an accumulator, where viewers could bet on the winners of all seven featured races at two courses each week. A punter could make a tidy sum in winnings if they rightly predicted each winner of the seven races.

Another highly respected racing commentator was Brough Scott. He would travel to courses on the day by rail from his Guildford home. He did all his "homework" on the train: "I make out a chart for each race covering major details of horses, riders and form." When he got to his destination, he would check with the World of Sport studio back in London for any developing news. He would then spend the rest of the time before the first race talking to trainers, jockeys and officials at the course to try and glean some further information. As for the ITV Seven: "It's tough going, covering so many races in the time allotted. The ITV Seven requires expert knowledge from the whole team to fit it in. It's a demanding job."

In 1980, World of Sport had live and exclusive coverage of the Derby. Jockey Willy Carson won riding Henbit despite his horse going lame in the last furlong. It was Carson's second consecutive Derby win having triumphed on Troy in 1979.

Throughout its 20 years (2 January 1965-28 September 1985), World of Sport provided competition for BBC's Grandstand. It employed a whole host of sports presenters and personalities, too many to list. Thanks to the marvellous work of anchorman Dickie Davies and the programme's many pundits it became, like Grandstand, part of the fabric of a Saturday afternoon.

A typical schedule for a World of Sport programme would be as follows, although this format changed over the years:

12.20pm On the Ball – a preview of the day's football
1pm Sports special one – a variety of sports
1.15pm ITN news
1.20pm Horse racing
3pm Sports special two – as above
3.45pm Half-time football scores
4pm Wrestling
4.45pm Results service

Shooting Stars

Ian Collis celebrates the feats of two of England's most prolific goalscorers

Last April, a mural appeared on an underpass in Derby. It featured a footballer wearing an old-fashioned shirt in chocolate, amber and sky blue. While most Derby County fans would be able to name this player, whose last game for the club was well over 100 years ago, it is unlikely that even ardent football fans from elsewhere would recognise him. Yet before the Great War, this man was once such a national household name that he was simply known as "Steve".

When he died in 1938, the New York Times wrote that Steve would probably go down in history as the greatest football player of all time. For many years, he held the English goalscoring record, but a couple of years before he died, he met the man determined to break his precious feat.

Steve Bloomer's life spanned the heights of international fame and the lows of unemployment. Born in 1874, his family moved from their Black Country home of Cradley to Derby when he was still a young boy. His metalworker father took up a job in Ley's Malleable Castings. On leaving school, Bloomer followed him into Ley's foundry, in a weird quirk of fate being employed as a blacksmith's striker. But his real interests lay elsewhere. The 1880s saw the spread of football fever across England as national leagues formed and competitions such as the FA Cup grew in popularity.

Bloomer was in the right place at the right time. Derby was a football hotspot hosting the replay of the 1886 FA Cup final, the first time a final had taken place outside London. The youngster's exploits with local clubs soon came to the attention of Derby County and by 1892 Bloomer was a first-team regular at the age of 18. Fixture lists were much shorter in those days, but Bloomer notched up 30 goals in his first three seasons. This earned him a call-up to the national side who played a few games each year. In 23 games for England, he scored 28 goals, turning him into the first football superstar. Lucky Scorer football boots were produced with his image on their soles and a grateful Football Association presented him with a portrait.

Bloomer could score goals from all angles, but he was best known for shooting hard and low, so called "daisycutters". In 1907, he scored a wonder goal against Scotland with a shot from the centre circle. Five years earlier, Bloomer had captained the England side

Top: Dixie Dean and Steve Bloomer shake hands before Everton's last match of the 1935/36 season against Preston North End. However, Dean was unable to play due to a broken collarbone.

Photograph: (Mural) Ian Collis

Left: Steve Bloomer's 28 goals in 23 games for England turned him into the first football superstar. Right: The Steve Bloomer mural on an underpass beneath Pride Parkway, Derby.

at Glasgow's Ibrox Stadium, when disaster struck early in the second half as part of some timber terracing collapsed killing 25 people and injuring hundreds. Amazingly, after a short delay, play was resumed.

Bloomer's slim figure, pale complexion and modest height led to his nickname of "the Destroying Angel". During 19 years at Derby County and four years with Middlesbrough, he went about his relentless business of scoring goals sometimes celebrating with his trademark "cartwheel". When his playing career ended in 1914, he had racked up 352 League goals. With terrible timing, Bloomer left Britain to take up a coaching role in Berlin, only to find himself interned a few months later after war was declared between Britain and Germany. Together with other "alien" civilians, he spent World War One behind barbed wire in a camp at Ruhleben, surviving harsh conditions and meagre rations.

Bloomer's humble origins appear to have dissuaded British clubs from offering him a managerial role, but in 1923 he moved to Irun in Spain's Basque Country to coach Real Unión Club. Here, as if taking part in a fairytale, he inspired the small-town team of amateurs to glory in the 1923/24 Copa del Rey – the Spanish equivalent of the FA Cup – defeating teams like Barcelona and Real Madrid. But Bloomer's letters suggest he was missing his wife and home, and he returned to England a year later.

Swallowing his pride, he took work as a groundsman at Derby's Baseball Ground. He could always remind himself that after nearly 20 years his English goalscoring record remained intact. But eventually, in 1936, a serious threat emerged and Bloomer found himself invited by the Liverpool Echo to a game at Everton, to see if the record could be broken. Bloomer's nemesis had arrived in the shape of William Ralph Dean, better known as "Dixie".

Dixie Dean was born in Birkenhead, Wirral in 1907. As a young boy he helped on the local milk round, getting up in the early hours to fetch the ponies and milk floats. Football mad from an early age, he supposedly lied to get admitted to a borstal school for juvenile delinquents as he thought borstal had more opportunities for playing football. Leaving school, he took a night shift job on the railway at Wirral so he could play football during the day. Dean's determination paid off and aged 16 he signed for Tranmere Rovers, his local club. Two years later, he moved across the Mersey to join Everton.

In contrast to Bloomer's pasty appearance, Dean had a dark complexion. (Some say that he got his nickname because his dusky skin and curly black hair reminded spectators of black people from the US's "Dixieland" states.) He was also a couple of inches taller than the Derby ace, and much more solidly built. A combination of power and athleticism enabled him to shrug off opponents. His prowess in the air was renowned, many goals coming from headers. The opposition targeted him for some brutal treatment.

On the pitch, Dean always kept his composure, limiting his retaliation to verbal jibes. Off the pitch, he had a lively sense of humour and a liking for more than a couple of drinks; indeed, his former teammate Joe Mercer claimed Dean made George Best look like a choirboy.

In 1925, the year he signed for Everton, a change was made to the offside rule. For a few years, until tactics were adjusted, goalscoring was easier, and Dixie Dean took full advantage. In 1927/28, he scored an incredible 60 goals in Everton's League games, a record which still stands today. Towards the end of Dean's 12th season with Everton, he began to close in on Bloomer's record of 352 goals. With one game left on the fixture list – a home fixture against Preston North End – Dean needed two more goals to break the record. The Liverpool Echo sensed that history was about to be made and invited Bloomer to attend, no doubt sensing a great photo opportunity.

Bloomer dutifully turned up but was bemused to find the Everton striker with his arm in a sling. Dean had broken his collarbone and would not be playing. Ever the gentleman, Dean took care of Bloomer, shared a few beers with him after the match and sent him home with a bottle of whisky for company.

In the following season, Dean went on to break the record, ending his career with 379 league goals. In later life, his time as landlord of the Dublin Packet pub in Chester gave him ample opportunity to practise his love of storytelling. Like Bloomer before him, no doubt the stories got more exaggerated with each retelling, but there can be no dispute that both players earned their place in the record books.

Between Yum and Yuck

Trevor Gehlcken on how learning to cook set him up for life

It always staggers me – and rather annoys me – when I hear men say they don't know how to cook. They might as well say they don't know how to wash or dress themselves surely. If you can't cook, then you can't feed yourself.

I learned to cook from a very young age at my mum's side and how glad I am that she passed on her knowledge to me. Food was still rationed after the war when I was born, so not a scrap was wasted. And Mum made everything herself, right down to things like mint sauce and sage and onion stuffing.

My memories of Mum's cooking lurch wildly between yum and yuck. While my sister and I tucked into a lot of tasty meals, I still screw my face up even now at the thought of cabbage, which was back then boiled into a horrid tasteless slop. The word stew still sends shudders down my spine. Never mind today's thick tasty heart-warming casseroles – stew back then consisted of gristly old left-over bits off the Sunday joint, odd vegetables and pearl barley swimming in a ghastly sea of hot water and fat bubbles.

In the summer, dinner every day was salad, with either cheese, egg or sardines. We were all sick to the back teeth of salad halfway through summer and were dying for some cold weather again when mum would cook something hot.

When hot dinners finally returned, homemade pies or meat or whatever would always be accompanied by boiled potatoes and veg. Mum hardly ever cooked chips as she didn't have a chip pan, so making chips involved chucking about half a ton of lard into a saucepan, frying the chips and then scraping it all out again. We had never heard of cooking oil.

There would have been a riot in our house if a proper homemade pudding hadn't materialised each day.

Top: Trevor's mum keenly awaited the arrival of Jersey Royal potatoes at the market each spring. Left: Trevor, pictured with his mum, dad and sister in 1954, the year food rationing ended in England after World War Two

Trevor is a dab hand in the kitchen.

Mum's puddings, laced with lard of course, were always pretty good and, on Sundays, she would make extra Yorkshire puddings, covering the leftover ones in golden syrup and using them for afters. As an adult, I've never met anyone else who remembers that particular sweet, but I still make it even today, albeit with sunflower oil now replacing the lard.

Fruit and veg were only available in season and I well remember mum almost salivating at the prospect of Jersey Royal potatoes and Guernsey tomatoes finally arriving at the market each spring.

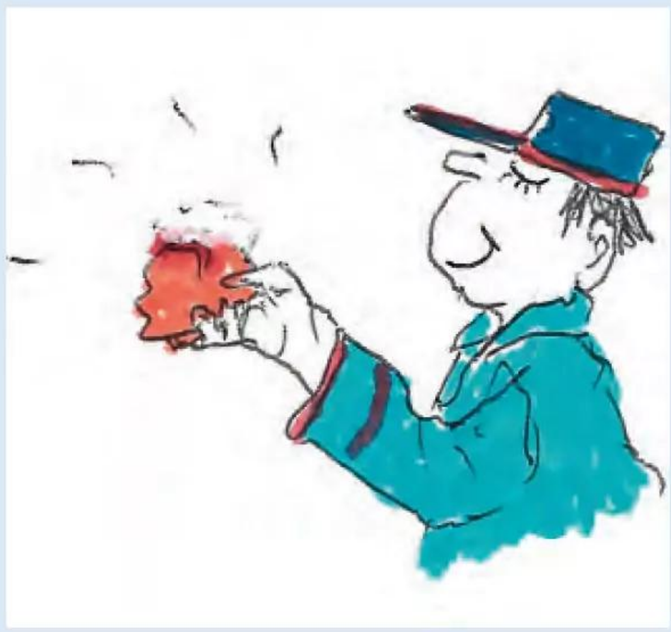
Out of season, fruit was invariably canned – and I genuinely thought as a kid that salmon and cream only came in tins. We only got either of those delicacies when we visited Granny for Sunday tea once in a while.

So, after willingly helping Mum in the kitchen as a kid, I was fully prepared to fend for myself when, at the tender age of 17, I rented my first flat with my mate Mick. And he shocked me on our first day together by asking me how to make boiled potatoes. I couldn't believe he didn't know.

Over the years, I've honed my skills and like to think I'm a pretty natty chef nowadays. Instead of buying frozen Yorkshire puddings for £1 and a packet of sage and onion stuffing for £1.30, I knock my own up from scratch as mum showed me. They cost me about 15p and 5p respectively – and how much better they taste.

My dear old mum is sadly long gone now, but the skills she instilled in me live on. And I made damned sure that that knowledge was passed on to my two children, now both in their forties and both even better cooks than me. Hopefully they are doing the same for my 11 grandkids, so Mum's spirit will live on through them.

The Early Boy



In 1944/45, I was one of 20 boys employed as a telegram boy at the main post office on Hammersmith Broadway. Working a 44-hour week in all weathers for the sum of £1 per week, we all had blue uniforms and a pillbox hat. It was quite hard work for a 14-year-old and quite dangerous at that time with the constant barrage of V-1 and V-2 rockets on London.

There was a good feeling of companionship among our group of youngsters with a lot of humour despite the awful delivery of wartime casualty telegrams – something we never got used to.

The boys had a rota of 20 days when an "early boy" had to be at the office by 7.30am in the morning, let in the team of cleaners and go to the 14 counter positions and change the dates of the small hand-held date stamps. When this task was completed, the early boy would have to cycle to a bakery in Fulham Palace Road where the dear old lady owner would have a large canvas bag full of delicious jam doughnuts ready for us. We had a small tea club of a few pennies per week which paid for the precious doughnuts – we were indeed her special customers.

The doughnuts were big and soft, covered in cream and a variety of jams and plastered with lots of sugar. They were not exactly healthy eating, but I can still remember the joy of tucking in to them, plus a steaming cup of cocoa to go with them.

Ron McGill, Guildford, Surrey

Ale and Hearty

A brewery visitor centre has been recognised for going the extra mile in providing a high-quality day out. Shepherd Neame's visitor centre (01795 542016, shepherdneame.co.uk/visitor-centre) at its Faversham brewery won a Welcome award in VisitEngland's Visitor Attraction Accolades. Accolades were awarded to 72 English attractions covering all aspects of what makes an outstanding visitor experience. The five categories were: Welcome, Quality Food and Drink, Hidden Gem, Best Told Story and Gold for overall excellence. The accolades were awarded based on scores that attractions obtained following their annual VisitEngland Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme assessment. Last year, the centre also received a Hidden Gem award.

The brewery's Giles Hilton, said: "We are delighted that our visitor centre has again been recognised as one of the country's top visitor attraction experiences.

"A small but dedicated team work hard throughout the year to ensure the experience is as welcoming as possible, and this award not only recognises this but also the part played by everyone behind the scenes in the brewery."

Shepherd Neame's visitor centre has won a Welcome award in VisitEngland's Visitor Attraction Accolades.

If you know of a regional delicacy that has all but died out or would like to share your food and drink memories, then let us know via info@bestofbritishmag.co.uk or at the address given on page 4.

TREASURES *In the* ATTIC

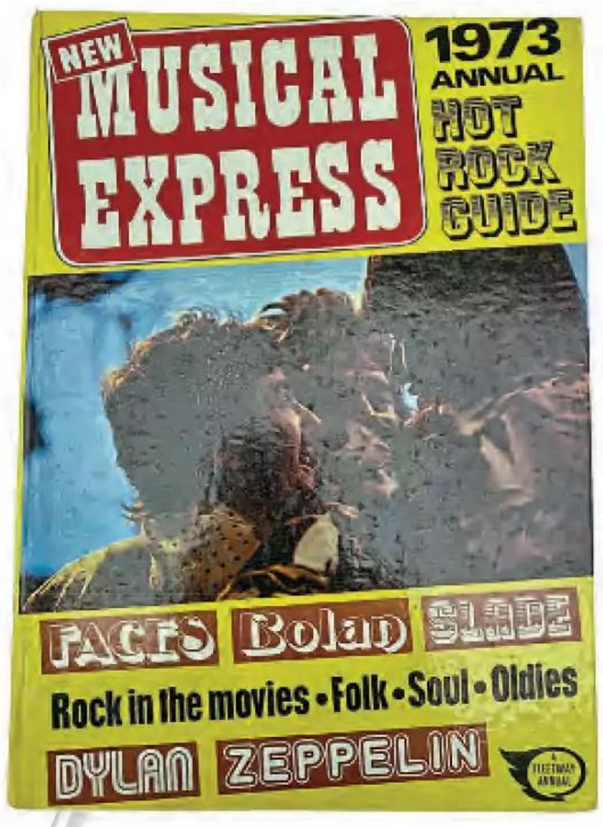
Brian Howes unearths some nostalgic collectables that might be discarded as worthless junk but actually have a value to today's collectors. Can you estimate what each object might be worth and pick out which one is the big-money item? **The values are printed on page 72.**

1 Special brew

Nottingham-based Boots the Chemists Ltd was one of the last companies to stop using these stoneware ginger beer bottles. That was back in the 1920s when they were replaced by glass bottles. This bottle was one of several thousand discovered buried beneath an old warehouse. Boots then sold them off.

3 Roses by name

Cadbury Roses were first made in 1938 to rival Mackintosh's Quality Street which were launched two years earlier. This scarce original drum box of Cadbury Roses dates to the late 1930s and still has its original string. Roses chocolates were wrapped on machines made by Rose Brothers of Gainsborough, Lincolnshire.



2 Musical memories

Glancing through the pages of this New Musical Express annual makes you realise what a great year 1973 was for pop and rock music. Its pages featured in-depth articles on David Bowie, Led Zeppelin, Rod Stewart, Deep Purple, Van Morrison and Marc Bolan to name just a few. Not a bad read for 25p.

4 Four in one

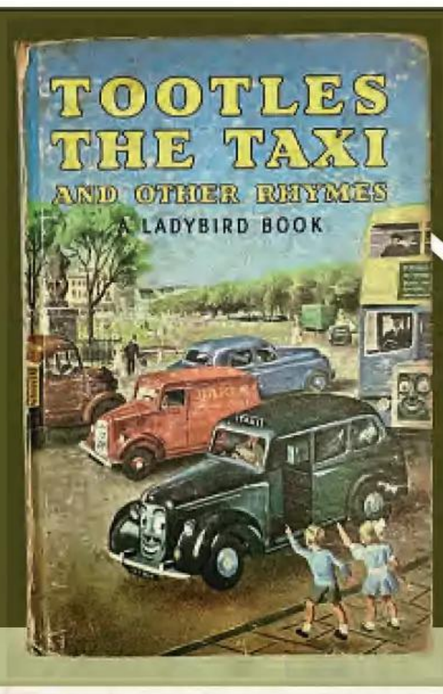
Made in the late 1950s, this ingenious plastic toy set utilised one friction-driven chassis which could be fitted to any one of four different bodies. It was made by American toy manufacturer Louis Marx and Company. Founded in 1919, it became the world's largest toy manufacturer during the postwar years.

5 Super Jim

This super little plastic star badge celebrates one of our finest-ever footballers. Jimmy Greaves joined Chelsea in 1957 and netted 124 goals in 157 appearances before moving to AC Milan in June 1961 followed by Tottenham Hotspur six months later. He hit six hat-tricks for England, scoring a total of 44 goals in 57 appearances for his country. Little wonder they called him "super Jim".

6 Sweet memories

This lovely sugar shaker dates from the 1930s and has survived in wonderful condition despite regular use in my kitchen. Cornish blue pottery was made at a small factory in Church Gresley, near Swadlincote in Derbyshire, founded by TG Green & Co Ltd in 1926. Having tremendous success during the 1950s and 60s, the factory sadly went out of business in 2007.



10 Tootling along

When I ask people which Ladybird book they loved best as a child, a great many of them choose Tootles the Taxi as their all-time favourite. I loved it, too, mainly because its wonderful illustrations by artist John Kenney were based on Dinky Toys. He cleverly brought them alive by giving them names and faces. Lovely memories.

7 Special delivery

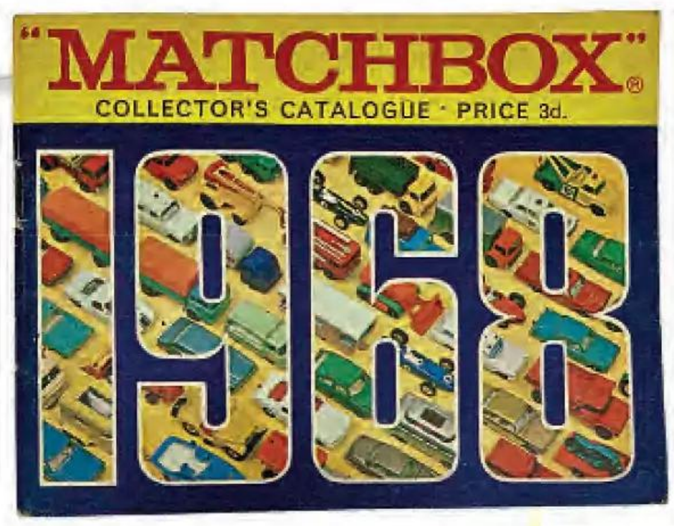
You couldn't beat the good old Bedford CA van when it came to reliability back in the 1950s. The first CA rolled off the production line at Bedford's legendary Luton works in 1952 and the last in 1969. They were used as delivery vehicles the world over and this lovely model was one of three CA vans issued as Dinky Toys in the 1950s.

11 Soul anthem

The soulful voice of Dusty Springfield brought us many fabulous singles and soulful albums for several decades and was still charting in the 1980s with those memorable hits alongside the Pet Shop Boys. Released in 1967, What's It Gonna Be was a Dusty dancefloor favourite and is still in big demand as a northern soul anthem.

8 Matchbox magic

Founded in the early 1950s, Matchbox toys were hugely popular during the 1960s and 70s with makers Lesney Products enjoying tremendous trade success the world over. I loved them and still own this nostalgic little catalogue dating from 1968 which was sold for 3*d*. Did you have a favourite Matchbox toy in the 1960s?

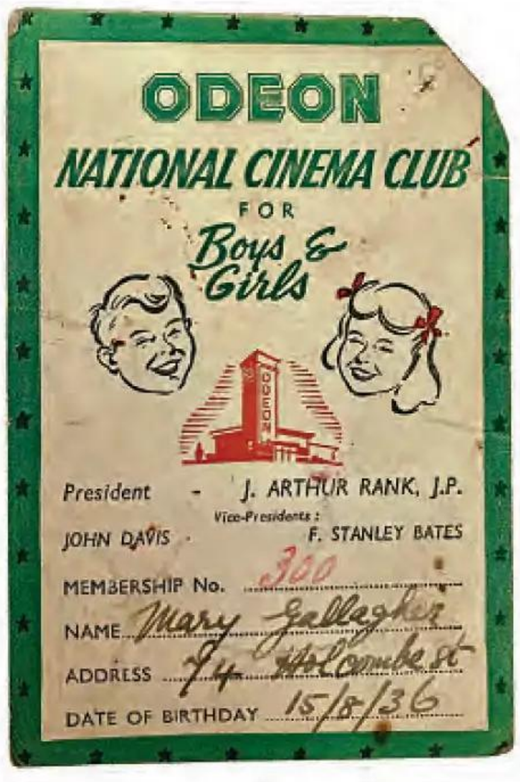


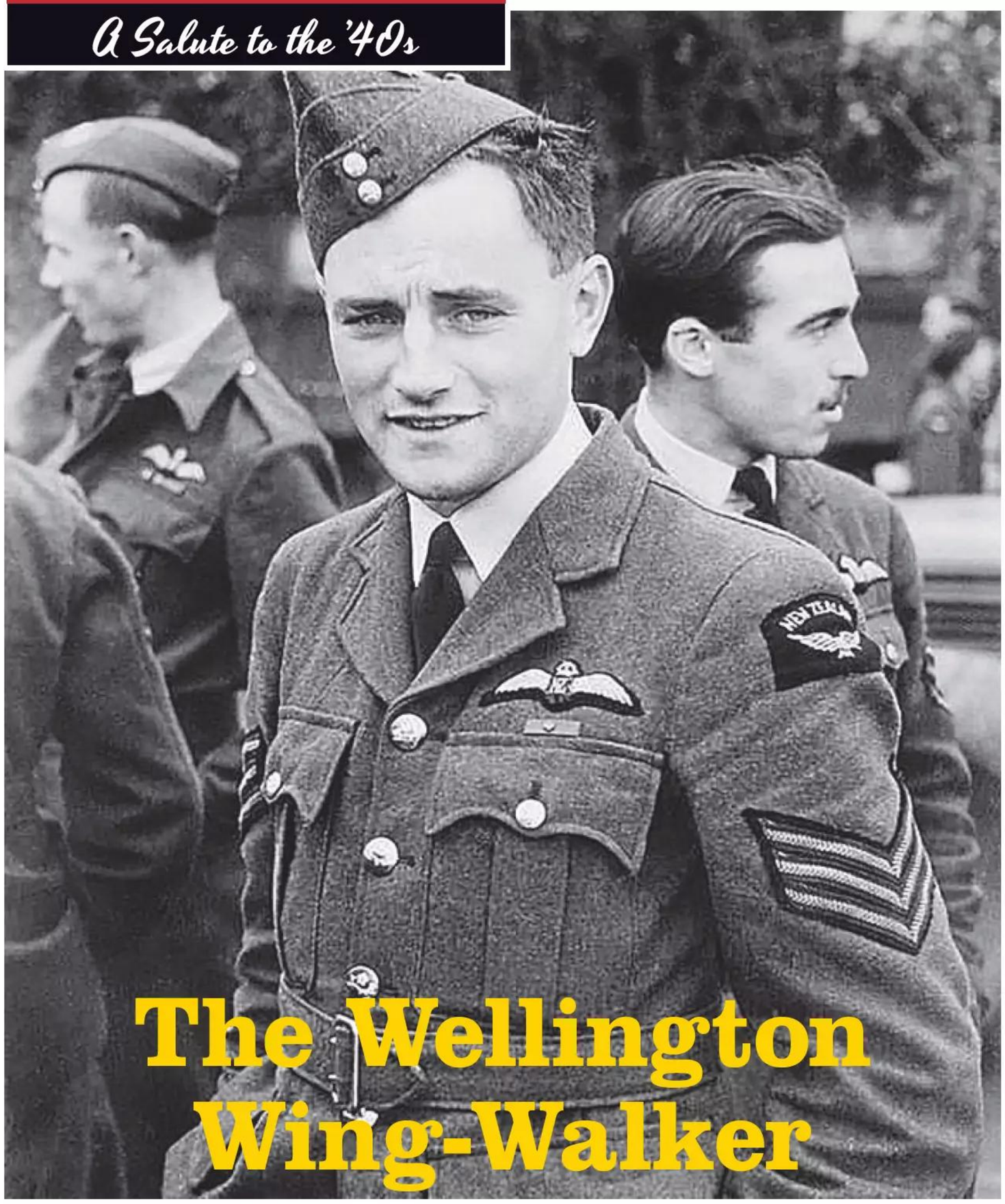
12 Stringing it

These handy Vi-Cocoa string dispensing tins date back to late Victorian times and were given away free to shopkeepers. The bases are weighted with sand and a ball of parcel-wrapping string was placed inside and pulled through to the cutter attached to the lid. Dr Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa was made by A Lloyd & Sons Ltd of Bunhill Row, London.

