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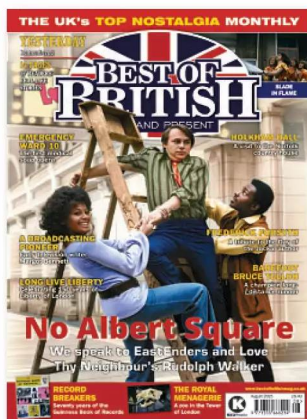
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SECOND'S BEST

Take a quick glance through the many lists of “sequels that are better than the original film” and you’ll start to get a feeling of *deja vu*. More often than not, *The Godfather II* will be near the top, along with *Superman II* (although I’m quite fond of *Superman III*) and *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*. In fact, that latter film has the double whammy of being far superior to the dreary *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, as well as being a much better sequel to the 1967 television episode *Space Seed*, which first introduced us to Khan Noonien Singh, Ricardo Montalban’s genetically engineered superman.

However, there is one superior sequel that is often unfairly overlooked, 1966’s *Daleks’ Invasion Earth 2150 AD*, the follow-up – based on the Doctor Who television serial *The Dalek Invasion of Earth* – to the previous year’s *Dr Who and the Daleks*. Benefitting from location filming and an increase in action sequences, Peter Cushing’s second outing



as “Dr Who” is made all the more enjoyable thanks to a supporting cast including Bernard Cribbins as the special constable whipped off into time and space, Philip Madoc as a sinister spiv, and Andrew Keir and Ray Brooks as resistance fighters.

It was the first time I had seen anything with Ray Brooks in it, although his voice was certainly familiar to me from the Mr Benn and King Rollo cartoons, along with public information films such as *Take Care With Fireworks* and *Crime: Together We’ll Crack It*. But it is because he performed such a memorable role in *Daleks’ Invasion Earth 2150 AD* that I was first introduced to his other work including *The Knack ...and How to Get It* and *Cathy Come Home*, a powerful work, which sadly feels as contemporary now as it did in 1966.

Ray Brooks was occasionally disparaging about his abilities but just take a look at anything from his CV and you’ll see that the chap had talent coming out of his ears.

Simon Stabler

THERE’S NOT A GHOST IN MY HOUSE

Despite writing a lot over the years about spooks, spectres and sanguinarians, **Cardinal Cox** remains a sceptic

If things go according to plan (and they seldom do), about the time you are reading this, I will be having a couple of pieces published in collections that will include fictional ghost stories.

This is a bit of a full circle for me, as one of my first professional commissions, just under 30 years ago, was a biographical introduction to a reprint of an Edwardian collection of ghost tales. The author of those had been EG Swain, a local vicar, and earlier in his career the chaplain of King’s College, Cambridge. At that time, he became part of the circle of MR James, the master of the ghost story genre. The Christmas Eve ghost stories broadcast by the BBC have often been adaptations of James’ work. When Swain moved away to where I live, he wrote some stories of his own. I had become intrigued by him and wrote a couple of articles about him and

then, when his collection was reprinted, I was asked to do the introduction.

So as a tip to would-be writers out there, spend time researching where you live. You never know when it could come in handy.

Now, I should say I’m quite a doubter of real ghost stories. While I happily accept that folks experience things that can’t be easily explained, I think these experiences (be they triggered by subsonic sounds, electromagnetic emissions or, as Scrooge himself suggested, cheese before retiring to bed) are then filtered by the subconscious of the person experiencing them. One person might interpret the experience as a ghost, another interprets it as an alien, another as a fairy. These subjective experiences are real to the person having them because, ultimately, everything everyone experiences is subjective.

I’m extra dubious though about three particular types of ghost story:

Theatrical ghosts. An audience for a good play will experience a range of emotions. These trigger pheromones that soak into the furniture. A change in the weather and these pheromones are then released back into the air. Someone walks in and experiences an intense feeling of dread. Or elation if there had been a comedy on.

Rental accommodation ghosts. Property run-down? Tenant before last died? Tell the newspaper that a glass was smashed at midnight and a shadow was seen on the stairs. Hopefully the family get rehomed.

Pub ghosts. Custom a little slack? Tell the newspaper that a glass was smashed at midnight and a shadow was seen on the stairs. Publicity generates punters.

No, the spirits I believe in are firmly contained in the bottles behind the bar.

Next Issue: Spangles

EDITORIAL

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Doctor Who star Colin Baker remembers.





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 Noggin and Natter

Dear Simon,

Here are four "old boys" with a combined age of 343. The two other David's I first met way back in infant school. John since we were in the same Wolf Cub pack.

We meet as often as we can for a "noggin and natter" and we are all family men with grandchildren. Two of us also now have walking sticks. Many people are surprised that I have kept in touch with friends since childhood and they think it must be very unusual.

To me, with widespread use of telephones and social media and Facebook, I would have thought it must be easier than ever.

Yours sincerely,

David Dearle
Leigh-on-Sea, Essex



Bonging on

Dear Simon,

I have only just got around to reading your June issue with its piece by Cardinal Cox about the relatively modern origins of some supposedly old customs. He refers to Lady Raglan and the Green Man, but I think he may be confusing her with Lady Llanover (same county, but different formidable lady).