9 Clubbing together

Remember rushing along to your local cinema for the Saturday morning children's club? In my case, it was the ABC Minors. This scarce Odeon National Cinema Club for boys and girls membership card dates to the 1940s and was issued to member number 300. The three club rules are printed on the back.





The Wellington Wing-Walker

John Greeves tells the story of the pilot who selflessly climbed out of his aircraft to save his crew

War can have devastating effects; it can also bring out the inherent bravery and valour some individuals possess in saving others. James Allen Ward was one such individual who was awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous bravery. Born in Wanganui, New Zealand, to English immigrants Percy and Ada Ward, he graduated as a teacher in Wellington in 1939 and had accepted a teaching post in his local town just as war broke out.

He immediately volunteered for the Royal New Zealand Air Force but had to wait until the middle of 1940 before he received his official call-up papers. His training as a pilot began with elementary flying training, followed by more advanced courses at Wigram air base in Christchurch. By January 1941, he had gained his wings, was assessed as an above-average pilot and was promoted to sergeant shortly afterwards.

After two weeks of embarkation leave, Ward found himself aboard the troopship MV Aorangi. On arrival in the UK, he was posted to RAF 20 Operational Training Unit at RAF Lossiemouth, Moray to learn to fly Vickers Wellington bombers. After six months of intense training, he qualified as a Wellington pilot and travelled down to RAF Feltwell in Norfolk to join his new squadron. No 75 Squadron RAF was a unique operation. In 1938, the New Zealand government bought 30 Vickers Wellington bombers and sent crews to train on them with the intention of flying them back to New Zealand. However, when hostilities broke out, with the permission of the New Zealand government, aircraft and crew were transferred to the RAF.

Ward became part of the crew of Wellington L7818 as second pilot. The command pilot was Sqn Ldr Reuben Widdowson, with observer/navigator Sgt Lawton, wireless operator Sgt Mason, front gunner Sgt Evans and rear gunner Sgt Box making up the rest of the crew. Ward's first mission was flown on 14 June 1941 on a bombing mission to Düsseldorf. By the first week of July, he had flown five operational missions as the second pilot. The squadron played a major part in these night battles and faced constant threat from flak and night fighters.

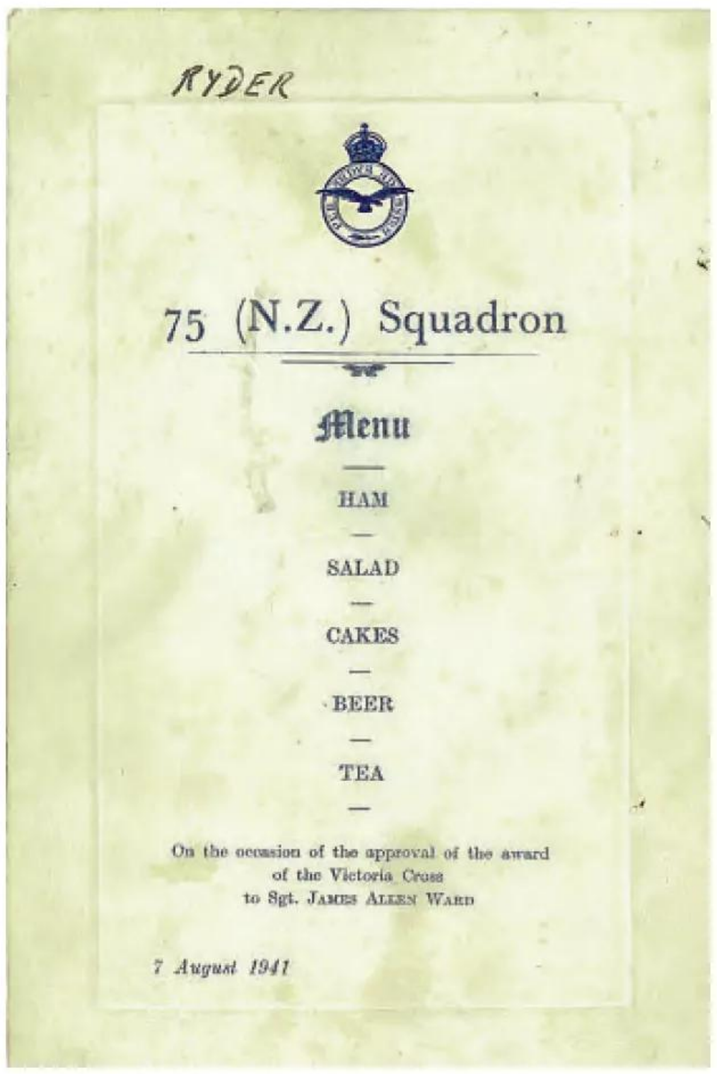
The Vickers Wellington was a hardy aircraft built using a revolutionary design developed by Barnes Wallis. A sturdy geodetic frame gave the aircraft its strength which was covered in fabric (Irish linen) to save weight. This would be of later significance when the aircraft took off on the night of 7-8 July 1941 on a raid to the western Germany city of Münster.

Despite the flak and search lights, the crew successfully dropped their bombs on target and Sqn Ldr Widdowson turned his bomber back to England. The aircraft was just over the Zuiderzee, north of Amsterdam and minutes from the Dutch coast, flying at 13,000ft when it was attacked from below by a Messerschmitt Bf 110 night fighter with cannon shell and incendiary bullets. The rear gunner of the Wellington, Sgt Box, was wounded in the foot but managed to deliver a burst of fire which sent the enemy aircraft down, apparently out of control.

The attack was over in a few seconds, but fire broke out on the starboard wing of the Wellington, fed by aviation fuel from a fractured pipe. Flames were gaining an alarming hold and soon threatened to engulf the entire wing. The crew acted fast, forcing a hole through the fuselage and made strenuous efforts to put out the fire using extinguishers and even the coffee from their flasks. It seemed only a matter of time before the plane would lose control. Two stark options existed: to fly for as long as they could and ditch the aircraft on occupied

Top: Sgt James Allen Ward, the first New Zealander to be awarded the Victoria Cross during World War Two.

Photographs: Crown Copyright


RYDER

75 (N.Z.) Squadron

Menu

HAM

SALAD

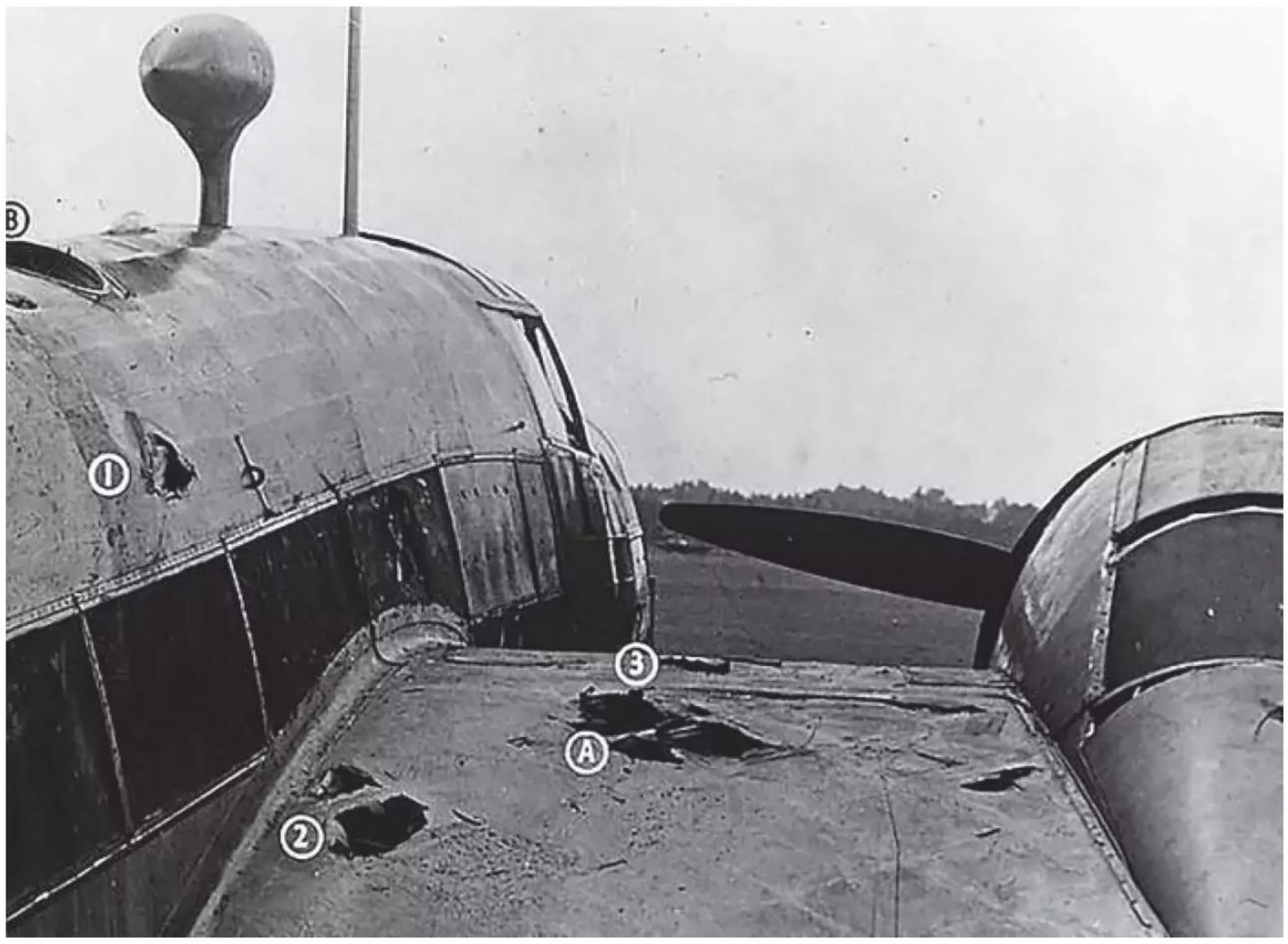
CAKES

BEER

TEA

On the occasion of the approval of the award
of the Victoria Cross
to Sgt. James Allen Ward

7 August 1941



Left: The menu for a dinner held at RAF Feltwell to celebrate the approval of the award of the Victoria Cross to Sgt James Allen Ward. Right: The damage caused to the Vickers Wellington L7818 after returning from a raid on the German city of Münster.

territory or the North Sea, or to bail out from the plane there and then.

Second pilot Ward, however offered a third option. He proposed climbing out of the aircraft down on to the wing and smothering the flames with an engine cover which a member of the crew had used as a cushion. Ward's first thought was to climb on to the wing without a parachute to reduce wind resistance, but his crew persuaded him otherwise, if he was determined to try.

With the help of the navigator, Ward clambered through the astrodome with a rope from an on-board dinghy tied around his waist. He then attached the parachute to his back. The bomber was now flying at a reduced speed, but the wind pressure Ward faced made the operation extremely hazardous. Ward himself described the experience: "It was like being in a terrific gale, worse than any gale I've ever known."

Breaking the fabric to make hand and footholds and taking advantage of existing holes, Ward gradually descended to the wing and then proceeded another 3ft lying flat along the wing to a position just behind the engine. He now faced the full force of the slipstream from the propeller which threatened to blow him off.

Nevertheless, Ward continued to smother the flames while ripping off any flammable fabric around the fractured pipe. He then pushed the engine cover into the hole made by the fire only to see it blow out when he released his hand. The job seemed done and Ward, by now very tired, started to make his way slowly back. He still had to endure the terrific winds but was able, with the navigator's assistance, to climb back into the aircraft. The danger of the fire spreading had been averted from the damaged pipe, as there was no fabric left nearby, and the fire soon burnt out.

> **"Six airmen safely made it home due to Ward's gallantry and selfless action."**

Sqn Ldr Widdowson continued to nurse the aircraft back across the North Sea. At one point a pool of aviation fuel suddenly flared up, but as soon as it ignited, it burned itself out. Other issues had arisen from the general fire damage as Sqn Ldr Widdowson made his approach to RAF Newmarket airfield in Suffolk. The hydraulics were out. He was unable to extend the aircraft's flaps and was now faced with the prospect of landing the aircraft at a much higher speed than normal. No hydraulics also meant no brakes as the aircraft landed, but Sqn Ldr Widdowson held his nerve, crashing through a fence and coming at last to rest at the boundary of the airfield.

Wellington L7818 would never fly again but, more importantly, six airmen safely made it home due to Ward's gallantry and selfless action. Ward himself always made light of the event, saying: "I can't explain it, but there was no sort of real sensation of danger out there at all. It was just a matter of doing one thing after another and that's about all there was to it."

Clearly, his superiors didn't agree. Commanding officer Cyrus Kay immediately recommended Sgt Ward for the Victoria Cross, Sqn Ldr Widdowson for the Distinguished Flying Cross, and Sgt Box for a Distinguished Flying Medal.

The publicity was such that Ward met prime minister Winston Churchill before he resumed his duties in early September, this time as commander of his own Wellington. The first mission went well, but on the second mission to Hamburg he was attacked by a night fighter and his aircraft was engulfed in uncontrollable fire. He ordered his crew to bail out. Two did successfully and survived as prisoners of war. Sgt James Allen Ward, aged just 22, remained at the controls of his aircraft which crashed in a field just outside Hamburg, killing him and three other members of his crew.

The Air Ministry had suggested to the New Zealand government, without Ward knowing, that he should be returned home, because of his Victoria Cross. Such a move would be helpful for propaganda and recruitment purposes. This proposal was approved on the very day Ward was killed – 15 September 1941.

James Allen Ward's Victoria Cross was presented to his brother by the governor-general of New Zealand on 16 October 1942. He would become the only person awarded a Victoria Cross for action in a Wellington bomber during the war. Today you can find his grave among Commonwealth comrades in the war grave cemetery at Ohlsdorf, Hamburg. A hero whose deeds continue to live on.

Round the AUCTION HOUSES

Every week at auction houses up and down the country, a varied host of collectables are put up for sale at general and specialist events, offering everything from top-end treasures to more modest items. **David Brown** picks a selection of recent gems that have found new homes, and looks ahead to forthcoming sales.

LOT 405 Transport Auctions of London – Sale of Underground, Railwayana, Bus, Tram & Trolleybus Collectables & Memorabilia, 26 October (transportauctionslondon.com)
One of the scarcest London Transport badges, made in very limited numbers and in very good condition, was one of the attractions in October's Transport Auctions of London online sale. The 1960s LT badge is that as worn by a Green Line controller, featuring the orange-coloured infills that represented this grade. There were just three to four officials in this role, based at Western House, Oxford Circus. The controllers handled breakdowns, accidents and traffic delays affecting Green Line coaches, in addition to dealing with public enquiries outside in the surrounding area. As always, the TAL sale offered a broad selection of items across various areas of transport collectables. Further successes included some sought-after Underground system maps. The next TAL sale is planned for 22 February and will be under new ownership, but with the same contact details.

SOLD FOR £500

LOT 297 Vectis Auctions – The Charles Hollywood Matchbox Collection, 30 October (vectis.co.uk)
The first part of the Charles Hollywood Matchbox Collection auction featured 445 of the popular diecast models in an online sale that was estimated to raise a total of £21,000 but went on to achieve £46,000, attracting bidders from around the world. Many models secured three-figure prices, such as Lot 61, a Matchbox Regular Wheels 33a Ford Zodiac pair estimated at £40-60, that realised a total of £539. The best individual price paid was for this Matchbox Regular Wheels 55a DUKW Amphibian vehicle in a rare, late issue D1 box printed by Pembroke Abbey with matching model artwork, estimated at £40-60.

SOLD FOR £760

LOT 258 Huntly Auctions – Winter Sale of Antiques and Collectables, 10 November (huntlyauctions.co.uk)
Items connected with the Oban and Callander Railway's Ballachulish branch are highly sought after because of its remote, scenic location. It is quite an occurrence for a BR(SC) enamel station totem from Appin to appear at auction, let alone a pair in a single lot. Appin station was a passing place on the single line, opened in 1903. The station was temporarily closed for four months in 1953 after flood waters washed away a bridge. Appin station closed with the Ballachulish branch in 1966. The Aberdeenshire-based auction house reported that the signs were in good condition for their age "with good flanges and are unrestored", adding that one totem shows more wear to the enamel than the other. The pre-sale estimate for the pair was £2,000-3,000.

SOLD FOR £3,500

LOT 225 GW Railwayana Auctions – Two-day Sale of Railwayana, Posters, Advertising, Motoring, 16-17 November (gwra.co.uk)
GWRA's final big sale of the year featured 1,000 transport related items from heavyweight locomotive memorabilia through to a stylish Concorde poster. One highlight was the cast brass rectangular nameplate Western Star from British Railways Britannia Class Pacific No 70025, built at Crewe in 1952 and withdrawn at Carlisle Kingmoor in December 1967. GWRA is accepting consignments for its next main auctions commencing with the online sale on 15-16 March 2025. There are some preview items already included on the website.

SOLD FOR £10,000

COMING UP

LOTS TBA Special Auction Services – The Collector's Auction, 4-5 February (specialauctionservices.com)
A fascinating mix of items is expected in SAS's sale featuring Motoring, Maritime and Part One of the Ray Anstis Iron Collection. The latter promises some rare and historic examples of the domestic household iron, while the maritime section is likely to include items from posters to hardware. Motoring interest covers a wide area but a particular popular section is the once familiar glass petrol globes such as the Cleveland Discol example (illustrated) that have been elevated as collectable works of art. The full catalogue will appear online two to three weeks prior to the sale.

When you are placing your bid(s) please be sure about what you are bidding for. Remember to take into account that on top of the hammer price, you will have to pay a buyer's premium (usually with VAT payable on the premium). Also, allow for post and packing with remote bidding.

I Don't Believe It

Chris Hallam celebrates the 35th anniversary of the popular BBC sitcom One Foot in the Grave

It was early in the year 1998 and two priests were excited to spot a famous face during a visit to the Irish mainland. The famous figure was the actor Richard Wilson who was then at the height of his celebrity thanks to his portrayal of the famously grumpy Victor Meldrew in David Renwick's sitcom One Foot in the Grave. As a ruse, the elder of the two clerics, Father Ted Crilly (Dermot Morgan), elects to surprise Wilson by sneaking up behind him and delivering Meldrew's famous catchphrase: "I don't believe it!" at the top of his voice. The stunt soon backfires as the startled Wilson quickly flies into a rage and, undeterred by Ted's priestly garb, starts to attack him, eventually having to be restrained by several bystanders as the shame-faced Ted makes a fast getaway.

The above scene is, of course, not drawn from real life, but from an incident in the third series of the popular sitcom Father Ted (1995-98) in which Wilson, playing himself, had gamely agreed to take part. But while entirely fictional, the incident does help convey just how popular One Foot in the Grave had become. The BBC One sitcom had made its debut just four days into the new decade on 4 January 1990.

As it turned out, 1990 would be something of a bumper year for good new British sitcoms with Drop the Dead Donkey, Keeping Up Appearances and Mr Bean all arriving that year. But initially, there seemed little about this newcomer to make it likely to stand out from the crowd. The opener, Alive and Buried, was a melancholy affair in which 60-year-old Victor is forced into early retirement with his long-suffering wife, Margaret, after 26 years of working as a security guard when his position is effectively replaced by a small, electronic box.

"It does everything you used to do, except complain about the air conditioning," Victor's boss played by frequent Victoria Wood co-star Susie Blake cheerfully explains.

That was it as far as the premise was concerned but Victor's grumpy manner and tendency to charge headlong into troublesome situations combined with some spectacular incidents of tremendous bad luck enabled writer David Renwick to create ever more ingenious comedy scenarios. After an unpromising start, ratings really started to take off and Renwick grew bolder and bolder.

As Victor (his name is ironic: in the game of life, he is anything but a victor) grew ever more famous, so did his exasperated "I don't believe it!" catchphrase which, as Father Ted demonstrated, was soon aped by impressionists both professional (such as Rory Bremner) and amateur throughout the land.

Despite this, most of the best jokes were entirely visual ones. The yucca plant standing in the Meldrews' downstairs toilet. Victor's neighbours' shock as they discover his head buried up to his neck under a flowerpot. The abandoned car left in a skip. Victor's surprise ("4291?") after he mistakes a neighbour's dachshund for a phone.

Top: Richard Wilson and Annette Crosbie, the stars of One Foot in the Grave, as Victor Meldrew and his long-suffering wife, Margaret.

Photographs: BBC, (Awards) Shutterstock

Left: Former Have I Got News for You host Angus Deayton played Victor's neighbour and nemesis Patrick Trench. Right: One Foot in the Grave and The Two Ronnies scriptwriter David Renwick with Ronnie Corbett at the 2008 British Comedy Awards.

Renwick was also the creator of Jonathan Creek which started in 1997 and, as with that mystery series, he would often imagine unusual scenarios and then work backwards to carefully construct the elaborate train of events which had led to it. Victor's surprise appearance under the flowerpot, for example, only occurred after he had antagonised a workman who then buried him up to his neck as revenge.

Perhaps no character suffered more from Victor's moods than his wife, Margaret, played by Annette Crosbie. Like Wilson, Crosbie was a Scot who had worked steadily on the stage and screen for decades. She first made a big impact playing two very different queens in historical TV dramas: she learned some important lessons about the hardships of marriage as Katharine of Aragon in The Six Wives of Henry VIII (1970). In Edward the Seventh (1976), she played Queen Victoria, the mother to Timothy West's roguish future king. Crosbie won Baftas for both roles although today is much better known for playing Margaret Meldrew.

Other supporting characters included Mrs Warboys (played by the late Doreen Mantle), Margaret's well-meaning but occasionally dim-witted friend. The second series began with the Meldrews returning from Greece to find their house destroyed by fire. The couple getting a new house was in fact a practical necessity (the building which the BBC had been using for filming had become unavailable) but Renwick took the opportunity to introduce a few new neighbours for the Meldrews.

Nick Swainey (Owen Brenman) lived with his unseen sick, elderly mother. Regarded as an "overgrown boy scout" by Victor, the cheerful Mr Swainey had already appeared in the very first episode, encouraging Victor to join an OAP away day trip to Eastbourne. On the other side, the Meldrews enjoyed less good relations with Patrick and Pippa Trench (Angus Deayton and Janine Duvitski), a childless couple approaching middle age. With Patrick frequently grumpy and sarcastic and Pippa far more placid and agreeable, the couple often seemed like younger versions of the Meldrews themselves.

Wilson's newfound fame ensured he was soon appearing alongside his co-star Deayton on the panel show Have I Got News for You, as well as on all the big shows of the era including Noel's House Party, Shooting Stars, The Big Breakfast, and Father Ted. He won two Baftas for playing Meldrew and was awarded an OBE in 1994. Such success was quite a turnaround for Wilson who for years had been much more of a familiar face than a household name cropping up in supporting roles in everything from Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em, Crown Court, Only When I Laugh and Emmerdale Farm to Howards' Way, Tutti Frutti and A Passage to India. His path crossed that of David Renwick several times. Renwick had been a writer for The Two Ronnies, authoring the famous Mastermind sketch and many of Ronnie Corbett's monologues ("you won't believe this, but officially I'm classified by the BBC as a glove puppet…"). Working with his then writing partner Andrew Marshall, he had also scripted the film version of sitcom Whoops Apocalypse (1987) and tabloid newspaper comedy Hot Press (1988) both of which had featured Wilson.

By the end of the 1980s, Renwick, by then in his late 30s, had decided to write a sitcom with Wilson specifically in mind. But the man himself initially turned it down. "I thought I was too young," Wilson explained. "Victor was 60 and I was 55. And there were some things about the script I wasn't sure about." Les Dawson was briefly considered for the part before Wilson changed his mind.

One Foot in the Grave's popularity peaked with the One Foot in the Algarve special broadcast on Boxing Day 1993. A sixth and final series appeared a full five years after the fifth series in the autumn of the year 2000. Eric Idle's jaunty theme music, which always played over footage of a lumbering, presumably ancient giant tortoise, in the title sequence, was heard for the last time. A very dark element runs through Renwick's writing throughout the series. This remains true right up to the end of the final episode.

Perhaps surprisingly, One Foot in the Grave has stood the test of time very well. Thirty-five years on from the very first episode, little about the show now seems dated and it is still very funny. A genuine comedy classic and, unlike Victor Meldrew himself, One Foot in the Grave is, so far, handling the ageing process remarkably well.

Yesterday Remembered

We welcome your memories of around 800 words and pay £20 for each story published. Don't forget to include pictures with your submission.

Monitoring the Milk

Neil Hewitt of St Ives, Cambridgeshire remembers:

It is now nearly 80 years since the compulsory introduction of free school milk to all pupils under the age of 18. I remember vividly my role in the 1960s as a milk monitor at St Johns infant school in Trent Vale, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire.

The milk would be delivered in third of a pint bottles which would rattle in the metal crates as two boys carried one crate at a time from the school gate to the classrooms. Milk monitors, proudly sporting their "milk monitor" badges, would put the crates by the classroom doors and either hand a bottle to the smaller children or make sure the bigger ones only took one bottle as they came out of class or sat at their desks before their mid-morning playtime.

Winters were far more severe in the 60s and the milk would often be frozen solid or covered with snow. Sometimes, the foil tops would be pushed off the bottles by the frozen cream topping and bottles would be stuck fast to the metal crates. The crates would require thawing by the large cast-iron radiators in the school hall. This defrosting process was never enough and the hurried first mouthfuls of milk either straight from the bottle or through a straw would be greeted with pulled faces and shouts as cold liquid hit the teeth causing "brain freeze". I also remember you had to be careful carrying the crates across the icy "slides" that had been created that morning on the playground.

On hot days, the milk could curdle, so it had to be stacked somewhere cool inside. There were no fridges available at my school, so would put wet towels on the crates to keep them cool, but the milk would still be warm and often split. There was also some dispensation for those who didn't like or couldn't tolerate milk, and they could have a bottle of orange juice.

The many foil tops removed from the bottles were not wasted as they were collected each day in a sack placed by the crates and proudly dispatched to the Blue Peter bottle top appeal. Back at home, I would watch the count climbing on the guide dog appeal thermometer and saw the first guide dog Honey introduced by Valerie Singleton and Christopher Trace in 1964. I was so proud that our milk bottle tops had helped to buy Honey and pay for her training within a few weeks of the appeal being launched.

Free milk had been available to local education authorities since 1906 as part of the provision of meals act but by 1930 less than half of all local education authorities in the United Kingdom had done so. It took the School Milk Act of 1946 to make this provision compulsory to all pupils. The then minister of education Ellen Wilkinson, who was part of Clement Attlee's government, introduced the act.

Sadly, its demise started in 1968 when Harold Wilson stopped it for secondary school children. It was further reduced in 1971 by Margaret Thatcher who stopped it for children over seven, giving rise to the phrase "Thatcher, Thatcher, milk snatcher."

She later said she was against the policy, and it was Edward Heath who forced it through. I understand that today free milk is only available to children under five if they spend two hours or more in approved day care. It's a great shame that we have all but lost a great British tradition.

A delivery of milk bottles to a school during the days of free school milk for all pupils under the age of 18.

Photograph: National Library of Wales

Cut-out Capers

Esther Chilton of Newbury, Berkshire remembers:

When I was aged about five, my father bought me my first comic. It was called Twinkle and came out weekly. I thought it was wonderful. Dad had a paper delivered daily and set up a weekly order for Twinkle as I was so taken with it. I loved the idea of comic-strip stories and there were also puzzles to do. I couldn't read very well, so Mum read me the stories. I could follow her words because there were pictures, and I remember being completely enthralled by Witch Winkle and Patty Pickle.

There was also a page with a cut-out doll, with cut-out clothes to dress her in. I thought it was brilliant. Mum cut them all out and then I placed the clothes on the paper doll. When I found out there was a cut-out doll and clothes in each issue, I was in heaven.

I was a patient child and made sure all the stories had been read each week and all the puzzles done before Mum started cutting the dolls and clothes out. I would line them up and make stories up for them, according to the clothes I chose for them to wear. Twinkle comic really was the start of my love affair with cut-out dolls.

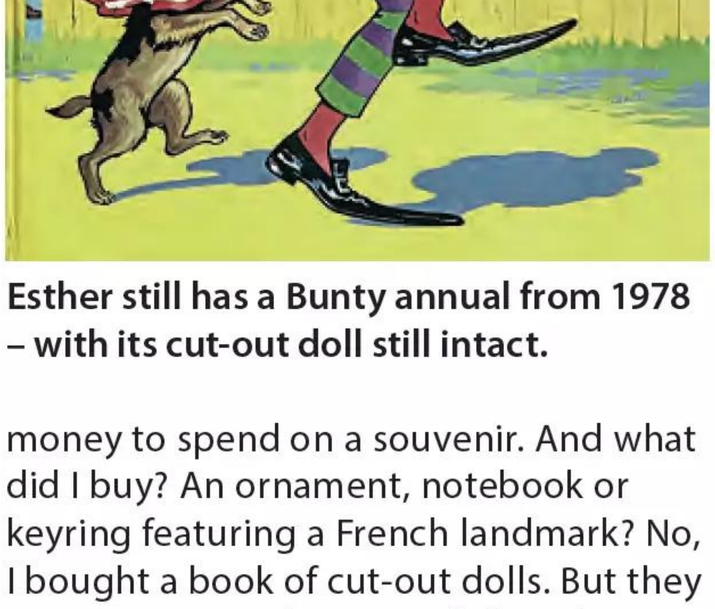
When Twinkle became too young for me, I moved on to Bunty. It had the same comic-strip format and featured characters I fell in love with. The Four Marys and Penny's Place were among my favourites.

But there was trouble ahead. One of my friends also had Bunty and told me I couldn't have it anymore. She wanted me to have Mandy comic instead. She saw Bunty as being *her* comic, so it couldn't be mine, too. Before I'd opted for Bunty as my new comic of choice, I'd made sure there was a cut-out and Colour doll inside. Mandy didn't have one, so there was no way I was having that instead of Bunty. My friend was not impressed. I can't quite remember how it was resolved. Perhaps our mothers sorted it out or maybe we sorted it out for ourselves as I stuck to my guns and had Bunty each week. Later I found out my friend had decided she preferred Mandy after all.

I enjoyed Bunty for many years – the cut-out doll, or to give it its proper name Bunty's Cut-out and Colour Wardrobe, in each week's issue was the highlight.

I don't know what it was about the cut-out dolls that I loved so much. I'd always enjoyed playing with doll's houses and figures and making up stories. I had a Sindy doll, but she only had a couple of outfits so perhaps that was it. Here was this young girl, albeit a paper one, with a different wardrobe every week. Money was tight in the 70s and I didn't often have new clothes myself so that may also have been part of the appeal. Additionally, I was fascinated by the tabs on the clothes, which you had to fold around the doll (just squares of paper but to me they were ingenious).

When I went to France with school, we were allowed a little bit of pocket money to spend on a souvenir. And what did I buy? An ornament, notebook or keyring featuring a French landmark? No, I bought a book of cut-out dolls. But they were very special cut-out dolls – there were four of them and their clothes were in the form of slim notebook pages, with pages and pages of clothes to choose from. I didn't have any scissors with me, and I couldn't wait to get back home and play with them.



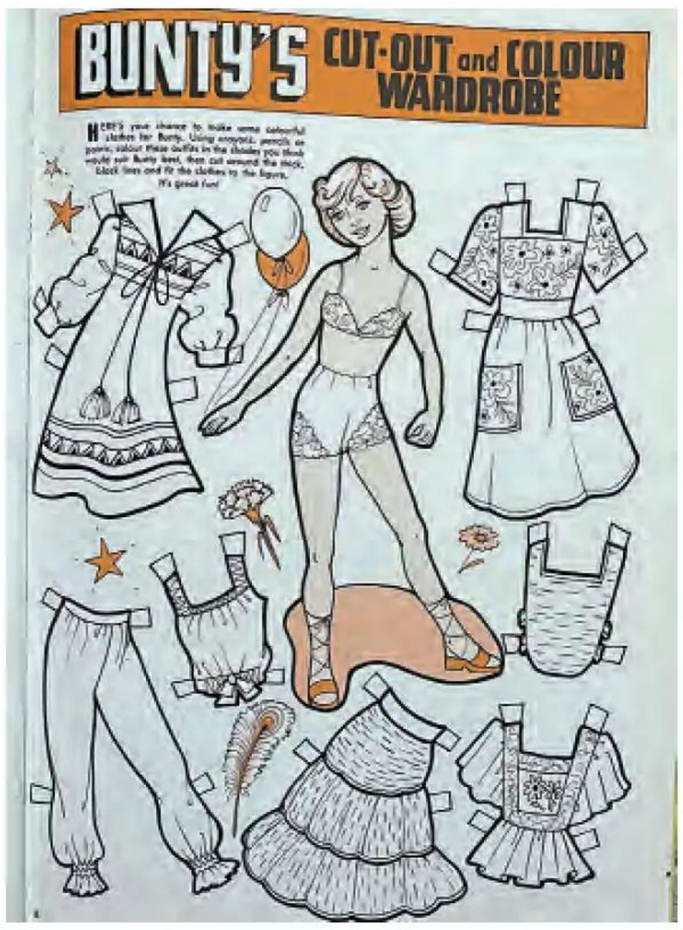
Esther still has a Bunty annual from 1978 – with its cut-out doll still intact.

When I reached secondary school, I soon found out that comics like Bunty and paper dolls weren't part of the other girls' lives; it just wasn't considered acceptable or cool to like either. So, my love affair with Bunty and cut-out dolls was over.

When I had my daughter, I hoped she would share my enjoyment of cut-out dolls, but alas, she didn't. Children have so many more things to keep them entertained these days. But I often wish I'd kept my cut-out doll collection, just to reminisce now and then. I do, however, have a Bunty annual from 1978 – with its cut-out doll still intact. It's also a special one – you colour it in yourself.

I'm not sure why I missed that one, but it gives me many happy memories of hours spent choosing wardrobes for paper dolls. Perhaps I'll go and get the felt-tip pens and scissors…

Esther aged eight when she was an avid Bunty reader.



Day of the Dayaks

Victor Allen of Wouldham, Rochester, Kent remembers:

I was interested to read Gerald Brown's article Back to School (Yesterday Remembered, March 2024) and the accompanying photograph of him at RAF Tengah, Singapore. In the background was a barrack block like those in HMS Terror, the Royal Navy establishment in Singapore. During my naval service, I served on coastal minesweeper HMS Maryton, one of the Singapore 104th Minesweeping Squadron. When my ship was being refitted, the ship's company was in HMS Terror. However, when the ship was operational, we carried out minesweeping exercises with the rest of the squadron and anti-piracy patrols off our then colonies of British North Borneo and Sarawak.

Piracy was a fact of life in those days. The pirates came from the Sulu Islands, part of the Philippines archipelago. They would raid coastal settlements inhabited by Malays who earned a living by fishing and harvesting coconuts for their outer shell. The Malays were nice people and, when we went ashore, they would shin up a tree, cut off a few coconuts, and open the nut for us to drink the milk and eat its flesh. All very delicious.

Sadly, these pirates would kill some of the Malays and when receiving news of such events the navy would patrol offshore. We had on board several Malay police officers and, when we caught a pirate junk, it was searched. If there was evidence of piracy, it would be taken into a coastal town called Jesselton, the pirates would be tried and were hung if found guilty.

We visited interesting places such as Manila, Bangkok, Penang and Hong Kong on a few occasions. In December 1962, there was an insurgency in the oil state of Brunei. We had a defence agreement with its sultan and quickly sent troops there backed up by the RAF and Royal Navy. The rebels, who were Indonesians, fled into the hinterland. However, part of Brunei was a small upriver settlement called Limbang where some Europeans doing missionary work had been captured by the rebels who announced they would hang them. The missionaries were rescued by a Royal Marine commando force on the morning of the execution and, although some marines died in the gunfight, none of the rebels survived.

To keep the peace and deter any further trouble from Indonesia, our army and air force maintained a presence in Brunei and occupied places in Sarawak such as Kuching, a few miles up a jungle river. The minesweeping squadron maintained a presence there together with the army and RAF. Kuching was once the home of Roger Brook who was there during the late 19th century with a colonial force from India to maintain law and order for the local sultan.

On one occasion, my ship visited a riverside town called Sibu that is some miles up the Rajang River. We were there for four days and the landing and boarding party I was part of went on a two-day river patrol, accompanied by a Malay district officer and two Malay police officers. We spent most of the day in a local craft powered by two outboard engines going up the Rajang River to visit a Dayak longhouse. The Dayaks are the indigenous people of Sarawak and had a reputation for headhunting in pre-colonial days. We arrived at the longhouse in the late afternoon, went ashore with the district officer and policemen and were greeted by the Dayak headman who knew the district officer.

What followed was a traditional welcome. We were invited to sit down, the headman picked up one of the chickens that was running around and began chanting a welcome. He then cut the chicken's throat and bled it into half a coconut shell. Accompanied by two young women, wearing only sarongs about their waists, he came to each of us in turn. The headman dipped his finger into the blood and placed it on our foreheads, while the young women gave us a glass of rice wine while singing a song about our spirits. The district officer had briefed us to wait until the song was finished before drinking half of the rice wine and throwing the other half over our shoulder for our spirit.

After the welcome, we settled in, ate an evening meal from our 24-hour ration packs and were entertained by the Dayaks. One of the Dayaks performed a headhunting dance, waving his parang (a machete-like knife) about, while the women danced for us to the music of some gongs known as gamelans. After the entertainment, we slept on straw matting while being bitten by all sorts of insects. In the morning, we returned to our ship and took a hot shower.

It was a great experience, sadly I did not have my camera with me, but I have the memories.

A young Victor in his days as part of the crew of coastal minesweeper HMS Maryton.

First Taste of Work

Susan Batten of the Basque Country, Spain remembers:

Back in the 1960s in West Ealing, London W13, I started my working life in Woolworths as a Saturday girl. We schoolgirls all worked on Saturday, so it was no hardship, and receiving the little brown envelope with our first earnings was immensely exciting. This was, I had no doubt, a rite of passage. In my case, I got 15*s* for the day's work.

It was hard work. Business was brisk on the hardware counter. In the days before the DIY megastore, crowds came swarming around the ironmongery counter on a Saturday morning to buy supplies. Nothing came in hermetic plastic packets or blister packs. All the nails and screws, the tools and fittings, were sold loose, to be counted out or weighed. We had lengths of chain with different gauges, which had to be measured out and cut as required. A press of customers gave complicated and contradictory orders, like the befuddled drinkers in bars I later worked in.

This was no glamorous occupation. My grey overall got dirty and my hands were witness to the shuffling of the grimy goods into paper bags. They suffered, too, the constant contact with "old money". The credit card was unknown in Woolworths then. Stocktaking was a matter of patient counting, but this was a job for the day staff. There was no time on a Saturday to do more than break out new packs like ammunition and throw the cardboard wrappers on the floor.

No modern cash register made automatic calculations. Many evenings I couldn't get away on time – I had to wait while a supervisor checked my till and found discrepancies between the takings and the till receipt. I suppose the store counted this shortfall as "par for the course" – something in the rush of trade we just couldn't avoid. I was never better at mental arithmetic than I became in those days working in pounds, shillings and pence selling tacks by the dozen.

Behind the scenes at Woolworths was a revelation, too. The area that the public never saw was a maze of narrow, dusty corridors. Down these dimly lit alleyways we scuttled off for tea breaks or on missions to "stock up".

The day came when I exchanged my dingy overall for smarter clothes when I worked at a wool shop down the road. At last, I was able to handle soft balls of wool and revel in the colours instead of sharp and scratchy ironmongery. But working in the wool shop brought trials I'd never dreamed of,

"I never seriously considered working in retail, but I valued all those early lessons in marketing and psychology."

and none were greater than the women who formed our clientele.

These were champion knitters whose conversations about patterns and stitches, details and fashion were a foreign language to a girl who hardly knew plain from purl. Woe betide me if I got the reference number wrong and offered them a shade slightly different from what they were after, and if that item was unavailable and they had to wait for their order, you'd think the sky had fallen in.

On the corner of Springbridge Road in Ealing Broadway stood Bentalls, the great department store, the acme of sophistication to my teenage eyes. How proud I was to move on from Saturday work to this summer holiday job before I left the district for university. Even better, I was set to work on the perfume counter with its elegant products set out to advantage and heady scents floating in the air. I felt I had come a long way from selling toilet chain. I never seriously considered working in retail, but I valued all those early lessons in marketing and psychology, learning to show off the product and "sell up".

Near Ealing Broadway station were the offices where I spent the student holidays. We temporary typists worked for agencies – one offered me a job working for them full-time – and through them I came to work repeatedly for a firm of solicitors. On merciless old typewriters before the daisy wheel, I typed up briefs for barristers on thick square paper and tied documents with red tape. On other days I did conveyancing or, working my way around the office, listened agog, as I audio-typed statements for divorce cases. Another road not taken, but it was so full of interest it was tempting.

So, I got my first taste of the working world in Ealing, west London. When I finished university, the world had changed, we were into the 1970s and I started my dream job – in advertising. Except – it didn't work out quite like that…

Susan worked at Bentalls' department store in the 1960s.

Shall We Dance?

Sue Leighfield of Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands remembers:

I was full of beans and endless energy in 1954, so my mother decided to enrol me for dancing lessons when I was five to calm me down. The Joan Hipkiss School of Dance in West Bromwich was to have the pleasure of my company for the next 12 years. Ballet, tap dancing and modern musical with weekly lessons in the local church hall and regular examinations.

The best parts as far as I was concerned were the annual pantomime and the New Year's Eve dance at the local gala swimming baths. Not as strange as it sounds. During the winter months, West Bromwich Corporation laid a sprung wooden dance floor over the swimming pool and the building doubled as a dance hall. There was an orchestra, ballroom dancing, singing. It was all just so exciting.

Each New Year's Eve, the Joan Hipkiss teenage class provided a ballet troupe to perform a Swan Lake-type routine beginning at 10 minutes to midnight with her daughter taking the lead role of Miss New Year and shooing Old Father Time, dressed in rags and carrying a sickle, off the floor and out of the door at midnight. All this entertainment followed by the 12 chimes of Big Ben, everyone singing Auld Lang Syne and dancing the Gay Gordons, the hokey cokey and the conga.

I adored being up until after midnight and seeing all the wonderful guests in their finery. Dancers really dressed up in the late 1950s. Gentlemen in black tie suits and ladies in full evening gowns with long velvet gloves and sparkly dancing shoes.

The pantomimes were terrific, too. I have always had a strong clear voice and no fear of play acting so early on I was given speaking parts in addition to all the dance routines. My father would tease by calling me "Susan Joy the Pantomime Boy". Looking back, I realise the scripts were from the 30s and 40s and full of silly jokes like: "Say something sloppy… rice pudding".

One practice night will stay with me forever. Friday 22 November 1963. Someone from the church hall put their head around the door to tell everyone that the 35th US president, John F Kennedy, had been shot dead. I clearly recall the feelings of upset and horror at this dreadful news.

Most of the time the pantomimes were played out in church halls, but we also had the honour to perform in a real theatre on stage at Dudley Hippodrome. The costumes were professionally made by seamstresses, glossy programmes were produced, and the local newspapers included reviews.

My teenage years were spent in youth clubs and the Adelphi Ballroom in West Bromwich, doing the twist, the shake, the hand jive and countless other popular dances of the era. All the groups and singers in the swinging 60s toured and played live at venues around the UK. I collected autographs from Lulu and the Luvvers, the Kinks, the Nashville Teens, and Goldie and the Gingerbreads to name just a few. The night the Beatles were on at the Adelphi I was supposed to be meeting my friend Veronica in the doorway of Walford Cashmore's shoe shop next door. She failed to turn up, so I went home and missed probably the best four autographs of all.

In my 20s, I enrolled for ballroom dancing classes in Birmingham, learning to waltz and quickstep. There was a brilliant purpose-built ballroom overlooking the reservoir in Edgbaston. Everyone from the Birmingham area from the 1940s to the late 1990s will doubtless recall the Tower Ballroom. A huge dance floor surrounded by full-size ornamental palm trees, revolving stage, superb live bands plus a disco, two large bar areas and a hot food bar. There were hundreds of party goers every Saturday night of all age groups. The younger dancers used to refer to the tower as "grab a granny night", cheekily reflecting the mix of ages and particularly the older women all having a good time. The Tower always had a session of ballroom plus rock'n'roll in addition to all the modern dancing. It was a wonderful place to meet new people. Other dance venues in Birmingham such as the Locarno and the Top Rank could not hold a candle to the Tower.

For a while, in the 1990s, apart from the usual discos, I began going around with a crowd who enjoyed northern soul. Now this is in a class of its own. Pulsing loud music and dancers who could really move around the floor to the pounding beat. Like high-impact aerobics at the next level.

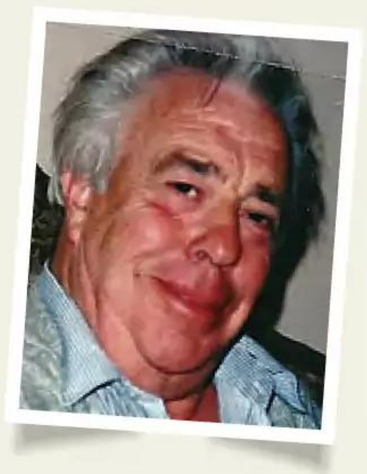
The Joan Hipkiss School of Dance ballet group from 1962 with Sue third from left.

More dance lessons in the early 2000s, this time brushing up on the quickstep plus tango, foxtrot and ballroom jive. By now I was really involved with 1940s re-enactment and dances are often a part of the events. Dancing sometimes includes assorted fun 1940s-style line dancing. Not historically accurate but a great way to enjoy dancing even if you do not have a regular partner.

My late mother raised an awareness and interest in dance which continues to this day. I will be forever thankful to her for this. I have never been gold or even silver medal standard but that really does not matter. Dancing keeps you fit and active and simply gives so much joy.

Scary Memories

George Harrison of Grantham, Lincolnshire remembers:



One day I went to see the film Horrors of the Black Museum but it was not long before I started to feel nervous and scared. I will always remember the last scene I watched as it tipped me over the edge: a young woman was in an old house, she picked up a pair of binoculars and on positioning them to her eyes a pair of spikes shot out deep into her eyes. Blood went everywhere and she collapsed. Assuming her to be dead, I ran out of the cinema, scared and headed for home.

It was a very dark and drizzly night, with only a few gas lamps lighting the way. I ran as quickly as I could down the high street, turning into a side street towards my home. With no streetlights now, it was dark and scary for even the bravest 10-year-old. I ran past a shop doorway just as a man stepped out on to the pavement right in front of me: I screamed and continued to do so as I went into my home. I really thought he was after me. This was an experience I wanted to forget but still can't. I also remember getting a smack from my mum who banned me from going to the pictures for a long time.

That scary experience stayed with me and other scary things happened as I grew up. Maybe the cinema experience had stayed lodged in my mind. During my early 20s, I was a fence erector and travelled all over the country. On one job, I was staying in Wallingford, Oxfordshire in a very nice lodging house but my bedroom was high up in the attic. The landlady showed me the way and I remember on one of the landings being shown the remains of Wallingford Castle from the window. This was the setting for that last civil war battle between the roundheads and cavaliers, a site that has always been rumoured to be haunted.

On my first night in these lodgings, I remember going to bed using a candle, as only the downstairs had electricity. On the candlelit landing, I passed the window and saw the eerie moonlit castle. A strange sensation passed through my body and I felt a little unnerved, so quickly went to bed before extinguishing the candle. After lying in the bed for a while and not being able to sleep, I heard footsteps. I lay motionless and was feeling tense, as I believed I was the only guest in the attic this night.

After the footsteps stopped, I heard a heavy blowing sound followed by a gentle tapping noise and much shuffling. It was now pitch black, silent and scary but I eventually drifted off to sleep. The next morning as I went to breakfast, the landlady apologised as she felt she may have woken me as she went to blow out the remaining candles. Suddenly the sounds I had heard had been explained. It wasn't ghosts from the neighbouring castle – or was it?

After getting married, I got a job in a local engineering factory. The shift system alternated between a week on days followed by a week on nights, on 12-hour shifts. In conversation, it came out that two men had been killed in the vicinity of where we worked, leading to talk of spiritual activity at nights.

During night shifts, instead of us all going to the clocking-on machine, we alternated between who did it. Being the "new boy", my night was Friday. As ours was the only department working this shift, the rest of the factory was in darkness. On my first "clocking-on" night, as I walked back towards my colleagues in darkness, there was an almighty banging noise that shook me to pieces. I later learned it was the heating coming on, with water passing through some very large pipes. The noise made me think of the stories of spirits in the night.

There were no canteen facilities on a Friday night, so break times were spent resting one's eyes but not being tired and this being new to me, I just wandered around the shop floor. I came across a workmate, lying on a bench, with his mouth and one eye wide open. I honestly thought he was dead and stood gazing at him in horror. After what seemed an age, he did move but I had not realised his open eye was glass.

I am sure there was supernatural activity in this department trying to unnerve me and being quite successful. Over the years I began to get used to the strange and weird activities and I felt more comfortable resting during my Friday night break. One night, while drifting off to sleep, I woke suddenly with a stream of cool air blowing on my neck. There was no one else around and it was a secluded corner of the work room.

While I have had other frightening experiences, on this occasion things seemed so real, and this is what made me believe in spirits. I later learned this experience happened in the area in which a previous employer had lost his life. I will never shake this feeling out of my mind.

I believe ghosts call out in the night as a way of communicating. Scary to us, however, don't you agree?

Starring Michael Gough and Shirley Anne Field, Horrors of the Black Museum left a lasting impression on George after running out of the cinema as a 10-year-old.

MY WORLD OF SPORT

Sporting memories from The Francis Frith Collection

The River Avon, Salisbury, Wiltshire

(Photograph taken around 1862)

I was an apprentice jockey at Noel Cannon's Druids Lodge from 1953 when Festoon won the 1,000 Guineas. We all won money that day as we knew she would win. We had some of the best gallops in the country and you could ride from Druids Lodge almost as far as Stonehenge. As apprentices we received 7*s* a week. It was a great two years until I was called-up for National Service.

Brian Miller

Newport Street, Bolton

(Photograph taken around 1960)

My one and only visit to Bolton was in January 1970 to see Watford FC play Bolton Wanderers in the Third Round of the FA Cup. I persuaded my younger brother, Geoff, to accompany me on the football special from Watford Junction to Bolton. It was a slow three-hour journey. However, the expense and the long journey was worth it, as Watford beat Bolton 2-1 to go through to the Fourth Round. I remember leaning out of the train window as our carriage slowly pulled away on the return journey and seeing hundreds of other happy faces singing, shouting and waving football rattles. A happy memory for this Watford fan.

John Howard Norfolk

Brands Hatch, West Kingsdown, Kent

(Photograph taken around 1965)

Soon after I began motorcycling in the mid-50s, I began to take what has been a lifelong interest in motorcycle racing. No matter how early we left, there would always be the build-up of bike traffic around West Kingsdown, as motorcyclists congregated in the laybys and pub car parks to join the cavalcade of riders arriving from all over the country. Getting to the circuit and leaving for home was all part of the adventure – in fact, a lot of the ton-up boys from north London were happy to ride around the roads seeking a challenge rather than enter the circuit to watch the racing.

Ducatee

The Games Room, Sandes Soldiers' Home, Catterick, North Yorkshire

(Photograph taken around 1955)

I spent many a happy hour playing table tennis, snooker and swimming, seems like yesterday. The top board of the swimming pool always seemed so high.

Brian Mead

I learned the game of snooker here as a young lad. My father was based in Catterick. I also learned to swim at the pool there.

Roderick Gourlay

The Francis Frith Collection

Over 150 years ago, pioneering Victorian photographer Francis Frith set up his company with the grand plan of photographing all the cities, towns and villages of Britain. His two sons, and later his grandson, continued Frith's massive task, and The Francis Frith Collection now contains more than 360,000 images taken between 1860 and 1970. Over 250,000 images are available to view online. Prints of the Frith photographs, as well as a wide range of other products and local history books, featuring these vintage images, are available from the website francisfrith.com

Share Your Memories

The Francis Frith Collection invites you to visit the website and add memories to the places featured in the photographs, or comment on others already added. Seeing a place from your past can rekindle forgotten or long-held memories. Why not add your story for others to read and enjoy – making your memories and stories part of this growing chronicle of British life?

POSTCARD FROM THE WELSH MARCHES

Bob Barton goes on the trail of drovers and encounters tongue-twisting place names

I was a big fan of cowboy films and television programmes as a youngster, lapping up the weekly episodes of Bonanza and Gunsmoke. At playtime, my pals and I donned our Stetsons and holsters, pretending we were guarding a ranch or chasing cattle rustlers. American cowboys were glamorous, and I never gave a thought to their British equivalents: the drovers. That all changed in the early 1980s when, on holiday in mid-Wales, we motored along a remote road. I remember that morning clearly. The narrow lane, bereft of any markings or signs, threaded a valley of russet, treeless hills between Tregaron and Abergwesyn. There wasn't another soul on the road. I felt lucky to have found such a mesmerising highway.

Later, I was told it was an old drover road. Having a drink in a wood-clad pub in Rhayader (the Cwmdauddwr Arms, now a bicycle shop) where most customers seemed to be talking in Welsh, a customer informed me it was once trod by these native "cowboys". A network of tracks, hollow-ways and sunken lanes linked the pastures around Tregaron with bustling livestock markets as far off as London's Smithfield.

In the days before the railways took over – and as late as the 1930s – drovers would lead hundreds of cattle, sheep, pigs and geese on laborious treks that took weeks at a time. With their dogs, often corgis, they braved highwaymen and footpads, slept under the stars with their charges and navigated using only hills, ponds, pubs – and copses of Scots pines (planted by the men as waymarkers).

I am hooked on finding country walks that follow the traditional routes. One memorable trek followed an ancient trackway with panoramic views, the Kerry Ridgeway, into the atmospheric hilltop town of Bishop's Castle. I also enjoy exploring this area's castle ruins, such as Clun and Ludlow. Each awash with legend and bearing the scars of bitter clashes between Welsh Princes and the Marcher Lords.

I discovered a statue of a determined-looking drover, wearing a heavy greatcoat and carrying a stick, beside a Llandovery car park. A volunteer in the town's museum (llandoverymuseum.wales) explained this characterful place was a hub on the drovers' route to London.

"As well as cattle, the men were trusted with large sums of money," she said. "One of the first banks – the Black Ox – was set up here in Market Square in 1799 by and for the drovers." It became part of Lloyds Bank, she added. It seemed only right that its headquarters was an inn, the King's Head.

Llandovery is situated on one of my favourite railway routes, the Heart of Wales line (heart-of-wales.co.uk). This meandering single track carves its way through bucolic countryside for 120 miles, linking Shrewsbury and Swansea. It stops at former spa towns and lonely request halts. The train drivers also operate level crossings and oversee token exchange (signalling) equipment. On a recent journey, I noticed most of the places where we called started with the four letters "Llan". The guard's announcement included tongue-twisters such as Llangammarch Wells, Llanwrtyd

Top: One of the parks at Llandrindod Wells is guarded by a water-spurting serpent that rises from a lake.

Photographs: Bob Barton

Left: The wood-clad pub in Rhayader, the Cwmdauddwr Arms, where in the early 1980s most customers seemed to be talking in Welsh, is now a bicycle shop. Right: A statue of a determined-looking drover, beside a Llandovery car park.

Wells and Llandeilo. As we crossed a viaduct resembling a medieval castle and watched a flock of sheep being herded below, I recalled a journey I made 13 years ago to a request stop near Builth Wells.

I had travelled to Builth Road to visit a quirky pub, the former station refreshment room called the Cambrian Arms. Landlady Angie Mason was welcoming – I was the only customer. She excused the solitude, explaining her Sunday lunches were usually fully booked. She had collected a display of historical local photos, railway posters, hurricane lamps and earthenware pots that were spread over every wall and surface. It was like being in the sitting room of an eccentric aunt. Sadly, the pub closed shortly after my visit and is now a private house.

My jumping-off point on a more recent Heart of Wales train journey was a once fashionable Victorian spa town: Llandrindod Wells. Stepping on to the platform, I noticed a paving stone marking the spot where Queen Elizabeth II first set foot in Wales after her accession to the throne in 1952. "Dod", as it's known, still boasts elegant architecture, an imposing spa hotel and holds a popular Victorian festival in August (0845 838 1395, victorian-extravaganza.com). There are two lovely parks, one guarded by a water-spurting serpent that rises from a lake. The other, the Rock Park Spa, has a pretty arboretum and "tree trail". I tasted spa water running from a nearby drinking fountain: the font of a "chalybeate spring". The liquid tasted strongly of rust, while a rusty patina surrounded it. And this water was meant to be healthy?

Arriving at the once fashionable Victorian spa town of Llandrindod Wells is the Heart of Wales train, a single track through countryside linking Shrewsbury and Swansea.

Another highlight of my visit was the National Cycle Museum (01597 825531, cyclemuseum.org.uk), housed in an imposing Edwardian building, ironically called the Automobile Palace. A volunteer, Pete, told me it is the largest collection of bicycles and memorabilia in Britain. Among the oldest is a rickety wooden tricycle made by a local carpenter. The rider "rowed" it with his hands and feet. There are displays on ace cyclist Eileen Sheridan (1923-2023), "a great friend of the museum" who once cycled 250 miles in 12 hours, and on the Army Cycling Corps of World War One, which pedalled into battle. A recruitment poster asks: "Why not cycle for the King?... Bad teeth no bar." My favourite exhibit is a Phillips Duplex "Sociable" Tricycle, built in Birmingham in 1895. It's called a sociable because three people (including a child) could sit side by side.

I left Llandrindod by bus, heading for England. The number 461 darted through pastoral countryside, with a backdrop of brooding hills. Every other vehicle we passed seemed to be a tractor. Much of the route towards Hereford used the A44 which, I read,

Left: An enamel sign at the National Cycle Museum, home to the largest collection of bicycles and memorabilia in Britain. Right: The National Cycle Museum at Llandrindod Wells is housed in an imposing Edwardian building, ironically called the Automobile Palace.

was a popular route for the drovers. These days, it's hard to imagine hundreds of bovines lumbering slowly along, being chivvied by rosy-cheeked men on foot and horseback. The bus called at New Radnor, where the drovers encountered one of many hated tollgates. I spotted Hergest Ridge, a beauty spot immortalised by musician Mike Oldfield in his album of the same name, before pulling into Kington.

This border market town is popular with hikers, being at the junction of several walking trails. Best known is the Offa's Dyke Path, following the boundary between England and Wales "from sea to sea". The dyke was constructed by King Offa in the 8th century. (He is also said to have introduced the English penny.) A town of independent shops, it still boasts a livestock market. There's a fascinating museum and history centre too, housed in the stables of a former inn (01544 231748, kingtonmuseum.com).

Outside is a statue of an athletic-looking dog, Fly, by sculptor Rachel Ricketts. I was told it represents the ghostly black dogs – often portents of doom – that dominate folk tales in these parts. The best known tells of a hound said to have belonged to "Black" Vaughan, of Hergest Court. Author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle borrowed the same story for his Sherlock Holmes novel The Hound of the Baskervilles, relocating it to Dartmoor. (Both Vaughan and Doyle were related by marriage to a real-life Baskerville family of nearby Clyro Court at Hay-on-Wye.)

A chatty volunteer in the museum explained the town was popular with drovers as it had lots of pubs and blacksmiths. These smithies specialised in shoeing animals, all the better to navigate England's metalled roads. Each cow would be fitted with eight iron "horseshoes" of a type he showed me. Even geese would have "slippers" or be walked through tar to harden their feet. As for the pubs, some had "penny plocks" where animals could be penned overnight. Among these is a time-warp pub called Ye Olde Tavern. The hostelry's two wood-panelled rooms are furnished with collections of pewter and trophies.

Arriving in Hereford in late afternoon sun, I gazed from the ancient bridge across the Wye to the cathedral, just as generations of those Welsh "cowboys" must have done. They may also have slaked their thirst at the Saracen's Head Inn, as I did. It seemed obvious which ale to choose: it had to be Black Sheep.

REFRESHMENTS

Ye Olde Tavern, 22 Victoria Road, Kington, Herefordshire HR5 3BX (01544 231417)
Unspoilt Camra heritage pub.

The Sun Inn, Rosemary Lane, Leintwardine, Herefordshire SY7 0LP (01547 540705)
Classic parlour pub once overseen by "Britain's oldest publican", Florence Lane (1914-2009).

Fforest Inn, Llanfihangel-nant-Melan, Presteigne, Powys LD8 2TN (01544 350526)
Drovers' inn dating from the 16th century, reopened in 2024.

All serve real ale.

Left: Bob gazed from the ancient bridge across the Wye to Hereford Cathedral, just as generations of Welsh "cowboys" must have done. Centre: Athletic-looking dog, Fly, sculpted by Rachel Ricketts, represents the ghostly black dogs that dominate folk tales. Right: The two wood-panelled rooms of Ye Olde Tavern at Kington are furnished with collections of pewter and trophies.

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A City's Centenary

Andrew Wilson offers a potted history of Stoke-on-Trent

A city made up of six towns, and built on a history of industrial greatness, Stoke-on-Trent is enjoying a huge resurgence of local pride and passion and is aiming to capitalise upon the opportunities and profile that a year marking the 100th anniversary of gaining city status will bring with it during 2025. As a world capital of ceramics, Stoke-on-Trent's cultural and artistic heritage not only runs deep, but also reaches back over the centuries. Affectionately known worldwide as "the Potteries", the city has been encouraged by the response so far to its call to celebrate the centenary and is now creating a year-long programme of events and activities to build upon its celebration weekend of 7-8 June.

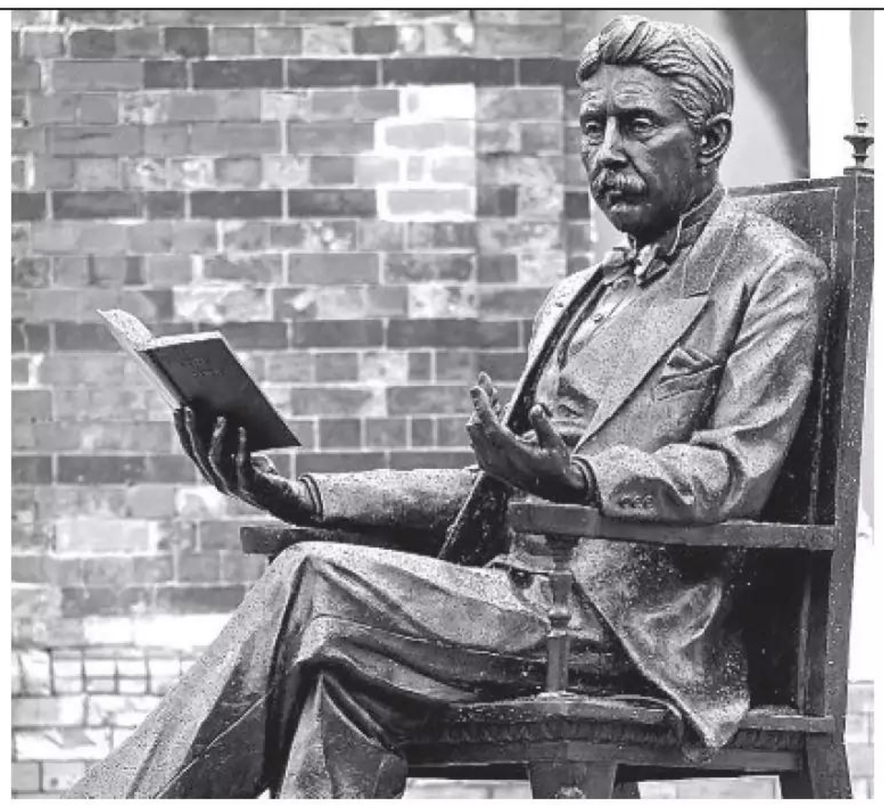
At a similar time to when the city forefathers first set their eyes on becoming a city, Potteries' author Arnold Bennett was writing about the "grim and original beauty" which was evident in the industrial landscape of the region where he spent his formative years. And his descriptions of Bursley (Burslem), Hanbridge (Hanley), Knype (Stoke), Longshaw (Longton) and Turnhill (Tunstall) helped to put the Potteries on the literary map of Great Britain.

He might have missed out Fenton, simply on the grounds that *his* Potteries sounded better as the Five Towns. But it was the complete set of six, which federated in 1910 to become the County Borough of Stoke, that created a springboard for a bid, 15 years later, to make an application to the Home Office to become a fully-fledged city.

Well into the 20th century, it was generally assumed that the presence of a cathedral was enough to elevate a town to city status. But in 1907, the Home Office and King Edward VII agreed on a policy that future applicants would have to meet three specific criteria: a minimum population of 300,000; a "local metropolitan character"; and a good record of local government.

An application from Portsmouth for city status was refused in 1911 on the grounds of it possessing insufficient inhabitants. And in 1919,

Top: Trent and New Wharf Potteries at Burslem, complete with bottle kilns which were typical of the industrial landscape of Stoke-on-Trent.



Left: A statue of author, journalist, travel writer, raconteur and wit Arnold Bennett outside the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery. Right: Donated to Stoke-on-Trent in 1972, Spitfire Mark XVI has pride of place at the city's Potteries Museum & Art Gallery.

when King George V made an official visit to Leicester to commemorate its contributions to the military during World War One, full city status was granted as an exception to the policy, as it was officially "a restoration of a dignity lost in the past."

The first application by the County Borough of Stoke for city status in 1925 was refused by the Home Office because Stoke-on-Trent fell short of the 300,000 inhabitants by just 6,000 people. But an approach to King George V from Stoke changed that and, on 5 June 1925 due to the king's direct intervention, Stoke-on-Trent finally gained city status based on its outstanding importance as the centre of the pottery industry.

A film in the British Film Institute's national archives (player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-stoke-on-trent-city-status-ceremony-1925-online) shows crowds turning out in force to welcome King George V and Queen Mary arriving on that day to officially elevate Stoke to a city. The footage shows the king inspecting a guard of honour from the North Staffordshire Regiment, entering King's Hall and then laying the foundation of an extension to the North Staffordshire Infirmary – at the time, the largest hospital in the UK, outside London.

Bennett is as good as any guide to show us what life was like in the Potteries just before, and immediately after, Stoke becoming a city. His literary legacy is vast: he was a writer of books, novels, plays and philosophical musings; he was a journalist, a travel writer, a raconteur and wit, and the head of war propaganda during World War One. He gave his name to an omelette; lived in Stoke-on-Trent, London and France; and was mourned nationwide when he died.

The towns he described in such precise detail in novels such as The Old Wives' Tale, Anna of the Five Towns, Clayhanger, and The Card were filled with "pitheads, chimneys and kilns, tier above tier, dim in their own mists" – very different from the six towns of modern Stoke-on-Trent but, for all that, a fitting tribute to the history and heritage of the Potteries.

"It promises to be quite a year for the Potteries with major developments already taking shape."

Renowned backstamps such as Wedgwood, Royal Doulton, Spode and Moorcroft emerged from that smoke, ensuring everyone around the globe got to hear of (made in) Stoke-on-Trent. But even if the behind-the-scenes factory visits, and the opportunity to purchase some of the nation's finest pottery remain key reasons for wanting to visit the Potteries, it's still worthwhile delving even more deeply to discover what else there is on offer.

Put the words "Stoke" and "City" together in any conversation these days, for example, and chances are you will hear one of three names instantly crop up: the "first knight of football" and local hero, Sir Stanley Matthews; England World Cup winning goalkeeper, Gordon Banks; or even (more recently) the player with the most dangerous throw-in in football, Rory Delap. One of the Potteries' best-loved sons, the "Wizard of the Dribble" Sir Stan was born in Hanley in 1915. When he died in 2000, more than 100,000 people lined the streets of the city to pay tribute to the man who – after rejoining Stoke City from Blackpool at the age of 46 – helped the club to win promotion back into the First Division. He played for Stoke City until the age of 50 – and afterwards always said he had retired too early.

In a city already filled with famous names, one of the country's last-surviving Spitfires recently "landed" at its new £5.4m home, the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery (01782 232323, stokemuseums.org.uk/pmag). While Spitfire RW388 itself is quite rightly the star exhibit in the new gallery, the free-to-visit exhibition space also reveals more about the story of the plane and its designer, Reginald Mitchell, who was born in Kidsgrove in 1895, and was educated at Hanley High School in Stoke-on-Trent.

Stoke-on-Trent also shares its birthday in 2025 with the Gladstone Pottery Museum (01782 232323, stokemuseums.org.uk/gpm) which opened 50 years ago; the Emma Bridgewater factory (01782 201328, emmabridgewater.co.uk) in Hanley, which opened 40 years ago; and local artist and poet Arthur Berry, who was born in February 1925. There's even a strong case in favour of flagging up 2025 as the 100th anniversary of the art deco movement which – again – was a pivotal moment for Stoke-on-Trent and the Potteries.

L'Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes held in Paris in April 1925 provided the impetus for the art deco movement to take off and was dedicated to the display of modern decorative arts – bringing together thousands of designers from all over Europe and beyond, including Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann and René Lalique.

They became prominent promoters of the early art deco movement, putting

their own modern spin on traditional craftsmanship. But back in the UK's capital of ceramics, Stoke-on-Trent was also creating its own wave of art deco designs, with Clarice Cliff, Susie Cooper and Keith Murray all becoming household names and leading exponents of the craft.

Today's current generation of backstamps which still carry the name of Stoke-on-Trent worldwide include Wedgwood, Emma Bridgewater, Moorland Pottery, Burleigh, Moorcroft, and Duchess China, along with trade producers Steelite, Churchill, and Johnson.

Today, Stoke-on-Trent's fame continues to be spread by television's The Great Pottery Throw Down and by the British Ceramics Biennial – as well as by the spectacular collections of pottery, fine china and ceramics on show in the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, and the V&A Wedgwood Collection in the museum at the World of Wedgwood (01782 282986, worldofwedgwood.com). Fittingly, the British Ceramics Biennial returns to the city in the autumn of 2025, and will once again raise the Potteries' profile as a centre of contemporary design, where young and local producers are now producing ceramic objects on a par with anything else on offer around the globe.

Another seminal moment for Stoke-on-Trent occurred in 1986 when the city hosted one of environment secretary Michael Heseltine's national garden festivals, which were designed to inspire a cultural regeneration of large areas of derelict land in post-industrial cities during the 1980s and 90s. Five were held in total – one every two years, and each in a different town or city. They cost £25m-£70m each to stage and left a lasting legacy in cities such as Liverpool and Stoke-on-Trent. That event, opened by Queen Elizabeth II, helped kickstart what was then an unlikely tourism industry for the Potteries which, in turn has helped to spread the name and fame of Stoke-on-Trent even further afield during the past four decades.

It promises to be quite a year for the Potteries. Major developments are already taking shape, and a party mood is gathering pace with one major highlight being the centenary celebration "weekend", which begins on Thursday 5 June. Saturday 7 June has been earmarked as a day of celebration, processions, street theatre and other events. Best of all, everyone's invited...

Tableware and Go-karts

Rachel Toy recalls an innovative pottery

Hornsea pottery was one of the most popular British ceramics brands of the mid- to late 20th century. Its innovative style of pottery design, decorated with graphical patterns, became staple tableware items of the day. Original 1950s slipware vases and 1970s brown storage jars are also popular with a new generation of collectors and enthusiasts alike. There is a collector's club, as well as various museum exhibits, all dedicated to the memory of the brand's heyday.

For some, it is the popular visitor attraction at the Hornsea factory in the East Riding of Yorkshire that holds the fondest memories. Now the site of Hornsea Freeport retail village, from the 1950s it was one of the main tourist destinations in the area, offering factory tours, a lake and picnic area, adventure playground, go-karts, boats, cafes and a mini zoo. For bargain hunters there was also a factory shop selling seconds. It was not only a true British day out, but Hornsea was one of the first British brands to expand its appeal to consumers in this way.

Brothers Colin and Desmond Rawson set up the company in 1949, making plaster of paris souvenirs from home. They soon moved on to clay when their friend Philip Clappison invested money to buy a kiln. Early 1950s products included toby jugs in pastel colours. The brothers were able to move to larger premises off the back of this initial success to The Old Hall in Hornsea Market Place.

By then, homeware design was changing, with the New Look becoming popular among new homemakers. For Hornsea, an injection of youthful ideas came to the company via Philip Clappison's son John.

John Clappison was studying at Hull Regional College of Arts, where he achieved a national diploma in design, specialising in ceramics. Working at Hornsea gave him the chance to develop his ideas in decorative techniques and glazing, although there were limitations in such a small pottery works. The first of his launches was the successful Elegance range in 1955. This came in contemporary organic shapes and included vases, cruet sets, bowls and butter dishes. It's black and white striped glazed design to the outer, with brightly coloured interior, was very popular with younger homemakers.

Similar ranges soon followed in the 1950s as John experimented further. Tricorn was a collection of small tableware items featuring a three-pointed shaped body. These were decorated with blue and white glazed design, topped off with a stylised star motif. Another popular range, now highly sought after, was Home Décor. Inspired by Scandinavian design, pieces were

Left: Hornsea collector Vix Cutler has fond memories of childhood visits to its visitor centre in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

covered in a white glaze, with small, raised dots all over the top half of the vase. Known as the "white bud" decoration, you can find examples in the ceramics galleries of the Victoria and Albert Museum (020 7942 2000, vam.ac.uk/south-kensington).

On the back of this success, the company moved to a new factory site in Edenfield in 1954, on the site of the Hornsea Brick and Tile Works. Now the company had the chance to really expand its product range, employing more designers including Alan Luckman, George Ratcliffe and Dorothy Marion Campbell, who joined as a clay modeller. Campbell's designs in particular are prized among collectors. Her creations included African figures, modern vases, dogs, giraffes and cats. However, the most prized of her designs are the 1956 Arctic Fox and Weasel vases, also on display in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Ceramic animals were a popular ornament for the home in the mid-century period and Hornsea also produced a range of Fauna vases. These were cute woodland animals set against tree trunks and logs. The range was produced from 1954-1967 until Hornsea decided to concentrate fully on large-scale production of tableware. Eastgate Pottery, in nearby Withernsea, bought the moulds and rights to Fauna and production continued in its small factory instead.

In 1954, Hornsea opened up its factory to the public, creating a much-loved visitor attraction. They discovered that customers liked seeing how the pottery was made and offered factory tours. The seconds shop, selling Hornsea items at reduced prices, was one of the first American style factory outlets in the UK. At its peak, there were over 350,000 visits per year.

Other attractions soon followed, and the playground area is a particular

"In 1954, Hornsea opened up its factory to the public, creating a much-loved attraction."

memory to Vix Cutler, now a Hornsea collector. She says: "There were rides and cafes, plus radio-controlled cars and boats which were tons of fun. I also remember go-karts and bikes". Vix even recollects a car museum, as well as horse and cart rides.

In 1967, Hornsea began to produce full ranges of tableware, in modern graphical designs such as Heirloom, Bronte and Saffron. These all used a resist technique pioneered by Clappison to stop the glaze sticking on to the screen-printed design. All of these ranges were popular with consumers in the late 1960s and 1970s and, at one point, the Heirloom range having to be limited on a quota basis to department stores in order to keep up with demand.

By 1974, the Edenfield Works employed 250 staff and was turning out over 3 million pieces a year. Inevitably, it was necessary to expand again, but the company received objections from local government. Eventually the company opened its second premises in Lancaster, on the completely opposite side of the UK. Regardless of this setback, the mid-1970s was a time when Hornsea further innovated in pottery production, developing the Vitramic high temperature glazing technique, similar to that used in glass making.

This era also marked the start of mechanisation of production. Staff were recruited from the local area but there were teething problems learning the new technique, plus the high standards needed. Despite this, Hornsea went on to win Design Centre awards for the first three tableware ranges produced at the site. Contrast was one of these, designed by Martin Hunt. Vix remembers it well: "It was very brown and matt, but its clean lines and contrasting black and brown are actually really iconic."

Unfortunately, the Lancaster factory was only in operation for 12 years due to various factors. High development costs, economic environment and new competition from cheaper imports all took their toll. Clappison continued to innovate in the 1980s and among his most popular were a pastel range of Strata trinket boxes and People figurines. Hornsea also resurrected the Heirloom shaped storage jars in a bold new colourful Stripe design. These had large, printed letters of the intended contents on the front, a style popular for kitchenware items at the time.

In the 1990s, Hornsea continued to make its most popular tableware ranges, as well as introducing new ones. Yeovil was a mediterranean inspired design, favoured by those experimenting with new and fashionable cuisines. The company went into receivership in the year 2000 and the factory sadly had to close for good.

However, Hornsea pottery lives on today. As well as collectors and enthusiasts preserving items for their own enjoyment, there is a museum in the town of Hornsea (01964 533443, hornseamuseum.co.uk) showcasing more than 2,000 original pieces. The Hornsea Research and Collectors Society (hornseapottery.co.uk) is the go-to place for more information and collectors' events such as sales, swaps and talks. Vix explains some of the appeal: "After inheriting a brown kitchen in our new house, I decided to embrace the 1970s colour palette. My mind instantly went back to Hornsea as it's just so iconic and evocative of the times."

Hornsea has also recently licenced its designs, so you can even buy new Hornsea products, such as tea towels, notebooks and lampshades. It certainly looks like this iconic British pottery brand is going to last long into the 21st century.

Left: At one point, the Heirloom range was so popular that demand outstripped supply. Right: First produced by Hornsea from 1954-1967, Eastgate Pottery then took over production of the Fauna range.

THINK PINK

Robert Sellers on the story behind the Pink Panther films

The Pink Panther series is one of the most enduring and financially successful franchises in movie history, it spawned nine films, along with a popular animated TV series. There were spin-off toys, games, clothes, even a breakfast cereal. And it made a star of Peter Sellers as the bumbling Inspector Clouseau.

Sellers only landed the role by sheer luck. Director Blake Edwards had asked Peter Ustinov to play Clouseau, only for the actor to walk off the project three days before shooting. According to co-star Robert Wagner, Edwards wanted Sellers from the start. "He always thought he was the man to play the part. So, when Ustinov left, Blake was on the telephone with Peter Sellers. And thank God because nobody could have been better in The Pink Panther than Peter Sellers. He was so perfect for the role. Now you cannot think of anybody else playing Clouseau."

A cosmopolitan crime caper, the star of The Pink Panther was supposed to be David Niven, cast as a sophisticated jewel thief, but it was obvious early on that Sellers was stealing the picture from under him. After watching an early preview Niven commented: "It's a very funny movie, but it's not mine, it's Peter's."

Released in 1963, The Pink Panther was an international hit and a Clouseau sequel was quickly put into production. Written by future Exorcist author William Peter Blatty, A Shot in the Dark (1964) introduced two new characters: Chief Inspector Dreyfus, Clouseau's harassed boss, brilliantly played by Herbert Lom, and Cato, Clouseau's manservant trained to attack his master at every opportunity to keep his fighting skills sharp.

Played by Burt Kwouk, Cato and Clouseau's fights became a fondly awaited staple ingredient in subsequent Panther instalments, increasing in their ludicrous nature each time until they almost resembled a cartoon. "I did my

Top: Clouseau (Peter Sellers) and Cato's (Burt Kwouk) fights became a fondly awaited staple ingredient in the Pink Panther films.

Photograph: (Lead) United Artists/Kobal/Shutterstock

own stunts in the early days," Kwouk recalled. "But as I got older I did less and less. I could fall just as fast; it just took me longer to get up. And Peter loved doing those fight scenes."

But behind the laughs, there was madness and darkness. A comedic genius, Sellers could be temperamental, unprofessional, and unpredictable. Most likely, today he would be diagnosed with bipolar disorder. His relationship with Blake Edwards got so bad that by the end of A Shot in the Dark both men vowed never to work together again.

But money talks, and when their careers stagnated in the 1970s, they put their enmity to one side in a bid to resurrect Clouseau, and their own fortunes. The Return of the Pink Panther (1975) was a huge hit; Prince Charles wrote to Sellers claiming he'd laughed so hard at the premiere that he'd wet the dress of the woman in the next seat.

The following instalment, The Pink Panther Strikes Again (1976), heightened the slapstick element. Ironically, as the series became more outlandish, Sellers began to increasingly rely on stuntmen to do his pratfalls, a sign of his weakening physical condition, brought on by a diseased heart and years of substance abuse. His relationship with Edwards deteriorated once again. The actor's behaviour included frequently not showing up for work (sometimes because he wasn't happy with the day's horoscope), carrying on conversations with his dead mother, or walking off the set if it was painted a certain colour.

Sellers had an aversion to certain colours, especially green and purple. Tony Adams, who produced many of the Panther films, recalled the occasion when Julie Andrews' mother – Blake's mother-in-law – visited the set and she was wearing a purple coat.

"Peter went ballistic, foaming at the mouth, pointing fingers and then ran off screaming like he had just seen the devil incarnate, literally not to be found for hours, or maybe days. And this poor old lady was left standing there wondering, 'What did I do?'"

Once, Sellers woke up Edwards with a phone call in the middle of the night to assure him filming would go well the next day because God had told him how to play a particular scene. When Sellers arrived on the set the following morning, it was obvious he had nothing planned, just a glimmer of hope that something intuitively brilliant might emerge. It turned out so awful that Edwards walked

"The Sellers Panthers are some of the most cherished film comedies ever made."

over to his star and said: "Do me a favour Peter. In future, tell God to stay out of showbusiness." The entire sequence had to be replaced with a new one.

"There was a lot of conflict," Burt Kwouk admitted. "And out of the Blake/Peter conflict came this wonderful stuff. They were both geniuses, really, and it's very difficult to get geniuses to work together."

Edwards vowed that Strikes Again would be the final Panther, but sheer greed, he admitted, prompted his involvement in Revenge of the Pink Panther (1978), another global smash hit. Indeed, such was the popularity of the Panther movies, that even when Sellers died of a heart attack in 1980, at the age of 54, the demand for more was so great that Edwards offered the role of Clouseau to Dudley Moore.

When the diminutive star declined, Blake decided that Peter Sellers would have to play Clouseau after all. Or at least his ghost would. The idea was to concoct a new story around deleted footage from previous Panther films, along with some classic clips. The result was Trail of the Pink Panther (1982) starring Joanna Lumley as a roving reporter on the trail of a missing Clouseau. Both critics and audiences gave it a resounding thumbs down.

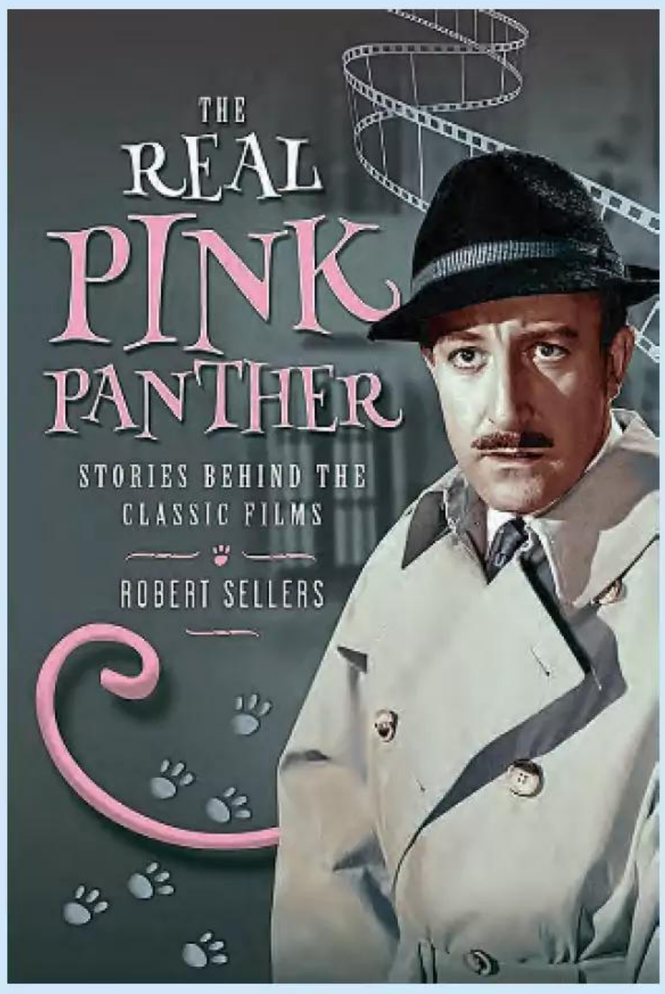
Hoping to keep the Pink Panther franchise alive, Blake Edwards brought out 1983's Curse of the Pink Panther, in which Clouseau is replaced as the hero by an equally bumbling American detective played by US TV star Ted Wass. Panned by critics and bombing at the box office, Curse of the Pink Panther killed off the franchise for a decade.

In 1993, Blake Edwards made one final stab at reviving the series by casting Italian actor Roberto Benigni as the son of Clouseau, an equally incompetent police officer in the south of France. Unfortunately, audiences again voted with their feet and after Son of the Pink Panther there was the undeniable feeling that the horse Edwards had been beating for so long was now truly dead. But Clouseau was destined to live again.

In the early 2000s, Hollywood was awash with rumours that Mike Myers or Jim Carrey was about to play Clouseau in a Pink Panther reboot courtesy of Ivan Reitman, the director of Ghostbusters. When Reitman left the project, it fell into the lap of a young film-maker called Shawn Levy, who brought in Steve Martin. Many people scratched their head wondering why the accomplished Martin wanted to go within 100 miles of Clouseau, opening himself up for comparison with Sellers.

Critics agreed, turning their nose up at the film, but audiences felt differently, and the 2006 Pink Panther reboot was a runaway hit. Martin returned for a 2009 sequel, but the box office was a disappointment and put paid to any further instalments. However, news recently broke that Eddie Murphy was in talks to star as Clouseau in yet another reboot of the film series. This time the rumour was that animation would be combined with live action elements to team up Clouseau and the famous Pink Panther cartoon character for the very first time.

Perhaps, though, it's all best left alone. The Sellers Panthers are some of the most cherished film comedies ever made, and Clouseau one of the great screen comic creations. "The whole Panther series doesn't seem like individual films to me," explained Burt Kwouk. "It just feels like one huge 12-hour movie that took 20 years to shoot." And what a movie.



The Real Pink Panther: Stories Behind the Classic Films by Robert Sellers is published by Pen & Sword Books on 31 January

Photographs: (Doctors) BBC Studios, (Great Canal Journeys) Spun Gold TV/All3Media International, (Edward the Seventh) ITV/Shutterstock

Go West

Chris Hallam pays tribute to a star of stage and screen

On Wednesday 13 November 2024, Timothy West appeared in an episode of the BBC One daytime soap Doctors. West played Artie Simkins, an elderly neighbour who raised the alarm when pensioner Sylvie Mackie (played by one-time star of The Bill Trudie Goodwin) fell over on her walking frame in her back garden. It was a very small part, but West was a very famous and respected actor who would have been instantly recognisable to most of the audience. The episode was the last but one of Doctors ever broadcast. It also marked the final screen appearance of West who had died at the age of 90 the previous day.

Writing in his 2023 memoir, West had pondered how the obituaries would remember him, musing: "In my own case, I'm not quite sure what they'll open with. 'Actor, best known for …' It could be a number of things, I suppose. '… his work on the stage', or Brass or Edward the Seventh. It could even be Gentleman Jack or EastEnders, if the obituary is being written either by, or for, a journalist or audience who have yet to reach middle age."

There is a touch of modesty there, but it's true. Unlike his wife, the actor Prunella Scales who is undeniably best known for the role of Sybil in Fawlty Towers, West's prolific career lacks a single defining role with which he is automatically associated. The title role in the sumptuous television costume drama Edward the Seventh (1975) was undeniably a highlight, however. Then in his early 40s, West played Edward from a young oversexed prince of 23 right through to the stout, bearded monarch on his deathbed at the age of 68.

Top: Timothy West and his wife Prunella Scales from an episode of their popular Channel 4 series Great Canal Journeys.

The first-rate cast included Robert Hardy and Annette Crosbie as the king's stern parents, Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, and John Gielgud and Michael Hordern as the rival Victorian prime ministers Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone. An international hit, the

Left: Then in his early 40s, Timothy West played the title role in the sumptuous TV costume drama Edward the Seventh (1975). Right: As Artie Simkins in the penultimate episode of Doctors, which was broadcast on the day the actor died at the age of 90.

series was retitled Edward the King in the US to prevent audiences mistaking the series for a sequel. To West's annoyance, many people later seemed to misremember him as having played Henry VIII. West would have been well cast as the Tudor tyrant but, in fact, had only ever played him once in a TV commercial for a brand of chocolate bar.

West was often cast as real-life figures and sometimes wondered if he was becoming typecast in such parts. Among other real people, he played Winston Churchill several times, Soviet leaders Joseph Stalin and Mikhail Gorbachev, eccentric Edwardian Horatio Bottomley, Georgian lexicographer Samuel Johnson, and composer Thomas Beecham.

West was the son of two actors, married two actors and one of his sons, Samuel West, is a prominent actor today. Timothy was born in Bradford in 1934. Though he has sometimes jokingly claimed to be a Yorkshireman and has often played Yorkshiremen on stage and screen, his parents, Lockwood West and Olive Carleton-Crowe, merely happened to be in the West Yorkshire city as they were touring with a theatre company at the time of his birth. A few weeks later and West would have been born in Eastbourne, East Sussex, a few weeks after that, Blackburn, Lancashire.

Despite enrolling as a police constable during World War Two, West's father continued to stage pantomimes. It was in one of these that the young Timothy made his stage debut when he was cast as a "small child" in 1943. One night in Bristol during the war, he woke to find his room "suffused with a bright pink glow, which gave the effect of a rather beautiful sunrise". In fact, as he soon learned, the city had been struck by a devastating air raid and the glow had been caused by a horrendous fire engulfing the city.

"In time, he would play the likes of King Lear, Macbeth, Prospero and Shylock but was probably at his best playing character roles."

He was not a big academic success and often played truant from school. His parents urged him to avoid a theatrical career but, in 1956, frustrated after stints working as a recording engineer and selling office furniture, he became assistant stage manager for the Wimbledon Theatre. His prolific stage career began there. In the early 1960s, he joined Peter Hall's new Royal Shakespeare Company. In time, he would play the likes of King Lear, Macbeth, Prospero and Shylock but was probably at his best playing character roles. From 1959 onwards, he was also appearing regularly on television.

He first met Prunella Scales in 1961 while rehearsing in the play She Died Young for the BBC. Both disliked the play but spent more and more time in each other's company when production was disrupted by a series of strikes. The two had fun while completing The Times crossword together. West ended up not being in the play anyway, but they remained in touch, writing frequent letters to each other. They were clearly falling in love.

But there was a problem: West had been married to Jacqueline Boyer since 1956. The couple had one daughter together, Juliet. West had been completely open and honest about this from the outset. But the marriage was unhappy and soon collapsed. Among other things, Jacqueline had what we would now call bipolar disorder (she died in 1995). A divorce was arranged. A supposedly adulterous hotel liaison was interrupted by a hired private investigator to satisfy the requirements of the divorce laws of the time.

By the time of West's second marriage in 1963, Scales had become a household name thanks to her starring role opposite Richard Briers in the sitcom Mariage Lines. They had two sons together, Samuel and Joseph, and moved to a house in Wandsworth,

south London. At the time of their 50th wedding anniversary in 2015, West estimated they had spent less than half of their married lives together, such being the nature of their lives as actors. West argued that this had enhanced their marriage rather than hindering it. Their habit of writing frequent letters to each other continued.

With Fawlty Towers and Edward the Seventh, the two later judged 1975 as perhaps the peak year of their entire careers. But there were many other highlights, too: West's memorable turn in the 1980 Royal Jelly episode of Tales of the Unexpected, and his small roles in classic films such as The Day of the Jackal (1973) and The Thirty Nine Steps (1978). One of West's most comedic roles was as the brutal northern industrialist Bradley Hardacre in the comedy drama Brass (1983-84 and 1990). West later described the production as one of the most enjoyable experiences of his career. "I do love playing awful people," he said.

He carried on working long into advanced old age, sometimes complaining that there were not enough good roles available for older actors. He was in the very first episode of the dark comic anthology series Inside No 9, played Lucy's father in the sitcom Not Going Out, and appeared in both Coronation Street and EastEnders within the last 10 years or so. He also appeared in Sally Wainwright's sexually charged historical drama Gentleman Jack (2019-22).

West first noticed his wife was struggling to learn her lines in 2001. She was formally diagnosed with vascular dementia in 2013. The programme Great Canal Journeys (2014-20), on which the couple appeared, did much to highlight her condition.

"We have exactly the same conversation every day of the week and it's something I never tire of," said West. "Repetition doesn't really exist in Pru's world and the look on her face when she enters the room and sees me sitting there on the sofa waiting for her makes me realise just how much I love her."

Prunella Scales is now 92. West also leaves behind three children, seven grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and his sister as well as a rich theatrical legacy.

Great Canal Journeys is screened regularly on U&Yesterday, while Doctors is available to stream via BBC iPlayer

Not Just a Face in the Crowd

Marcus Heslop speaks to Jill Goldston, a background artist recognised by Guinness World Records as the most prolific extra ever

A flickering face in the background of an old black and white film. The type of which you might see on Talking Pictures TV one rainy Sunday afternoon. A face, should you take the time to look, you may see time and time again. A petite brunette, a pretty face in the crowd, be it as a citizen in Carry On Cleo or watching a darts match in an episode of On the Buses. Her name is Jill Goldston and she has recently been recognised as the most prolific extra ever in an award bestowed upon her by Guinness World Records.

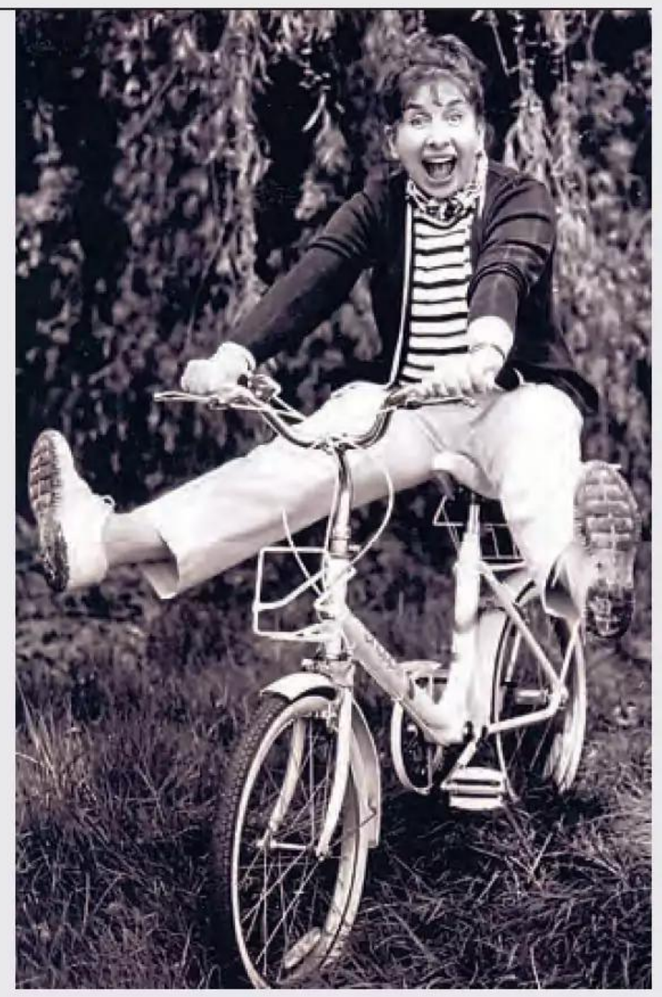
Now happily retired from showbusiness, Jill was gracious enough to be interviewed for this article in which she talks about her career and the recent short film which celebrates her life on screen. We started by discussing her early years. Born in 1943, she says: "I was a late surprise addition to my parents, my brother being 11 years older than me. As my parents were older than most, they sent me to dance school which I loved. I was a very active child and always looking for adventure. At 15 I ran away from home (not that I didn't like my parents) and joined the revue company at Butlin's in Brighton."

She met her husband, Geoff, at Butlin's – a marriage that has recently celebrated 60 happy years – and then moved back to London to dance in cabaret clubs. One of the other young women said she did extra work as Jill explains: "She made it sound fun, so I joined the Film Artistes' Association as all work was very unionised. My first job in 1963 was called Just for Fun. And it was."

From very early on, Jill had an excellent reputation within the industry. David Edwards, of Central Casting and later his own agency ExCasting, recalls: "I always found Jill to be a complete pro in all her work as she took the job most seriously. I can never recall Jill turning down a job as some extras did; she accepted all bookings with great gratitude. One never had to worry about a crowd call regarding Jill as you'd always know she'd get the wardrobe right and, of course, be on time. Assistant directors also knew they could rely on her if she was asked to react in shot or deliver a line. Jill was also a popular stand-in where she could easily revert back to being in the crowd or delivering a small part."

Across nearly 50 years, Jill appeared in almost 2,000 television programmes and films. Her husband kept a list of the productions she was booked for. Everything from The Two Ronnies to Superman IV: The Quest for Peace and most of the Carry On films which she remembers with great fondness: "Shot at Pinewood, they usually made two films a year. They were fun to work on. The cast had to work incredibly hard as the budget and time was tight. Finish was 5.15pm and overtime was called in 15-minute sections. It is amazing that the films have stood the test of time and still make you laugh. A great testimony to them."

Photograph: (Carry On) ITV/Shutterstock



Left: Jill, pictured on the telephone in a scene from Carry On Matron, worked on most of the Carry On films. Right: Jill Goldston has been recognised by Guinness World Records as the most prolific extra ever with 1,951 film and TV appearances.

Most of the experiences were positive apart from working with Michael Winner, who was notoriously impatient and unpleasant to extras, as Jill elaborates: "He was no fan of extras, that's for sure. But he was equally rude and obnoxious to most people. Especially his assistant that had to walk three paces behind him and incurred great abuse if the script was not handed to him immediately."

Another occurrence, memorable for all the wrong reasons, was when Jill appeared in a UK-shot episode of the Tom Selleck series Magnum PI. Jill played a waitress in a scene with Selleck and John Hillerman who portrayed estate manager Higgins. Jill describes the event: "The scene was a swanky evening clothes reception. I was the waitress with a tray of drinks. It was a tracking shot of me offering a drink to Tom Selleck. Suddenly, before the take, Magnum's sidekick [Higgins] said: 'Be very careful as Mr Selleck only has one suit and it would hold up production if anything happened to it.' Going for a take. Action. Following my instructions I walked over to offer the drink. And collided full-on with Tom Selleck, emptying the drinks all over him. They had changed the set without telling me. Tom Selleck was charming and said: 'Let's get you a cup of tea. I could do with a break.' The sidekick was furious but everyone else was totally forgiving."

Having retired in 2009 after the Mamma Mia! spoof for Comic Relief, Jill may have faded into obscurity had it not been for a subforum on website britmovie.co.uk Forum members spent a painstaking amount of time identifying extras and posting photos of scenes from films and television. Jill was soon identified as the most prolific and, in 2014, when the letters page of a national newspaper asked: "Which extra has appeared in the most films?" I put her name forward. This caught the attention of the Daily Mail and Jane Fryer interviewed Jill at length about her career.

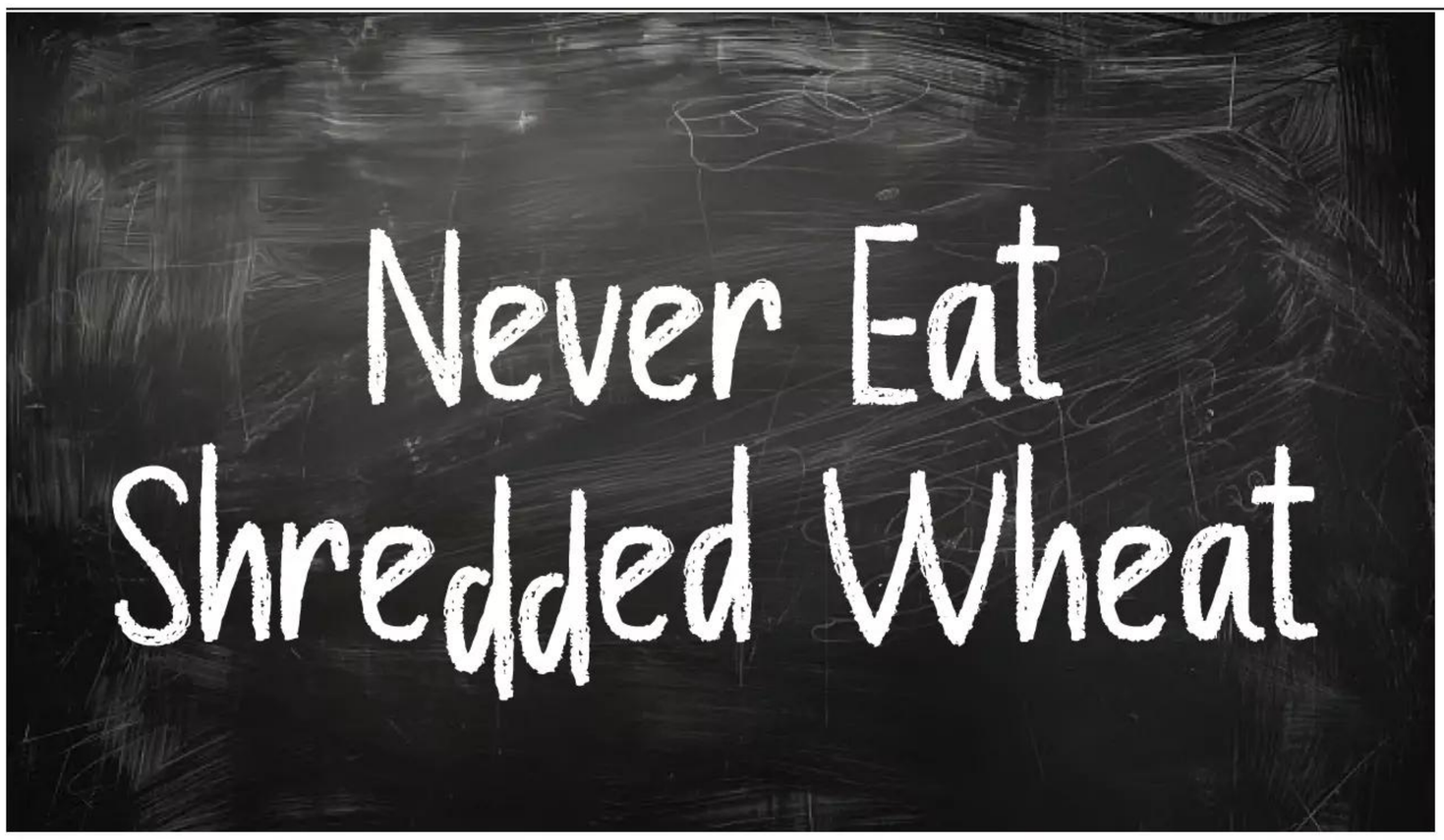
The next step in her renaissance came when film-maker Anthony Ing contacted Jill after seeing the website and thought she might make an interesting subject. He explains: "I was open to considering other people. But given the enormity of Jill's work and the fact she had kept a diary of all her jobs, Jill was immediately a great candidate on paper. When I met with her and started finding her in films, I realised how she was the ideal subject for a range of other reasons. The way that she was such a distinct and unique presence while simultaneously able to blend in, the warmth in her performances, and the way that her many recurring roles – around nursing and service work in particular – tied neatly into themes around labour dynamics that I wanted to explore."

The finished film Jill, Uncredited (2022) is a surprisingly moving piece. Running at just 18 minutes, we see Jill's life unfold before us as the camera zooms in on her or slows down to focus on her moments in the individual films. Anthony explains the structure of the film: "From the extensive research, I created a library of many of her appearances. What got included depended on the themes that emerged, and how well things fitted in tonally. There were lots of things I would have liked to include but had no place for. There was that great shot of Jill dressed as a squirrel in a TV adaptation of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe – but it was far too otherworldly to slot in."

The film has received excellent reviews and is something Jill herself is very proud of. She explains how she felt when Anthony initially contacted her. "I didn't know what to expect, really. I liked him immediately. I assumed he would be contacting lots of other extras and hearing their stories. When I found it was just me, I was taken aback. We met up several times and I met Charlie and Catherine from Loop films. They were all so lovely. When the film premiered at the London Film Festival, I was told there would be a Q&A afterwards. I had to beg my son, who lives in New York, to come over and support me. It was quite unnecessary. I loved the film and surprise, surprise I loved the Q&A. Anthony made a very wistful and thought-provoking film and I will be forever grateful to him."

Asked to sum up her incredible career Jill says: "I think I can sum it up in three words: lucky, lucky, lucky. I took pride in my job and always gave it my best shot. And then to have someone spend their time and creativity to make a film about it – amazing. And a wonderful tribute to extras everywhere without whom films would be, oh, so boring. Without character and soulless. I look back with great memories."

Jill, Uncredited is available on Mubi.com



Derek Lamb remembers the ways of easing the chore of rote learning

Charles Dickens's 1854 novel Hard Times featured the school board superintendent Thomas Gradgrind. His attitude to learning was clear and unbending: "Teach these boys and girls nothing but facts. Facts alone are wanted in life." Fast forward a hundred or so years and Mr Gradgrind would approve of the primary and secondary state education that we received. Tables were chanted, spellings learned, dates remembered, and coalfields located. Fortunately, most of my teachers were keen to dilute the burden of rote learning with shortcuts and creative mnemonics: acronyms, rhymes, songs and phrases.

Geography then was mostly "capes and bays", requiring pages of sketch maps and diagrams to be memorised and reproduced in the exam. I have no difficulty, 60 or so years on, from naming western tributary rivers of the Yorkshire Dales thanks to the acronym SUNWACD: Swale, Ure, Nidd, Wharfe, Aire, Calder and Don. In North America, "Some Mistresses Have Extraordinary Oddities". This has nothing to do with female teachers but a useful rule for remembering the Great Lakes: Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario.

Being able to identify the main types of clouds was required in meteorology. Cirrus clouds are made of ice crystals rather than water droplets and the advertising catchphrase "Nice one, Cyril" was adapted to "Iced one, cirrus".

Ordnance Survey maps were an important part of the geography syllabus. Those unfamiliar with the cardinal points of the compass were given the advice to "Never eat Shredded Wheat". Grasp of grid references was essential but how to remember which comes first, the eastings (numbers along the bottom of the map) or the northings (those up the side)? We were told that "you always go into the house before you go up the stairs", so eastings precede northings. If only the platoon in an episode of Dad's Army had known this, they would have rendezvoused at the safety zone and not at the target.

Going underground, distinguishing between stalagmites and stalactites is a challenge, as they are virtually identical words. There are numerous mnemonics: the "g" in stalagmites reminds you they are on the ground. Stalactites hang down so they must "hold on tite". A slightly more risque version refers to "tites" coming down.

Like geography, history also required considerable memorising, mostly dates, kings and battles. Rhymes were helpful: "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue; In sixteen hundred and forty-four, they fought the battle of Marston Moor."

There is a mnemonic that enables recall of all the monarchs of England from William the Conqueror, which begins: "Willy, Willy, Henry, Steve." It wasn't part of our syllabus, although the Tudors were. Consequently, "divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived" summarised the fate of the six wives of Henry VIII.

In maths, knowing your times tables was essential. Practice made perfect and, although not a mnemonic, learning was reinforced by the entire class rhythmically chanting them. In the 1987 wartime film Hope and Glory, the children take cover in an air raid shelter and are told to repeat their seven times table, despite wearing their gas masks. My dad helpfully pointed out that multiplying by 10 simply involved putting a 0 next to the number; hence nine 10s are 90. Multiplying by 11 just required the number to be repeated; hence two 11s are 22.

Selling items by the dozen was widespread then. Conveniently, the price of the item in old pence was the same number as the price of a dozen in shillings. I didn't understand quite how this worked but was grateful since it released brain capacity for the complexities of geometry. This included the calculation of angles in a right-angled triangle, using the tools of tangents, sines and cosines. The acronym SOHCAHTOA summarised these. The alternative was

Practice made perfect and, although not a mnemonic, learning of times tables was essential and was reinforced by the entire class rhythmically chanting them.

Photographs: (Classroom) © The National Library of Wales, (River) Creative Commons/Andrew Shannon

Left: School board superintendent Thomas Gradgrind's attitude to learning in Hard Times was unbending. Above: The River Swale, west of Reeth, one of the western tributary rivers of the Yorkshire Dales in the acronym SUNWACD: Swale, Ure, Nidd, Wharfe, Aire, Calder and Don.

"silly old Harry couldn't add hundreds to our amazement". Since Mr Hodges was our maths teacher, we cheekily adapted the phrase to begin "silly old Hodges". Rather like the eastings and northings in geography, it was easy to confuse the x and y axes on graphs until you remembered that the x axis goes "acrox".

Languages never seemed well endowed with mnemonics. I cannot recall a single one in French, so there was little respite from the grind of weekly vocab tests. However, I did notice that most feminine words ended in an "e" and, although not a firm rule, it was near enough to get me through. English offered greater scope: "I before e, except after c." "Stationary" and "stationery" are easily confused until you remember that the "e" in "letters" reminds you that there is an "e" in stationery. Many relied on the expression "big elephants can't always use small entrances" to correctly spell "because".

General science was mostly a succession of rules, laws and hypotheses, helpfully endorsed by mnemonics. The planets are identified with a bizarre image that begins "most volcanoes erupt mouldy jam sandwiches". Meanwhile, "Richard of York gave battle in vain" places the colours of the rainbow and "Mr Green" summaries the intrinsic characteristics of life: movement, reproduction, growth, respiration, excitation, exertion, nutrition.

My favourite was Fleming's left-hand and right-hand rule to summarise the operation of an electric motor and generator respectively. It requires the complex alignment of thumb, first finger and second finger and could easily be mistaken for a very rude gesture, so best not used outside the physics lab. Like so much that I can still recall, I have not needed Fleming's rule since the late 1960s. There are now no coalfields to locate, the colours of an electric flex have been replaced, rendering RIP (red is positive) redundant. When I use a keyboard, the spelling and grammar check picks up most mistakes.

However, many of us continue to use mnemonics in our everyday lives. Although I dutifully learned the stopping distances of a car at different speeds, I keep a safe distance from the vehicle ahead by reminding myself that: "Only a fool breaks the two-second rule." Recalling the duration of each month usually begins with "30 days hath September", while "spring forward and fall backwards" ensures we change the clocks correctly twice a year. Crossing the international date line involves losing or gaining a day. "Going west a day goes west" avoids confusion when you reach your destination.

Turning to weather lore, most of us are familiar with: "Red sky at night, shepherd's delight, red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning." Although new to me, all three of my adult children use "lefty loosey, righty tighty" to remember which way to turn a nut on a bolt.

The enduring legacy of academic learning is the basis of one of Britain's most popular past times, the quiz. Television and radio schedules bristle with them, from the cerebral University Challenge and Eggheads to the more "light entertainment" based Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?, The Chase, and The Hit List. Few magazines and newspapers are without a quiz. Most pubs, clubs and societies regularly hold quiz nights, complete with jokers, a music round and a marathon. Although Charles Gradgrind's Victorian attitudes are largely out of favour today, he would be a towering asset in any modern-day quiz team.

Getting the Point With Decimalisation

The introduction of decimal coinage and metric units in the early 1970s caused considerable challenges to those who grew up with imperial measurements. For money, I used the "double and slash" technique. Double the price in new pence and add a slash between the resulting numbers. Hence, 26 new pence became 52 or 5*s* 2*d*.

For volumes, the rhyme "a litre of water's a pint and three-quarters" worked well. Moving from degrees fahrenheit to degrees celsius was not so straightforward. However, 1967 reminded you that 19C is 67F and pleasantly warm. Conveniently, 28C is a hot day and reversing the numbers correctly produces a temperature of 82F.

Mr Motor Racing

David Brown remembers racing driver and motorsport entrepreneur Raymond Mays

Growing up in the south Lincolnshire market town of Bourne in the 1950s and 1960s, it was difficult to ignore the importance of the fact that here they produced motor racing cars – and some very good ones, too. World beaters, in fact. The world of motor racing was altogether a more exotic concern than the area's agricultural engineers, but the establishment of works where racing cars could be designed, built and sent out to race at home and abroad attracted a talented workforce that started out from modest premises. The man who provided the catalyst for this development was a distinctive, sporting gentleman: Raymond Mays.

When I was a schoolboy, Mr Mays, as he was always referred to, was treated with respect and school caps would be raised in his presence. There was an air of detachment about him, but you would see him about in the town, always with a lit cigarette. While he earned his reputation as a driver among other young, bright hopefuls at places such as Brooklands or Shelsley Walsh speed hill climb, his passion for cars extended beyond the track and he owned many wonderful marques and specials including several Bentleys. During my schooldays, I would usually see him driving large Ford saloons, a blue Rover P6 and latterly a Rover 3500.

Thomas Raymond Mays was born at the family home, Eastgate House, on 1 August 1899 and it would remain his home throughout his life. His father was a local businessman, Thomas William Mays, who was keen that Raymond joined the family business. However, Raymond had other ideas about how he could best spend his time. He was sent to school at Oundle, Northamptonshire where a new acquaintance, Amherst Villiers, proved a valuable ally in his motoring ambitions. Following military service with the Grenadier Guards, Mays became a Cambridge undergraduate. Villiers would work on Mays's cars at Bourne, from where they would be tried out on straight fen byways such as South Fen Road.

Mays's first car was a speed model Hillman, traded in for his first Bugatti Brescia named Cordon Rouge, which was followed by a second Brescia named Cordon Bleu. Villiers's supercharging skills were put to great use and the two cars blazed a trail across the big hill climb events of 1924, with many records broken on the way. A famous photograph from 1924 shows the astonished look on Mays' face as one of the rear wheels of Cordon Bleu breaks free as he descends the Caerphilly hill climb course. This image has been used in advertisements and even as the cover of 1993 album Instant Trouble by French rock band Roadrunners.

Raymond's desire to create a team of English racing cars to take on the

Top: Raymond Mays racing a plane at Skegness Sands, 1923. Left: Powered by a 1½-litre 16-cylinder supercharged engine, the BRM Type 15 is put through its paces at the 2014 Goodwood Festival of Speed.

Photographs: (Memorial) David Brown, (Type 15) Creative Commons/Nic Redhead

Left: The 1924 image showing the astonished look on the face of Raymond Mays as a rear wheel breaks free has been used in adverts and as an album cover. Middle: Raymond Mays led the way with his still sought after tuning kits. Right: A fitting memorial to Raymond Mays stands in South Street, Bourne close to the town's heritage centre.

continental competitors continued to occupy his thoughts and time. The result was the creation of English Racing Automobiles (ERA) in 1934, starting life in workshops in the grounds of Eastgate House. Mays was joined in the venture by veteran racing driver Humphrey Cook, together with the technical skills of a young designer, Peter Berthon, with valued chassis work by Reid Railton.

Much fettling was required to get the set-up right, but soon Mays and Cook were amazing crowds at Brooklands with the speed capacity of their ERAs. Only a total of 16 ERAs were built – of which all, bar one, survive with examples often seen and heard at historic racing events. In addition to the small works team, several owner/drivers had notable successes with ERAs at home and abroad.

World War Two stopped motor racing and ERA was sold to Leslie Johnson, who restarted the business at Dunstable, Bedfordshire from 1947. Though the upright ERAs looked old-fashioned alongside some of the continental racing cars, drivers – including Mays – continued to do well with them. Mays won the British Hill Climb Championship in its debut years, 1947 and 1948. He also had great success at Brighton Speed Trials, winning in 1946, 1947, 1948 and 1950. Mays was entered for the 1950 British Grand Prix but his entry was cancelled. Towards the end of 1950, he stopped driving racing cars competitively.

Raymond Mays and Peter Berthon had fresh ideas and ambitions and in the place of ERA came BRM. British Racing Motors was formed and Mays helped secure financial backing from many leading companies including Joseph Lucas Ltd and Rubery Owen and Co Ltd. New workshops were established at Bourne, close to Eastgate House, on the site of the former gas works. As engine testing did not make the company popular with neighbours, further facilities were established at the old Folkingham Airfield, out in the countryside to the north of the town. It was at Folkingham on 15 December 1949 that Raymond Mays unveiled the new V16 BRM declaring it to be a "world beater". The car is well known for its marvellous sound, but its raw power took some handling. One world-class driver who did get to grips with the V16 was Argentinian ace Juan Manuel Fangio who managed to lap the Folkingham test track faster than anyone had managed before.

In 1952, Sir Alfred Owen, of the Owen Organisation, took over BRM, and, under the stewardship of the West Midlands industrial giants, steady progress was made with some better-balanced car designs. Even so, after a decade, Sir Alfred declared that if the BRMs did not prove more successful, the company's days would be numbered. Fortunately, 1962 was to prove to be BRM's big year, when a small company from rural Lincolnshire showed it could win the Formula One World Championship. It was a close-run thing, with just a small margin between BRM and Graham Chapman's Lotus team from the Norfolk village of Hethel.

Not only was BRM the winning World Championship construction team but main driver, Graham Hill, was crowned top driver – a double cause for celebration.

The BRM staff at Bourne in 1965 totalled just over 100 (a fraction of the numbers employed by today's Formula One teams) and the town took great pride in them. I knew several friends' dads, an uncle and neighbours who worked for BRM. Mays's ambition had been realised – a British championship car built in Britain using homebuilt skills and parts.

BRM would achieve further great victories and some impressive close misses, but 1962 proved to be the only championship-winning season. The fact BRM would not step away from producing all-British cars at a time when rivals such as Lotus were making the most of new developments from the likes of Cosworth engines from Ford, saw a struggle to compete. The final Grand Prix victory for BRM came in 1972 when, on 14 May, Jean-Pierre Beltoise led from start to finish at Monaco in the rain in his P160B.

The official name of the team 1954-1971 was the Owen Racing Organisation with Berthon and Mays still hands-on until the team was handed over to Louis Stanley, the husband of Sir Alfred's sister Jean Owen. The Owen Organisation ended its support of the team and Louis Stanley ran a low-key outfit called Stanley-BRM until 1977 when the end finally came. Raymond Mays had retired

from BRM by 1975, but that didn't stop his pals pestering him for passes.

Away from the track, Mays' own garage business – Raymond Mays and Partners – opposite the BRM works in Spalding Road, Bourne opened in June 1952. Members of The Archers radio series were in attendance together with dignitaries from Ford's Dagenham plant. There was another branch established at Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. The Bourne garage was sold off and eventually the site became part of a large housing development.

Mays was also involved in the production and sale of tuning parts packages in the 1950s and 1960s, primarily designed to make UK production Ford four- and six-cylinder cars go faster – still a sought-after tuning system if you can find one. Mays was awarded the CBE for his services to motor racing in 1978. Away from the sport, he was a great fan of musicals as can be gauged by his choice of eight gramophone records when he appeared on Roy Plomley's Desert Island Discs radio programme, first broadcast on 25 October 1969. He invited his friends from the shows to visit him at Eastgate House, including US stars Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyon.

Raymond Mays died at Eastgate House on 6 January 1980. Aged 81, he had debts of £150,000 with the house and remains of the family estate being sold to help pay them off.

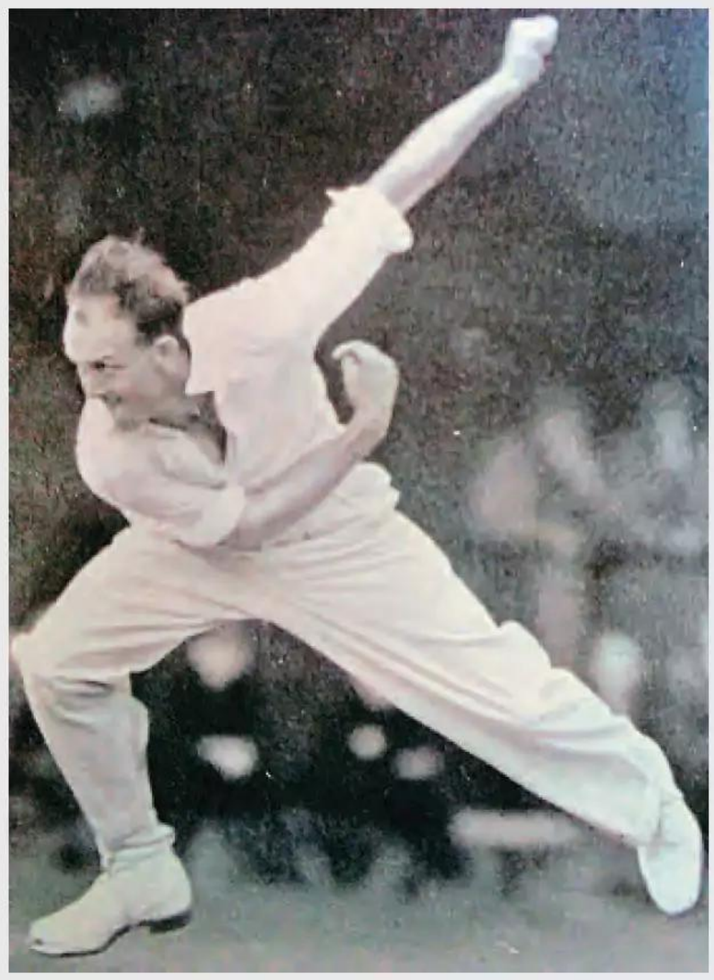
A funeral service was held at Bourne's Abbey Church, followed by private cremation at Grantham. There was no memorial in Bourne for several years but, since 2003, there has been a fine memorial in South Street, close to the Bourne Heritage Centre (01778 422775, bournetown.co.uk), that contains a magnificent display of Mays memorabilia. The museum has limited opening at weekends and bank holidays.

An informative plaque about Mays is displayed outside Eastgate House, while JD Wetherspoon opened a pub named after him in the town in 2022. Twenty years earlier, a new road was named Raymond Mays Way. He would doubtless have enjoyed driving one of his cherished cars along there – at speed.

Recommended further reading: Split Seconds – My Racing Years by Raymond Mays, edited by Dennis May.

Typhoon Tyson Down Under

Colin Allan recalls how Frank "Typhoon" Tyson destroyed Australia's batting in the 1954/5 winter Ashes series



"Truly fast bowling carries with it a sensation of pleasure. From a shuffling slow start, the stride quickens. Two yards from the wicket now and time to give it everything you've got." So wrote English fast bowler Frank "Typhoon" Tyson in his autobiography, A Typhoon Called Tyson. And he would know for Tyson was probably England's fastest-ever bowler, certainly the quickest of his generation. The speed and accuracy of his deliveries were a decisive factor in England's Ashes series triumph over Australia in the winter of 1954/5. The MCC (as England's touring party were still called in those days) had beaten the Aussies for the first time down under in 25 years.

Frank Tyson had not, at first, liked his nickname which the press had given him as typhoons were more associated with countries such as China and Japan than cricket-playing nations. However, he came to accept it as a mark of his undoubted ability. The moniker certainly summed up his sensational performances in Australia, especially in the second and third Tests. For it was in the Ashes series of 1954/5 that Tyson reached the height of his powers. The flat, hard surfaces of Australian pitches were ideally suited to his fast bowling.

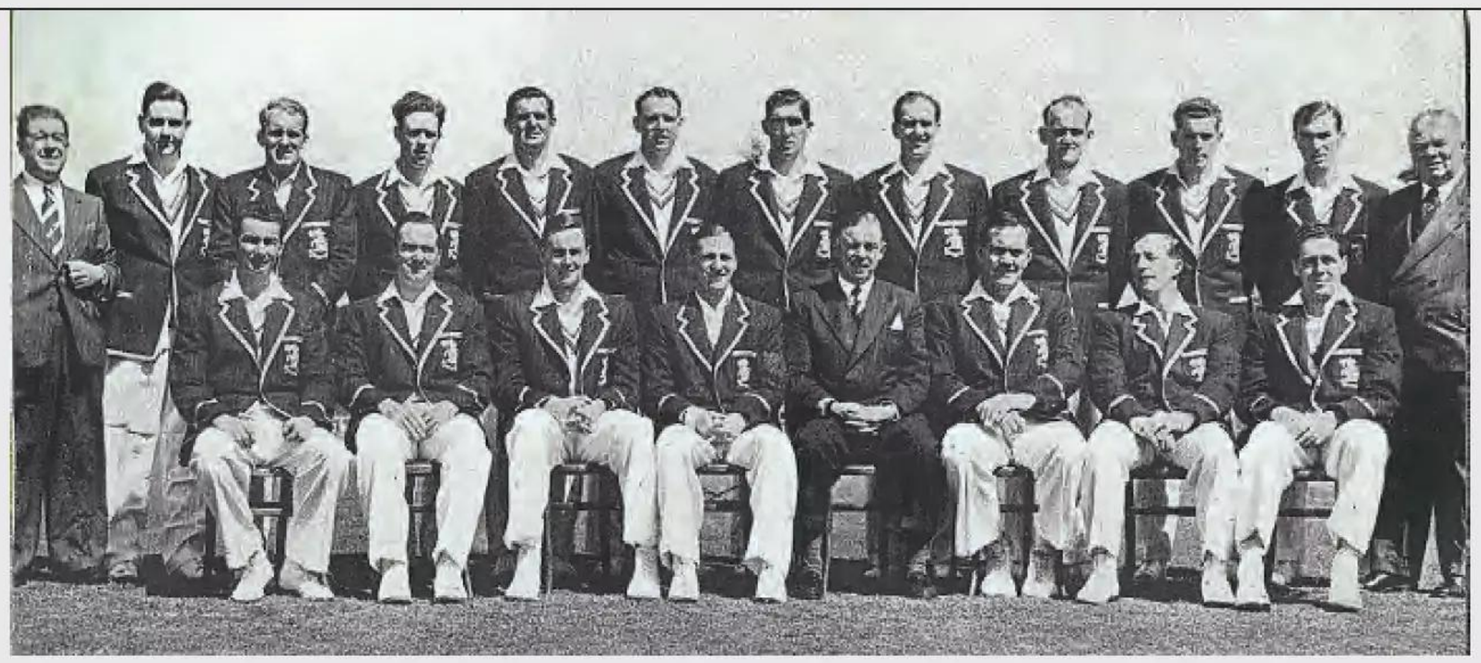
However, the first Test in Brisbane (26 November-1 December 1954) gave no indication that England would take home the Ashes. The home side scored a formidable total of 601 for eight declared. England could only muster scores of 190 and 257 to suffer an ignominious 154-run defeat. Tyson, himself, laboured under the strain of a 38-yard run-up. His 29 overs resulted in figures of only one wicket for 160 runs.

Thankfully, for the MCC, it was a far different picture in the second Test held in Sydney (17-22 December 1954). It had been England's captain, the legendary batsman Len Hutton, who had first questioned Tyson about his long run-up. This had been during Tyson's test debut against Pakistan at the Oval in 1954. All Hutton had said was: "Don't you ever bowl off a shorter run, Frank?" The skipper let the matter rest at that but it had got Tyson thinking. After the Brisbane Test, Frank Tyson realised he must try a shorter run, especially considering the unforgiving heat in Australia.

England's first innings was again uninspiring as they limped to 154 all out. When Tyson started to bowl, he was so anxious to succeed that some of his first deliveries were wild but eventually he found his confidence returning: "The shorter run [of 18-20 yards] was becoming more settled and I felt the rhythm returning, mounting to a crescendo as I crashed the ball down as fast as I could."

The cricket correspondent of the Times described Tyson's first wicket quite graphically: "Neil Harvey received

Top: Frank "Typhoon" Tyson was the quickest bowler of his generation.



The MCC touring party including, standing: Colin Cowdrey (second left), Brian Statham (fourth left) and Frank Tyson (ninth left); seated: Godfrey Evans (second left), Peter May (third left), Len Hutton (fourth left) and Bill Edrich (seventh left).

a beast of a ball from Tyson which spat up at him and splashed off his bat for Colin Cowdrey to catch." Tyson took a further three wickets to finish with a highly respectable haul of four for 45. However, Australia reached a total of 228, a first-innings lead of 74.

Thankfully, England's batters came to the rescue in their second innings. Eventually, it was Frank Tyson's turn to bat. There then occurred a most unfortunate incident. On trying to duck from a short delivery by fiery fast bowler Ray Lindwall, Tyson turned his back on the bowler. He described the event in his book as follows: "Never again will I turn my back on a fast bowler. The ball struck me on the back of the skull, and I sank to the earth only dimly conscious of the ambulancemen and of being helped off the field."

England's innings finished on 296 so Australia needed 223 runs to win the game. But they reckoned without a determined Frank Tyson: "I was so sore that I swore they would not win." The final day started with Australia's opening batsmen Jim Burke and Neil Harvey determined to make a solid start but Tyson had recovered from his head blow and was firing on all cylinders: "I flung every effort into my bowling, and in the second over sneaked a very fast yorker [a ball that lands at the batsman's feet and is very difficult to fend off] beneath Burke's bat."

Graeme Hole was the next batsman to succumb to Tyson's wrath. Another Tyson yorker forced its way under the Aussie's bat to shatter his stumps. Tyson's next contribution to victory was in the field. Richie Benaud attempted to score off a slower delivery but the ball hit the top of his bat and soared towards a distant Tyson: "The freshening wind caught the ball and caused me to misjudge it. I completed my effort on one knee, the ball clutched in my hands three feet from my body and inches from the turf."

Next on Tyson's radar was the man who had bowled him that vicious bouncer, Ray Lindwall. Tyson resisted the urge to bowl a short delivery and Lindwall missed a full ball to be bowled while trying to stroke a half-volley. Australia were now down to their lower order but the tailenders were slowly edging towards the required total. Both England's fast bowlers – Brian Statham and Tyson – were visibly tiring.

Tyson summoned up his last dregs of energy as he sprinted towards batsman Bill Johnston. The Aussie tried to club the ball to the boundary but this time it took an edge. Wicketkeeper Godfrey Evans took the catch as all the English fielders rose in elation. Tyson wrote that his shout was not of triumph but of relief. England had won by 38 runs to level the series. Frank Tyson returned figures of six for 85. He had taken an astonishing 10 wickets in the match.

Yet the third Test in Melbourne provided his greatest day of bowling. It was during Australia's second innings on 5 January 1955. England scored a modest 191 in their first innings and Australia replied with 231. With Peter May top-scoring on 91, England produced the worthy total of 279 in their second innings, meaning Australia needed 240 to win.

By the end of play on 4 January, Australia needed 165 to win with eight wickets still standing. The odds seemed heavily in their favour. A crowd of 60,000 arrived expecting play to last at least until teatime and, no doubt, to witness a home victory. As it happened, the match was over 20 minutes before lunch. Frank Tyson was the man behind Australia's dramatic collapse.

With his seventh ball of the day, he had Neil Harvey caught behind by Godfrey Evans. The wicketkeeper made a prodigious leap to his left to bring off a spectacular catch. Tyson saw it as the turning point of the game. In his second over of the day, Tyson actually bowled a poor one, but luck was on his side. Richie Benaud swung wildly at it and merely succeeded in deflecting the ball on to his stumps. Keith Miller was the next Australian in Tyson's sights. He was to receive what Frank Tyson thought was the fastest ball he had ever bowled. Miller slashed at it, and it seemed to be sailing over the close fielders, but skipper Len Hutton got a hand to it and pushed it upwards. Team-mate Bill Edrich jumped for it behind Hutton's back and Miller was out. In fact, half the Australians were out for just 87.

Tyson had Len Maddocks bowled with a yorker after Statham had Hole caught behind by Evans. Two balls later, Tyson trapped Lindwall on his crease to be adjudged leg before wicket. Frank Tyson could hardly believe his form: "I was bowling in a daze. This was not happening to me. It was as if I was watching another bowler. Never before had I bowled like this, I was making the ball swing, in Australia."

With Ken Archer falling to a Statham yorker, it was 110 for nine. One run later, it was all over. The "Typhoon" had his last victim. Bill Johnston was caught by Evans when he wafted at another ferociously fast delivery. Amazingly, Tyson finished with bowling figures of seven for 27. It was certainly a red-letter day for Frank Tyson on 5 January and one that will be remembered whenever Ashes series are recalled. England went on to win the fourth Test, and the series 3-1, in Adelaide (28 January-2 February 1955) and the fifth Test in Sydney was drawn due to rain delays.

Of course, cricket is a team game and Frank Tyson would be the first to acknowledge his part in the series was backed up by fine performances from all his teammates. In fact, he was quick to praise the efforts of his fast-bowling partner, Brian Statham. He wrote that fast bowlers hunt in pairs. Statham had been unlucky in not claiming more wickets as he bowled consistently well throughout the series. When batsmen face two really fast bowlers, their concentration needs to be constant. This leads to pressure and, inevitably, to wickets.

In 1960, Frank Tyson emigrated to Australia. He had married an Australian and wanted to bring up his children down under. He became a schoolteacher, journalist, cricket coach and broadcaster in Melbourne before retiring to Australia's Gold Coast. There, he always loved waking up to the sun. Yet, in truth, he had already had his "day in the sun" – 5 January 1955 in Melbourne.

Aus-tenacious

Claire Saul looks ahead to a few of this year's events celebrating the 250th anniversary of the birth of our greatest female novelist

Jane Austen's name appears in any given poll of Britain's greatest literary talent, in the hallowed company of the likes of William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens. This year, we will be hearing more than usual about this globally recognised author, whose novels have been published in more than 40 languages, for 2025 marks the 250th anniversary of her birth on 16 December 1775. The celebrations of this happy event will be held throughout this year and across the country, but particularly in the counties most closely associated with her.

The Hampshire village of Steventon was home to Jane for the first 25 years of her life. There at the rectory lived Mr George and Mrs Cassandra Austen, their six sons and two daughters, plus pupils who were being tutored by George. Sadly, the building is long since demolished but in Pump Field, in which it once stood, there will be a country fair on 6 July, part of a programme of village celebrations starting on 8 June with a concert of words and music at St Nicholas Church and ending with a service of thanksgiving on the anniversary of Jane's birth.

The church is one with which not only Jane would have been familiar, but also generations of her family: members of the Austen family were rectors of Steventon for more than a century. Jane and four of her siblings were baptised at St Nicholas Church and multiple family members and acquaintances were laid to rest there.

Jane was homeschooled, bar 18 months from the spring of 1785, when she and her sister Cassandra boarded at the reputed Reading Abbey Girls' School located at the historic Abbey Gateway. It is thought her experiences of the school inspired Mrs Goddard's School in Emma, which she describes as a place where "a reasonable quantity of accomplishments were sold at a reasonable price." In May, Reading Abbey Quarter will begin a series of activities to celebrate the anniversary of her birth, including talks and special events.

Tours and other activities are also scheduled at the Vyne in north Hampshire, which Jane knew well; the property's Chute owners were good friends of Jane's brother James, who was rector of the local parish. One biographer speculates that eligible bachelor William Chute's search for a wife might have sparked the narrative we enjoy in the early chapters of Pride and Prejudice. Also, that a young girl adopted and raised at the Vyne might have inspired the character of Fanny Price in Mansfield Park. Head towards Netley Abbey, near Southampton, to see the magnificent ruins which are thought to have been behind Jane's notion of Northanger Abbey.

Bath is the setting for many events in Austen's novels and it was a city she knew well herself, having lived and written there after her father's retirement. Realise Jane and her characters' experience of the Regency era at the Jane Austen Centre, which

Top: A young visitor to Jane Austen's House at Chawton, near Alton, Hampshire.

Photographs: (Young visitor) Rob Stothard for Jane Austen's House, (Winchester Cathedral) Joe Low, (Statue) Steve Russell Studios, (Netley Abbey) English Heritage

Left: A specially commissioned sculpture of Jane and her writing desk, by Martin Jennings, will be unveiled at Winchester Cathedral, close to the route of her funeral procession. Right: Winchester Cathedral visitors at the memorial stone in the north nave aisle which makes no mention of Janes novels, but praises "the extraordinary endowment of her mind".

offers food tasting, dressing up and writing with a quill and ink as part of the experience. You can even have a selfie with her waxwork, developed from a sketch by Cassandra and contemporary descriptions of Jane's appearance. The 24th annual Jane Austen Festival this September offers a 10-day programme which includes costumed promenades through the city, guided walks, costumed balls and more.

Until the end of February, the portable writing desk given to Jane by her father on her 19th birthday is on display at God's House Tower in Southampton, the city where she and her family lived after George's death. The item is on loan from the British Museum and is the centrepiece of the exhibition In Training for a Heroine, Jane Austen's Travelling Writing Desk which celebrates her connections to the city. Keen walkers can also follow the Jane Austen Heritage Walking Trail Map, which identifies eight key locations of interest, each marked by a plaque explaining the novelist's Southampton story.

For the last eight years of her life, Jane lived in a property on the Chawton House estate, with her widowed mother, sister and a family friend, back in her home county of Hampshire near Alton. Here she wrote or revised her six most famous works. The 250th anniversary celebrations at what is now called Jane Austen's House run throughout the year, combining with regular activities such as musical events, sewing circles, creative writing workshops and online activities to offer a varied and busy programme. There are 16 events listed for this month alone. One of the property's most treasured exhibits enjoyed by visitors is the dining room table at which she sat to write.

Ill health brought Jane to Winchester in May 1817, where she sought specialised medical treatment. She died at her lodgings there within two months and was buried at Winchester Cathedral, a building she greatly admired, where her memorial stone in the north nave aisle famously makes no mention of her novels, but praises "the extraordinary endowment of her mind". The cathedral has a programme of events planned for 2025 but key among them will be the unveiling of a specially commissioned sculpture in the cathedral surrounds, close to the route of her funeral procession.

We can only imagine the extended portfolio of books we would be enjoying today had death not snatched this supremely talented woman away at the age of just 41. But through Jane Austen 250 events, and by visiting the sites that inspired her and those which are featured in the many dramatic interpretations of her famed works, we can celebrate those precious 41 years in 2025.

Head towards Netley Abbey, near Southampton, to see the magnificent ruins which are thought to have been behind Jane's notion of Northanger Abbey.

Find Out More

God's House Tower: God's House Tower, Town Quay Road, Southampton SO14 2NY (07824 326005, godshousetower.org.uk)
The Jane Austen Centre and the annual Jane Austen Festival: The Jane Austen Centre, 40 Gay Street, Bath BA1 2NT (janeausten.co.uk)
Jane Austen's House: Jane Austen's House, Chawton, Alton GU34 1SD (01420 83262, janeaustens.house)
Netley Abbey: Abbey Hill, Netley, Southampton SO31 5FB (english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/netley-abbey/)
Reading Abbey Quarter: Reading Museum, Blagrave Street, Reading RG1 1QH (0118 937 3400, readingmuseum.org.uk/jane-austen-250-2025)
Steventon: Steventon Village, Basingstoke, Hampshire (steventonhants.org.uk/jane-austen/)
The Vyne: The Vyne, Sherborne St John, Basingstoke RG24 9HL (01256 883858, nationaltrust.org.uk/the-vyne/)
Winchester Cathedral: Winchester Cathedral, Winchester SO23 9LS (01962 857200, winchester-cathedral.org.uk)

BEST OF BRITISH
puzzle page

Twenty Questions

How well do you know Britain – Past and Present? Test your knowledge with our January quiz

1. First broadcast on 5 January 1970, who was the original host of A Question of Sport?
2. Who, alongside Julia Smith, created EastEnders?
3. Who played the title roles in The Chief, Judge John Deed and Inspector George Gently?
4. By what name was author Eric Arthur Blair, who died on 21 January 1950, better known?
5. Who was principal conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic from 2002 to 2018?
6. Which aeronautical engineer wrote novels including On the Beach and A Town Like Alice?
7. Who played the title character in Bramwell and is Kate Lethbridge-Stewart in Doctor Who?
8. Who was commander-in-chief of RAF Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain?
9. Who was appointed manager of Nottingham Forest in January 1975?
10. What film attracted 23.5 million viewers when it premiered on ITV on 20 January 1980, making it the most viewed film on television?
11. Who played Paul McCartney's fictional grandfather in the film A Hard Day's Night?
12. Which Rowan Atkinson character made his television debut on 1 January 1990?
13. Who starred as Eric Liddell in the 1981 film Chariots of Fire?
14. Who founded Jersey Zoo?
15. Who presented his "Odd Odes" on That's Life!?
16. Which Carry On actress played Betty Lewis in the sitcom Bless This House?
17. Who was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for Hamlet and won a Golden Globe Award for Best Actress for Guys and Dolls?
18. Who, on 26 January 2015, was the first woman to be ordained as a bishop in the Church of England?
19. Who played footman Edward Barnes in Upstairs, Downstairs, and Billy Henshaw in the sitcom In Loving Memory?
20. Who was the original host of BBC Radio 4's Just a Minute?

And I quote…

Who, "with all his idiosyncrasies, his indulgences, his occasional childishness, but also his genius, his tenacity and his persistent ability, right or wrong, successful or unsuccessful, to be larger than life," was, according to Roy Jenkins, "the greatest human being ever to occupy 10 Downing Street?"

Dialect Detective

Britain has many wonderful regional dialects. Can you spot the correct definition for each of these examples?

1. Swack *(Norfolk)*
a) A hard blow
b) A tail or rump
c) A peapod

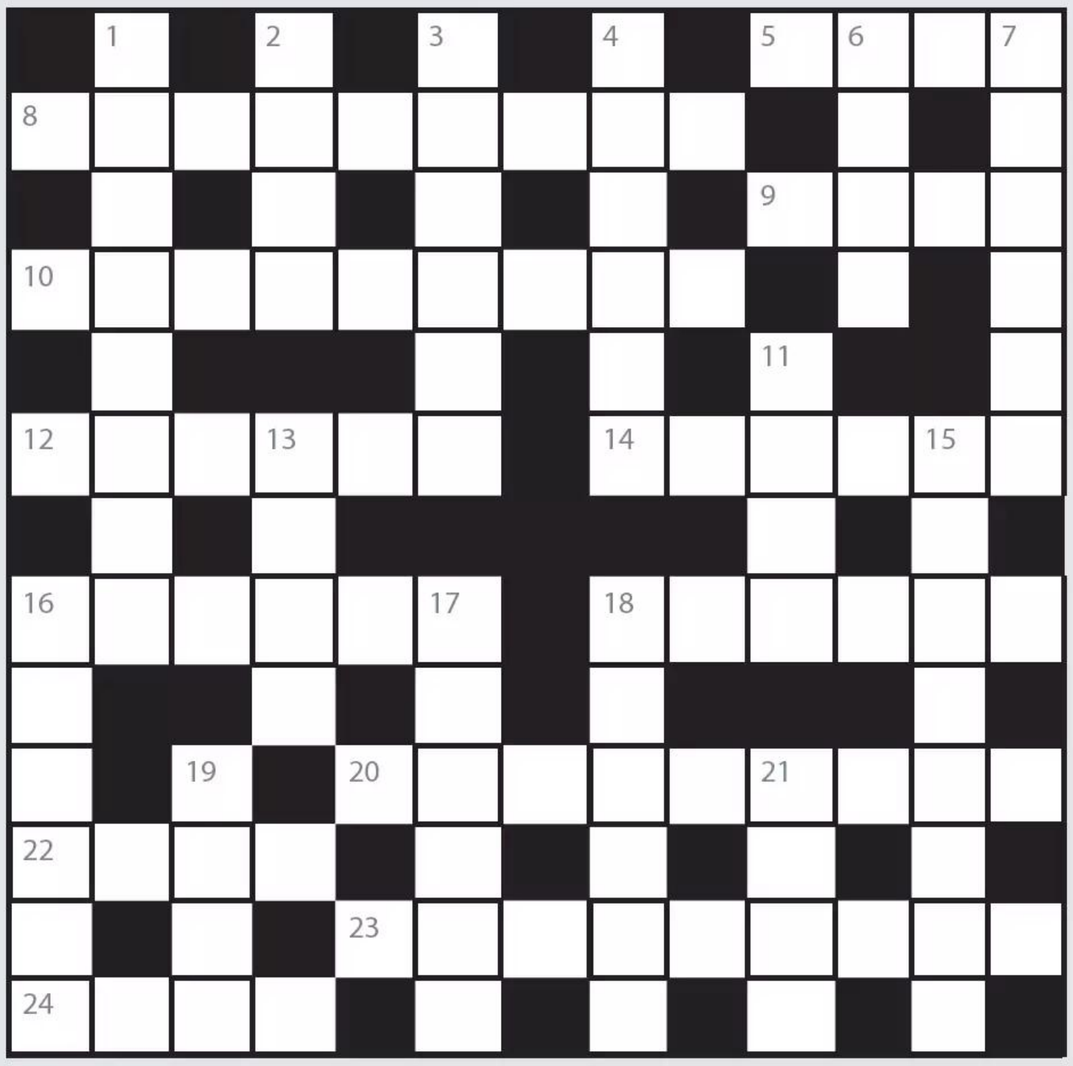
2. Chopper *(Hampshire)*
a) A clergyman
b) A small log
c) A cheek of bacon

3. Nill *(Somerset)*
a) A needle
b) A small blow
c) A short meal

4. Vorad *(Somerset)*
a) Forward
b) To indulge
c) The yew tree

Cryptic Crossword

Compiled by CADOC



Across

5. .... the lad, so to speak, who climbed a 10 Across to meet a larger-than-life chap (4)
8 and 22 Across. Girls found in pantomimes strangely enough (9,4)
9. Miss Collins initially just overpowers actors naturally (4)
10. Chat after Heinz products reveals climbing frame in pantomime (9)
12. But Freddy Trueman's hat wasn't one (6)
14. An "everything found" experience in the main for Tom (6)
16. My old comics also had Heinz products – with nothing in them (6)
18. Del Boy's stooge gets strewn yonder (6)
20. Explosives – absolutely terrible? What a surprise (9)
22. See 8 Across
23. Chuck eats pastry – how frightening (9)
24. Actor Oliver sounds like actress Beryl (4)

Down

1. Horrible – sounds like what a 10 Across did, vegetable-wise (8)
2. Soon to find unknown writer (4)
3. "In the bleak mid- . . . . . " (Christina Rossetti) (6)
4. Language used by Celts when fifty-one trapped in awful cage (6)
6. I feel all right - but appear out of control running this (4)
7. Does listening to this light a flame? (6)
11, 13 and 19 Down. Times past, Lena lands guy in trouble (4,4,4)
13. See 11 Down
15. Let's hand out part of Scotland (8)
16. Did jazzman Chris make my hair curl? (6)
17. After 3 Down these jolly good people get skiing etc (6)
18. Burns, say, or back right into hazard (6)
19. See 11 Down
21. After half of 18 Across he had trouble with an emu (4)

What is it?

Sharpen up and hit your target.

The solutions to this month's puzzles are on page 72

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WHAT OUR READERS SAY ABOUT *BEST OF BRITISH*

★★★★★

Excellent variety of nostalgia, information and illustrations – my favourite magazine in fact.
MR C KENNETT, DUNSTABLE

★★★★★

The range of topics covered in the magazine never ceases to amaze me. Keep it up.
PETER J GASKIN, IPSWICH

★★★★★

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RAY GRIFFITHS, GRIMSBY

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THE UK's TOP NOSTALGIA MONTHLY

BEST OF BRITISH

PAST AND PRESENT

SIMON STABLER, EDITOR

Best of British is the UK's premier nostalgia magazine, covering every aspect of life from the 1930s to today. Packed with features that celebrate classic entertainment, transport, food and drink, and more, not to mention Postbag and the Yesterday Remembered memoir section, a subscription to Best of British is always going to be great value.

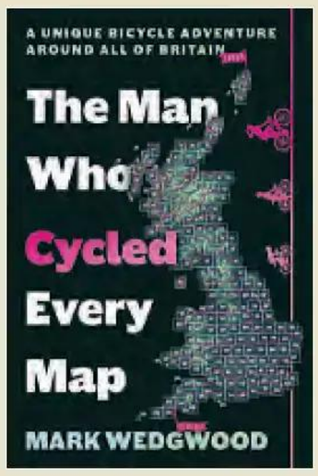
WHY YOU SHOULD READ BEST OF BRITISH EVERY MONTH

» Interviews with the stars of classic TV, film and music » A lively Postbag and Yesterday Remembered section » Images and memories from The Francis Frith Collection » Plan great days out with Postcard from... and Out & About » Guess the values of our Treasures in the Attic » A trip down memory lane

Bookshelf

David Brown checks out the latest releases

BOOK OF THE MONTH



The Man Who Cycled Every Map

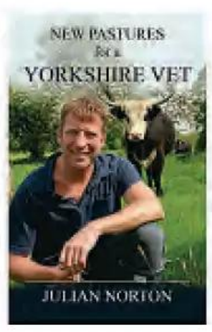
By Mark Wedgwood, The Book Guild Ltd, paperback, £15.99

You know those pink-edged Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale maps, the Landranger series? Well, Mark Wedgwood knows them better than most. The global pandemic has been responsible for many unexpected adventures as people were given the gift of time. While some looked to the exotic, Mark studied his collection of Landranger maps and began planning a mega cycle ride of all the maps in numerical order – from No 1 Shetland to No 204 Truro and Falmouth – that would cover 7,306 miles, requiring around six months of cycling.

Among the practicalities he had to consider was the fact that if he achieved one coast-to-coast trip, he and his bike would need to get back to the other side of the country again for the next leg – preferably not cycling back. Accommodation would be required, and he would want to see his family. Over the winter months of 2021, much planning was required but there were still many questions buzzing around inside our intrepid adventurer's head.

Mark's wife joined him for the first part of the trip – maps one, two, three and four – to visit Shetland and Orkney for the first time. It took them three days by bike, ferry and train to go north to get there. On his journey, there were scenic parts to enjoy, more mundane areas to endure, very different people along the way, bike and personal maintenance to consider. Plus, the changing weather.

The scope of Mark's trip is mind-blowing. I'm grateful he made the trip, and his book is full of character and discoveries about modern Britain. That said, the next time I plan to visit Aldeburgh in Suffolk, I won't be starting from the Welsh coast.



New Pastures for a Yorkshire Vet

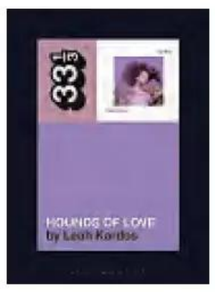
By Julian Norton, Great Northern Books, hardback, £14.99

When we last left Julian Norton in Ruminations of a Yorkshire Vet, he reflected on a period of almost three years working as an assistant in the market town of Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire but fresh adventures and challenges awaited him. He discovered that a once-thriving vet practice in Wetherby, West Yorkshire had suddenly closed its doors, leaving an opportunity in an area covering lower Wharfedale, Leeds and beyond. Visiting the deserted practice, which had not worked out under ownership of a large conglomerate, Julian discovered that the small, modern unit did indeed look as if it had suddenly been abandoned. It had a good car park and was well positioned for access via major trunk routes in the area. He was hooked on its possibilities as a branch surgery.

Details were examined, paperwork signed, and, in November 2019, Sandbeck Veterinary Centre opened – open your doors and the people and their animals will come. Hopefully.

Julian believes that three happy patients with relieved owners is enough to make for a rewarding day and his first day was made even better by learning a new "trick" from a colleague while treating Amy, a Labrador with a problematic jaw. Post-op, Amy came round tumour-free and soon began to wag her tail again. Success.

The appeal of this book is a series of readable, brief stories featuring animals from small pets to large agricultural beasts – all originally published in the Yorkshire Post. Never a dull moment.



Hounds of Love

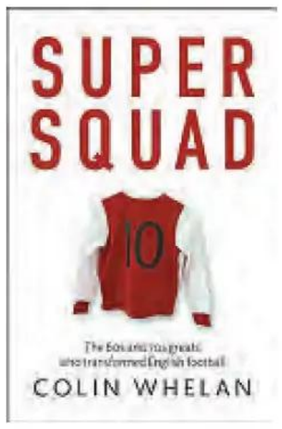
By Leah Kardos, Bloomsbury Academic, paperback, £9.99

There are now more than 200 streamline editions in the 33⅓ imprint of pocket volumes, each dedicated to a classic album with lots more on the way. Senior music lecturer Leah Kardos explores exactly what was so special about Kate Bush's fifth album, its groundbreaking songs and the artist's capability at taking control in terms of producing her own style of music so succinctly.

It shows great faith on behalf of her recording company, EMI, after what they regarded as disappointing sales of her fourth album, The Dreaming. You might have thought they'd consider bringing in a big-name producer to weave some magic, but no, the artist herself was given full artistic freedom to show what she could do. She was given time to develop the songs at her home studio at East Wickham Farm in Welling, The result was a triumph.

Released on 16 September 1985, the single Running Up That Hill (A Deal with God) had been released the previous month and was already proving popular with airplay and sales. As albums go, there were no less than four hit singles on the first side of the album: Running Up That Hill, Cloudbusting, Hounds of Love and The Big Sky. The second side represented a different concept, offering two distinct aspects of her art.

In the 21st century, there was not one, but two, revivals of that lead single. A remix of Running Up That Hill was broadcast during the closing ceremony of the 2012 Summer Olympics and the song re-entered the UK singles chart, making it to No 6. A decade later, in June 2022, Running Up That Hill reached No 1 in the UK singles chart after the song appeared in the Netflix series Stranger Things.



Super Squad: The 60s and 70s Greats who Transformed English Football
By Colin Whelan, Troubador Publishing, paperback, £9.99

Football on the television was not a big thing in my family home, apart from the silence that was to be observed while Dad checked his pools coupon against the results. Round at my friend's house on a Saturday afternoon was a different matter: at least four of us in a semi-circle around a modest black and white set with snacks and drinks to keep us refreshed. That, indeed, was how the 1966 World Cup Final was watched and celebrated.

My friends were a little older than me and talked about the likes of Danny Blanchflower and Jimmy Greaves as if they were personal mates. I lapped up all their insider knowledge on these magic players from a time when it really was a different game. Later in life, I would have the privilege of helping Bobby Moore with his Saturday afternoon match reports for a Sunday national. He was at the match, while I toiled against the clock to meet a tight deadline.

I would choose Moore as the captain of my team, but I'm happy to follow the advice of Colin Whelan – part-time civil servant and full-time classic football fan – with his impressive 23-man squad including the Charlton brothers, Kenny Dalglish, George Best and Peter Osgood.

You don't need to be a dyed-in-the-wool football fan to enjoy reading about the chosen players of Colin's dream team. The facts and figures are all here, but so are some great details of the players themselves that make all the difference.

Space: From Sputnik to the International Space Station
By Jan van der Veken, Prestel, hardback, £19.99

Having lapped up the salt-tinged pages of Jan van der Veken's colourful book Boats, strap yourself in for a voyage into space from the early but very important steps to modern complexities that are turning dreams into reality. Where better to start than describing and illustrating the parts of a rocket, clearly showing what does what and how it works. Having got your rocket with all that power, you need to know how to control it.

It might look out of date now, but when the Soviet Union launched the first satellite into orbit, Sputnik, a small beeping sphere, it had people out with their binoculars hoping for a glimpse of it across the night sky. You'd perhaps have done better to visit the 1958 Brussels World's Fair in Belgium where a replica Sputnik was displayed. Back then, the cold war was big news and a race to put man on the moon escalated between the US and the USSR. Being able to determine where satellites are provides the basis for today's GPS technology.

How a man got put on the moon (and how they got back), the shuttle era and space station realities are covered in informative sections – and what about extraterrestrial life – are we alone? This is another book that is simply a pleasure to own, which will delight readers of all ages. To complete the trio of volumes by Jan van der Veken, originally published in the Netherlands, the very first book, Planes, is also available.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Rheingans Sisters: Start Close In
CD, (rheinganssisters.co.uk), RSC005t

Having seen sisters Rowan and Anna Rheingans perform much of the music from their latest album, Start Close In, in front of a live audience, it is at times difficult to realise the two sisters are producing all the sounds you are experiencing. With drones ancient and modern, mixed with string and wind instruments, their sound defines a modern approach to folk music, taking in influences from home and abroad.

Rowan lives in their native Derbyshire, Anna in France and they are never happier than when exploring and performing social song and dance elements, sharing their interpretations with their followers. When Rowan plays the electric guitar, a further magic ingredient is realised.

The album starts with a traditional tour de force, Devils, an interpretation of The Devil and the Farmer's Wife, one of those dark, stormy night tales where the choice of female proves to be a challenging one even for Satan. The complex levels within this track contrasts with shorter, straighter readings of French love songs and Swedish dance tunes that combine to form a satisfying programme of light and darker moods.

Joining them on the album are Daniel Thorne with some splendid saxophone passages, such as on Un Voltigeur, and Adam Pietrykowski on organ. Adam, whose production skills cover rock and classical elements, produced the album with the sisters, that was recorded at Giant Wafer Studios near Llandrindod Wells during January 2024.

Lords of the Manor: The Lost History of Caludon Castle
Documentary, YouTube (youtu.be/EqHvmgE-SjI)

It is amazing what you can find to watch on YouTube these days, from short music clips to full-length feature films. It is also a great place for documentary programmes including archive footage and areas of contemporary research. A recent addition is a 45-minute programme examining the lost history of Caludon Castle, the remains of which can be found at Wyken on the outskirts of Coventry.

Situated within the 20-acre Caludon Park, the castle remnants feature a ruin with a red sandstone wall, representing the former Great Chambers, that survives above the existing dry moat. The castle was built in the early 14th century and was owned by some of the most powerful families in the country. There were connections with royalty and William Shakespeare.

The film was based on the book A History of Caludon Castle – The Lords of the Manor of Caludon Castle, published in 2014 by John Clarke, incorporating his deep, lifelong research into the subject, and edited by George Demidowicz. This new documentary film focuses on the rise and decline in the castle's fortunes and was written and directed by local film-maker Mark Ellis, who has produced a very watchable account of an overlooked aspect of local history.

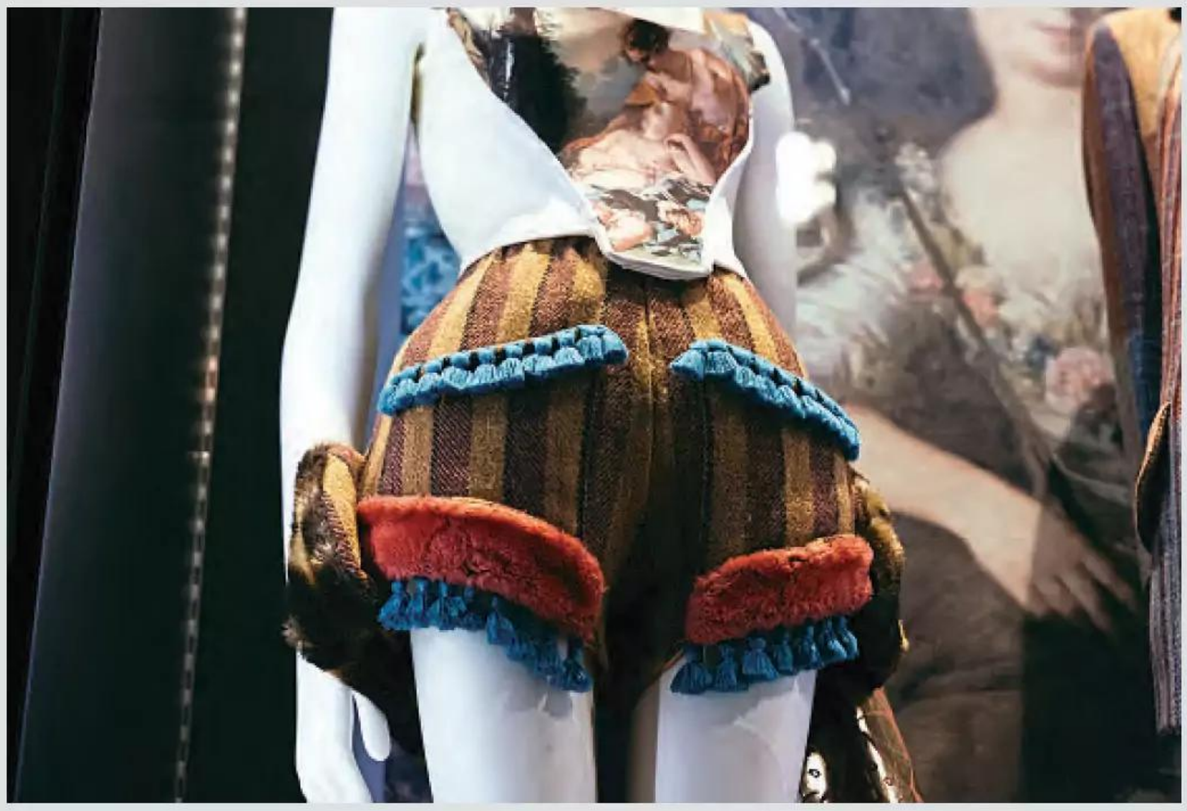
OUT&ABOUT

Places to go, people to see

Framing Fashion

An exhibition featuring some of Dame Vivienne Westwood's most recognisable creations has opened at the Bowes Museum in County Durham. Running until 2 March, Framing Fashion: Art and Inspiration from a Private Collection of Vivienne Westwood features a new selection of the late designer's ensembles from the private collection of Peter Smithson. Items from one of her richest and most recognisable collections, Portrait (autumn/winter 1990/1991), will be displayed alongside others exploring Dame Vivienne's inspiration from classical and medieval art, 18th century portraits and pastoral scenes as well as other art forms. To provide an insight into the construction of some of the signature designs featured in the exhibition, the Fashion Department at Northumbria University have created digital reconstructions of Dame Vivienne's painter's smock and Stature of Liberty corset which will be shown on a screen close to the garments represented.

01833 690606, thebowesmuseum.org.uk



A Shepherd print Stature of Liberty corset and Harris Tweed bloomer shorts, taken from Dame Vivienne Westwood's Portrait collection.

Caring Companions

An exhibition exploring the life-changing and life-saving impact animals can have on our lives has opened at the Florence Nightingale Museum, London. Running until autumn, Caring Companions showcases assistance animals, personal stories and case studies, therapy animals, and the science behind it. Throughout history, animals have given people comfort, support, and assistance; some as pets, while others are matched with people to assist in a specific way or to provide support. Widely regarded as the founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale was one of the first advocates for animal therapy. During her lifetime she rescued many animals, most famously a Little Owl named Athena who would follow the nurse everywhere she went. While working at Scutari Hospital during the Crimean War, Nightingale introduced Jimmy the tortoise as a "ward pet" for the wounded soldiers, later writing in her book Notes on Nursing (1860) that "a small pet animal is often an excellent companion".

020 7188 4400, florence-nightingale.co.uk

Florence Nightingale introduced Jimmy the tortoise as a "ward pet" for the wounded soldiers of the Crimean War.

Electric Dreams

Discover how artists used machines and algorithms to create mesmerising and mind-bending art between the 1950s and the early 1990s with a new exhibition at Tate Modern. Running until 1 June, Electric Dreams: Art and Technology Before the Internet celebrates the early innovators of optical, kinetic, programmed and digital art, who pioneered a new era of immersive sensory installations and automatically generated works. Bringing together groundbreaking works by a wide range of international artists, experience the psychedelic environments they created in the 1950s and 60s – using mathematical principles, motorised components and new industrial processes – and see how radical artists embraced the birth of digital technology in the 1970s and 1980s, experimenting with machine-made art and early home computing systems.

020 7887 8888, tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern

AARON #1, Harold Cohen's painting based on drawings generated by his software AARON, an early precursor of today's art-making AIs.

Photographs: (Finding Fashion) Claire Collinson Photography © The Bowes Museum, (AARON #1) Courtesy of Harold Cohen Trust

NOT TO BE MISSED

Stitched: Scotland's Embroidered Art

(Until 18 January)
In an exciting collaboration with the National Trust for Scotland, this exhibition brings together an extraordinary collection of embroidered textiles, many of which are being showcased for the very first time.
Dovecot Studios, 10 Infirmary Street, Edinburgh 0131 550 3660, dovecotstudios.com

Bedazzled

(Until 26 January)
Shining a spotlight on the lasting appeal of beaded and sequinned dresses and their place in fashion history and featuring a range of garments from the 1920s to the 1980s, the exhibition highlights the evolution of style, craftsmanship, and the cultural significance of evening wear over the past century.
Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight Village, Wirral 0151 478 4136, liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/lady-lever-art-gallery

Open: The People's Exhibition

(Until 31 January)
Showcasing artistic talent from across the East Midlands, beginners to seasoned professionals. A variety of artworks, from paintings, to sculpture, textiles and more, celebrates the creativity of the region.
Leicester Museum & Art Gallery, Leicester, Leicestershire 0116 225 4900, leicestermuseums.org/leicester-museum-art-gallery

Churchill in Cartoons: Satirising a Statesman

(Until 23 February)
Marking 150 years since Winston Churchill's birth by uncovering how satirical cartoons influenced public perception during Churchill's lifetime, and how they shape our understanding of his role in history today.
IWM London, Lambeth Road, London 020 7416 5000, iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-london

JMW Turner and Changing Visions of Landscape

(Until 23 February)
Exploring artists' approaches to landscape from the 17th century to the present day. It begins the celebrations for the 250th anniversary of the birth of JMW Turner, one of the most influential artists in the history of western art.
Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery, Norwich, Norfolk 01603 493625, museums.norfolk.gov.uk/norwich-castle

Resilience

(Until 02 November)
An evocative, multi-media exhibition on the resilience of Cornwall's coastal communities past, present and future.
National Maritime Museum Cornwall, Falmouth, Cornwall 01326 313388, nmmc.co.uk

ATTRACTION OF THE MONTH

Nottingham Contemporary

One of the largest contemporary art galleries in the UK, Nottingham Contemporary hosts regular changing exhibitions of international art. Housed in a RIBA Award-winning building, whose design takes inspiration from Nottingham's historic Lace Market, the gallery runs a full programme of events, including talks, film screenings, music and performances. Free drop-in family activities take place every weekend and throughout school holidays.
What to eat: The cafe is operated by Blend, a business which began at Sneinton Market in 2017. Along with their delicious coffee and famous grilled cheese sandwiches, salads, all-day brunch and cake.

Disabled access: An accessible building with lift access on all floors. The accessible toilets include a Changing Places toilet with a changing bed. Large-print versions of exhibition information panels are available in the galleries and other information in large print can be provided on request. Appropriately trained assistance dogs are welcome throughout Nottingham Contemporary. Ear defenders, coloured overlays and magnifiers are available at the reception desk. Hearing loops are fitted in reception and in The Space. Communication cards, a means of visual, or nonverbal, communication, can be downloaded from nottinghamcontemporary.org/visit/access-and-facilities to print at home or save to a portable electronic device.

How to get there: Centrally located in Nottingham city centre, Nottingham Contemporary is a three-minute walk from the Lace Market tram stop (0115 824 6060, thetram.net) and an eight-minute walk from Nottingham railway station (03457 125 678, eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk). The nearest bus stop is Fletcher Gate H1, which is served by Nottingham City Transport green, navy and turquoise lines (0115 950 60 70, nctx.co.uk). The nearest city council public car parks (parking.nottinghamcity.gov.uk) are Lace Market (NG1 1QE) and Broadmarsh (NG1 7FE).

Opening times and admission: Open Tuesday to Saturday, 10am-6pm and Sunday, 11am-5pm, entry is free. Blend is open Monday to Friday, 8.30am-5pm and Saturday and Sunday, 9.30am-5pm. The gift shop is open Monday, 10am-5pm, Tuesday to Saturday, 10am-6pm and Sunday, 11am-5pm.

Nottingham Contemporary, Weekday Cross, Nottingham NG1 2GB (0115 948 9750, nottinghamcontemporary.org).

DIARY DATES

GREAT BRITISH EVENTS

SOUTH WEST OF ENGLAND
Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, Channel Islands

SOUTH EAST OF ENGLAND AND LONDON
Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Surrey, Sussex, Isle of Wight

WEST OF ENGLAND
Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire

EAST OF ENGLAND
Cambridgeshire, Essex, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk

MIDLANDS
Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland, Staffordshire, Warwickshire

NORTH OF ENGLAND
Cheshire, County Durham, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire, Isle of Man

WALES

SCOTLAND

NORTHERN IRELAND

SOUTH WEST OF ENGLAND

01 NEW YEAR'S DAY CHARITY DAY

Take a pleasant gentle stroll through the gardens on this special day raising funds for a chosen charity.
The Lost Gardens of Heligan, St Austell, Cornwall
01726 845100, heligan.com

03-05 WINTER STEAM GALA

A final steam fix of the season, with on-train catering and heated heritage carriages, featuring visiting locomotives, freight trains, auto trains, and double heading.
South Devon Railway, Buckfastleigh, Devon
01364 644370, southdevonrailway.co.uk

11 CRAFT IN THE ARCHIVES (10AM-12.30PM)

Bring your knitting needles, discover vintage craft patterns and learn how to find even more at our craft-themed, knit-and-natter with a pop-up display.
Somerset Heritage Centre, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton
01823 278805, swheritage.org.uk

17 WINTER WORDS BY CANDLELIGHT (8PM)

Highly acclaimed tenor Ruairi Bowen and prize-winning accompanist William Vann perform a concert centred around Benjamin Britten's Winter Words. Booking recommended.
Salisbury Cathedral, Salisbury, Wiltshire
01722 656555, salisburycathedral.org.uk

24-25 SPACE ODYSSEY PLANETARIUM (5-9PM)

Explore our solar system and the wider universe, as well as hearing news of the latest space missions, through the mobile Space Odyssey planetarium. Booking essential.
Fleet Air Arm Museum, RNAS Yeovilton, Ilchester, Somerset
01935 840565, nmrn.org.uk/visit-us/fleet-air-arm-museum

SOUTH EAST OF ENGLAND AND LONDON

01 NEW YEAR'S DAY CLASSIC GATHERING (10AM-4PM)

With more than 1,000 classic vehicles displayed on site, live music, a winter barbecue and other additional food outlets, there will be something for everybody.
Brooklands Museum, Weybridge, Surrey
01932 857381, brooklandsmuseum.com

04 GUIDED TOUR: CIVIC CENTRE CLOCK TOWER TOUR (10.15-11.15AM, 11.30AM-12.30PM)

Ascend the Civic Centre's iconic clock tower. Climb all 215 steps and discover the incredible story of its construction as well as gaining unparalleled views of the city. Booking essential.
SeaCity Museum, Southampton, Hampshire
023 8083 4536, seacitymuseum.co.uk

11 CAB IT! (10AM-12.30PM, 2-4.30PM)

Experience underground trains from the driver's cab and explore a variety of static vehicles built between 1927 and 1983 – including the museum's 1938 tube stock. Booking essential.
London Transport Museum, Acton Depot, London
0343 222 5000, ltmuseum.co.uk

17 EDWARD BAWDEN & ME EXHIBITION TOURS (NOON-1PM)

Join the keeper of fine and decorative art for an hour-long tour of some of the highlights of Edward Bawden & Me. Booking requested.
The Higgins Bedford, Bedford, Bedfordshire
01234 718044, thehigginsbedford.org.uk

25-26 LONGFIELD MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION 2025 (10AM)

Organised by Erith Model Railway Society and featuring up to 30 layouts, plus extensive trade support, societies, demonstrations and refreshments with nearly 90 stands in total.
Harris Garrard Academy, Thamesmead, Erith, Kent
07736 560956, ukmodelshops.co.uk/erithmrs/index.html

WEST OF ENGLAND

01 BUS RUNNING DAY (10AM-4PM)

Free heritage bus rides running all day plus books, stalls, cafe treats and buses galore.
Oxford Bus Museum, Long Hanborough, Witney, Oxfordshire
01993 883617, oxfordbusmuseum.org

04-05 WINTER STEAM GALA (9.15AM)

Kicking off the 2025 season, our 60th anniversary year, with a collection of majestic steam locomotives operating a busy timetable.
Severn Valley Railway, Kidderminster, Worcestershire
01562 757900, svr.co.uk

08 THE ART OF BEEKEEPING (7.30-9.30PM)

Take a closer look at the life of a honeybee colony with beekeeper Chris Stroud, including the challenges they face with a changing climate. £2.50 entry (cash only).
Winyates Green Community Centre, Redditch, Worcestershire
worcswildlifetrust.co.uk

19 HENLEY AND DISTRICT THEATRE ORGAN TRUST (3PM)

Join Phil Kelsall, resident organist of Blackpool Tower, for an afternoon of musical entertainment playing the mighty Allen digital theatre organ.
Town Hall, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire
0118 972 4988, henleyorgantrust.org.uk

25 HOW DOES IT WORK (12-4PM)

Join our volunteers for an afternoon getting hands-on with some of our collections – and see our amazing objects in action.
History of Science Museum, Oxford, Oxfordshire
01865 277293, hsm.ox.ac.uk

EAST OF ENGLAND

01 NEW YEAR'S TRAINS (10AM-4PM)

Celebrate the new year with a visit to the museum, and unlimited rides between 10.30am and 3pm on a train hauled by one of the vintage steam locomotives.
East Anglian Railway Museum, Wakes Colne, Colchester, Essex
01206 242524, earm.co.uk

05 NATURE WALK AT LONDONTHORPE WOODS (9.30-11.30AM)

Learn how to identify common trees and find out why they are so important in an urban environment, while enjoying a family-friendly guided walk. Free but booking essential.
Londonthorpe Woods car park, Grantham, Lincolnshire
0344 249 1895, nationaltrust.org.uk/belton-house

17 NORWICH: A LOVE STORY, A STORYTELLING SHOW BY JOHN OSBORNE (6.30-8.30PM)

Celebrate the cobbled streets of the city with the storytelling show by writer and theatre-maker John Osborne. A story full of love and secrets. Plus, explore the museum after-hours.
Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell, Norwich, Norfolk
01603 629127, museums.norfolk.gov.uk/museum-of-norwich

18 VULCAN VIP VISIT (9AM)

Experience XL426 away from the crowds with a guided tour before climbing into the Vulcan's cockpit and see it in deep maintenance during winter servicing. Booking essential.

Vulcan Restoration Trust, London Southend Airport, Southend-on-Sea, Essex
avrovulcan.com

22-29 KATHARINE OF ARAGON FESTIVAL 2025

Peterborough Cathedral and Peterborough Museum join forces to honour the life and legacy of Katharine of Aragon, first wife of King Henry VIII, and explore the city's Tudor heritage.

Peterborough Cathedral, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire
01733 355315, peterborough-cathedral.org.uk

MIDLANDS

01 TOY & TRAIN COLLECTOR'S FAIR (10AM)

Boasting an excellent selection of new and old toys, trains, models, accessories, collectables and much, much more. Venue and catering indoors with masses of free parking.

Newark Showground, Newark, Nottinghamshire
01522 880383, newarkshowground.com

23-26 WINTER STEAM GALA 2025 (9AM-6PM)

Including a special twilight train service, this action-packed four-day event features an intensive timetable for both passenger and goods trains as well as special guest locomotives.

Great Central Railway, Loughborough, Leicestershire
01509 632323, gcrailway.co.uk

26 BEAM ENGINE STEAMING (11AM-3PM)

See the Basford beam pumping engine in steam, and venture further in, and travel back to an age when steam and diesel engines powered the nation's factories.

Nottingham Industrial Museum, Wollaton Hall, Gardens and Deer Park, Nottingham
nottinghamindustrialmuseum.org.uk

27 LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT: THOMAS TROTTER – SPACED OUT! (1PM)

Thomas Trotter showcases the organ's sublime delicacy and awesome power as well as his own technical wizardry in some of the most inventive programmes you're ever likely to hear.

Town Hall, Victoria Square, Birmingham
0121 289 6343, bmusic.co.uk

28 NURSING ON FILM 1920S-1980S (11AM)

This collection of archive films and interviews from the Ray Johnson Film Archive is a tribute to nursing in north Staffordshire, as captured from the mid-1920s. Free, drop-in event.

Mitchell Arts Centre, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire
01782 409307, mitchellartscentre.co.uk

NORTH OF ENGLAND

02 SPOTLIGHT TOUR (11AM)

A friendly, informal and informative introduction to the exhibitions, collections or building led by visitor assistants, curators and volunteer tour guides. Included in admission.

The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, County Durham
01833 690606, thebowesmuseum.org.uk

04 LAKELAND HISTORIC CAR CLUB (10AM-12.30PM)

Whether you're an owner, enthusiast or just keen to see some great examples of some classic local cars, everyone is welcome to this monthly event at the museum and Cafe Ambio.

Lakeland Motor Museum, Ulverston, Cumbria
015395 30400, lakelandmotormuseum.co.uk

11 THEATRE TOURS

Take a guided tour of the third oldest continually operating theatre in England. You may even see the ghost. Booking essential.

Lancaster Grand Theatre, Lancaster, Lancashire
01524 64695, lancastergrand.co.uk

23 BEHIND THE SCENES PRIVATE APARTMENT TOUR (11AM-2PM)

Enjoy a rare behind-the-scenes experience on the first floor of Harewood while the house is closed to the public. Ticket includes hot lunch in billiard room. Booking essential.

Harewood House, Leeds, West Yorkshire
0113 218 1000, harewood.org

25-26 SHEFFIELD HERITAGE FAIR

A celebration of Sheffield's rich history, showcasing the work of key heritage groups. Find out about the future of key historic sites and chat with more than 40 local groups.

Millennium Gallery, Sheffield, South Yorkshire
0114 278 2600, sheffieldmuseums.org.uk/visit-us/millennium-gallery

WALES

01 TICK & TWITCH 2025 (9AM-5PM)

Get your healthy new year off to a flying start. Pick up your free checklist and pencil and head out into the wetlands to spot as many species of wild birds as possible in just one day.

WWT Llanelli, Llanelli, Carmarthenshire
01554 741087, wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/llanelli

02-05 SATURNALIA – A ROMAN FESTIVAL (11AM-4PM)

Celebrate Saturnalia, the Roman festival held in December to celebrate Saturn the Roman God of agriculture, when there were feasts and present giving. No need to book.

Caerleon Roman Fortress and Baths, Caerleon, Newport
0300 025 2239, cadw.gov.wales

03 MARI LWYD (6-7PM)

Join us for a warming drink and music, and see Mari cause her usual mischief.

Dinefwr Park, Newton House, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire
01558 825910, nationaltrust.org.uk/dinefwr

18 THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF PLACENAMES (11AM)

This month's meeting of the Swansea branch of the Historical Association features a talk from John Richards.

National Waterfront Museum, Swansea
haswansea.org.uk

31 SCRABBLE CLUB (2-4PM)

Meet new people and have fun, while you boost your vocabulary skills with this well-known word game.

Plas Pentwyn Resource Centre, Coedpoeth, Wrexham
01978 722920, wrexham.gov.uk/service/your-local-library

SCOTLAND

02-03 BLACK BUN SPECIALS

Enjoy a nostalgic steam train journey in a cosy carriage, complimentary hot drink and a slice of traditional Hogmanay black bun – a perfect family treat to begin the year together in style.

The Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway, Bo'ness, West Lothian
01506 825855, bkrailway.co.uk

18 KELVIN HALL BUILDING TOUR (10.30-11.15AM)

Join volunteer tour guides for a free 45-minute tour to learn about the history of Kelvin Hall and take a look at how the building is being used today. Free but ticketed.

Kelvin Hall, Argyle Street, Glasgow
0141 276 1450, glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/venues/kelvin-hall

24 MUSEUM LATE: BIG BURNS CEILIDH (7.30-10.30PM)

The Jacobites Ceilidh Band will get you twirling through Strip the Willow, Dashing White Sergeant and other traditional dances. Between dances explore the museum galleries at night.

National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh
0300 123 6789, nms.ac.uk

25-26 MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION

Presented by Kilmarnock and District Model Railway Club, see some of the finest model rail displays in the south-west of Scotland representing a wide range of scales and eras.

The Linthouse, Irvine, Ayrshire
01294 277177, scottishmaritimemuseum.org

27 EDINBURGH FROM ABOVE (2PM)

Explore archive aerial photography which has recorded changes in Edinburgh through the 20th century with a bird's eye view of iconic landmarks. Free but booking essential.

HES Archives and Library, John Sinclair House, Edinburgh
0131 651 6872, historicenvironment.scot

NORTHERN IRELAND

01 DONAGHADEE NEW YEAR'S DAY HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR (10.30AM-1PM)

Join Dr Robert Neill who will guide you around the stunning seaside town of Donaghadee aka Port Devine in the Hope Street BBC television series. Booking essential.

Donaghadee Harbour, Donaghadee, County Down
028 9182 6846, visitardsandnorthdown.com

07 MODERN TRACTION ON THE GREAT NORTHERN (7.30PM)

Experienced speaker Michael McMahon presents a review of how the GNR(I) embraced modern technology and applied it in diesel railcars and one diesel hydraulic locomotive.

Whitehead Railway Museum, Whitehead, County Antrim
028 9358 6200, steamtrainsireland.com

• Details correct at time of going to press – please confirm with event organisers before travelling.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

Twenty Questions

1. David Vine who was born on 3 January 1935.
2. Tony Holland who was born on 18 January 1940.
3. Martin Shaw who was born on 21 January 1945.
4. George Orwell.
5. Sir Simon Rattle who was born on 19 January 1955.
6. Nevil Shute who died on 12 January 1960.
7. Jemma Redgrave who was born on 14 January 1965.
8. Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding who died on 15 February 1970.
9. Brian Clough.
10. Live and Let Die.
11. Wilfrid Brambell who died on 18 January 1985.
12. Mr Bean.
13. Ian Charleson who died on 6 January 1990.
14. Gerald Durrell who was born on 7 January 1925 and died on 30 January 1995.
15. Cyril Fletcher who died on 2 January 2005.
16. Patsy Rowlands who died on 22 January 2005.
17. Jean Simmons who died on 22 January 2010.
18. Libby Lane.
19. Christopher Beeny who died on 3 January 2020.
20. Nicholas Parsons who died on 28 January 2020.

And I quote…

Sir Winston Churchill who died on 24 January 1965.

What is it?

A dart point sharpener.

Dialect Detective

1a, 2c, 3a, 4a

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

Treasures in the Attic

1. Boots bottle £25, 2. NME annual £8, 3. Roses chocolate box £30, 4. Marx friction toy £50, 5. Jimmy Greaves badge £40, 6. Sugar shaker £45, 7. Dinky Toy van £120, 8. Matchbox toy catalogue £20, 9. Cinema club card £15, 10. Tootles the Taxi book £10, 11. Dusty Springfield record £25, 12. STAR ITEM String dispensing tin £400.

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BACK IN TIME WITH COLIN BAKER

BoB's very own Time Lord says you're never too old to do something new, and recalls getting everything "DLP" for the late Timothy West

A happy new year to all you discerning readers of this elegant publication. As an incurable nostalgiaphile, I was delighted when Simon our editor (praise be heaped upon him!) invited me to contribute a column exactly six years ago – and here I still sit precariously, until they shorten the magazine by four pages, and I fall off the end.

I know it is deemed fashionable today by those who believe we should not allow the past to interfere with our lives in the present and our plans for the future. But maybe it is some vestigial legacy of my time as a Time Lord that makes me view my life more holistically. In my mind, playing cricket with my big brother, cycling to Blackpool with my friend, playing Rose Maybud in Ruddigore, interviewing about to be convicted murderers in their cells, and parachuting with the Red Devils are all as present in my life as if they happened yesterday.

And as anyone who is my age and reading this knows, the only real difference between me then and me now is the incipient decrepitude that prevents me from repeating many of those things, however much I would love to. So, my new year's resolution should be to do as many things as I can to ignore those doubts and infirmities and just do something challenging. After all, I was 69 when I entered the Jungle and ate a possum's anus.

I was saddened to learn that Timothy West has left us. Having been a fan of all his wonderful work at the Royal Shakespeare Company during the 1960s, when I think I saw every play he was in, it was for me a great thrill to be directed by him when I played Sir Joseph Porter KCB in HMS Pinafore for the Carl Rosa Opera Company 20 years ago.

He was a director with a gentle hand and an accurate eye. He made the process relaxed, creative and enjoyable which helped me enormously as a non-singer in the company of operatic stars. I do remember him being a stickler for the words. He stopped me once in an early rehearsal and said that I really mustn't paraphrase as Gilbert's words were specific and special and could not be improved upon. He was quite right to remind me of this, of course, even though it was early days, and I ended up DLP (dead letter perfect) as the actors' acronym has it.

Colin found Timothy West to be a director with a gentle hand and an accurate eye.

Tim had a very good sense of humour; so, I know he would have forgiven me for relating a little coda to this story. I toured in the show for over six months but was unable to do the final week in the Republic of Ireland due to a previous commitment. Tim said he would do it and as you might expect was a definitive Sir Joseph Porter "Ruler of the queen's navee". However, during the week in which he performed, the orchestra had a book on what line he would say at one particular point when Gilbert's *mot juste* eluded him. Suffice it to say his paraphrased line was invariably both apposite and funnier. We've all been there. In almost every play I have ever done, there has been at least one line that declines to lodge itself in the right place.

I once worked with an actor who listened to me describing how the deceased had been stabbed several times and then suggested that we should immediately search for the gun. Every night he panicked and occasionally chose the correct word with immense relief.

May 2025 bring you all immense relief and happy days.

Photograph: David Rose/Shutterstock

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