It was Augusta Hall, Lady Llanover (1802-1896), who revived many old and largely neglected Welsh customs and created the National Eisteddfod which still takes place annually. She was a firm temperance supporter who turned the pubs on her land into coffee houses, a great supporter of the Welsh language, founded a local flannel industry and made her staff wear Welsh costumes.

She was slightly eccentric in her ways and once played host to a German aristocrat; when he was leaving, she had members of her staff strewing rose petals before him on his way to the station.

Augusta was the wife of Benjamin Hall MP who is best remembered as being the promoter of the provision of a clock tower at the Houses of Parliament – the large bell in the tower was dubbed Big Ben after



Augusta Hall, Lady Llanover (1802-1896), a great supporter of the Welsh language and other Welsh customs.

Benjamin, who, as one MP remarked was "always bonging on about it."

Roger Bowen
Blaenavon, Torfaen

Julia Somerset, Lady Raglan (1901-1971) wrote a 1939 article for the journal Folklore in which she connected the foliate head motif of medieval church architecture with other "green" concepts, such as the Jack o' the Green May Day custom. She also claimed that the Green Man represented a pagan fertility figure, a connection which has been contested by other folklorists.

A Ssafa Pair of Hands

Dear Simon,

I was very interest to read the letter Ssafa, So Good in April's Postbag.

My father, Major Charles James Galletly MBE TD, worked for Ssafa for 27 years when ill health forced him to retire.

He was also the chairman of the Knowsley, Sefton and St Helens War Pensions Committee. Yours sincerely

Fiona Henderson
Liverpool





Eyes Right!

Dear Simon,

It was August 1941, I was 18 and in Dundee, appearing at the Tivoli Theatre in a comedy act with my father and brother, Tommy Jover With Nena and Raf.

While touring, we always stayed in digs. It was my job, every Monday morning, to take our three ration books and go into town to purchase food and bring it back to our landlady to cook for us. It was not an easy job, as I was a total stranger to the merchant who naturally wanted to take care of his regular customers first. Also, I was not much of a cook and left it up to the poor landlady to figure out what to do with whatever I had managed to bring her.

I walked up and down streets looking for shops that might have some of those little extras they could share with me, but this was not my lucky day. Having exhausted all possibilities, and with my meagre rations in my shopping bag, I turned down a tree-lined street to go back to our digs. It was a beautiful day, perfect for a nice quiet stroll. However, walking along the pavement proved impossible. Dozens of army officers were milling around shouting orders to the soldiers. This was not unusual during the war as soldiers were billeted in towns across the country. To avoid having to work my way through all these men, I decided that as there seemed to be no traffic, I should walk in the street.

I stepped off the curb and started to walk but hadn't gone far when an uncomfortable feeling came over me. Why were the soldiers lined up shoulder to shoulder on both sides of the street? Why



were they standing to attention? Why were they so quiet? What was going on?

It was obvious that someone of importance was expected to come down this street at any moment, and that someone was certainly not me. I was horrified and angry that someone had not warned me. My eyes caught those of a soldier, and he looked as horrified as I felt. But worse was yet to come. Now there was a car purring expensively behind me. It was driving very slowly, probably to avoid

running me over. I took a quick glance behind me and saw a big, black Rolls-Royce with two union flags on its hood. A white gloved hand seemed to be waving at me; it had to be the Queen. "Don't faint! Don't faint", I kept telling myself as I straightened up and walked with determination over to the soldiers and squeezed my way between two of them.

Nena Jover Kelty
Glendale, California

Off Brand

Dear Simon,

Your latest editorial struck two chords with me. Regarding corporate rebranding, I often wonder if this is simply the sign of a new CEO wishing to literally make their mark on a company.

There are also various theories about the length of time that should elapse before logos require "refreshing" and, as you rightly point out, this process often extends to losing sight of what the original represented. I have always found it strange that some companies feel the need to revise their image multiple times,

while others, Ford being a good example, are happy to retain something familiar and easily identifiable. Having a good design from the start helps, of course.

Some companies also extend their pointless rebranding to repackaging their products, leading to many an unnecessary search of supermarket shelves for something familiar that eventually turns out to look like a rival. Such changes can often be accompanied by those dreaded words "New Improved Recipe", perhaps shorthand for it not tasting the same either as they have found a way to make it cheaper (but sell it at the same price).

Your other comment on the replacement of the innovative ITV franchises also rings true. When viewed today many of the series produced by the likes of Southern and other long-gone companies exhibit originality of ideas and notable casting, writing and so forth. It is interesting too just how many of the complete series made by the former ITV constituents survive, rather a contrast to the somewhat cavalier attitude of the BBC in that and other matters.

All the best
Martin Broadribb





I Had My Uses

Dear Simon,

We all remember our first job. I was employed as an office boy for builders' merchants Blanchard & Burgess Ltd of West Quay Road, Poole in Dorset. Little did they know what they were letting themselves in for.

It was a strange job. You did normal office work such as filing, phoning and the post, but if a customer came in you were like a shop assistant. I also became the typist. The firm paid for me to go to night school once a week. I hated the typing class. I was the only male in a class of about 20.

We had a large showroom displaying fireplaces made in tiles. Everyone admired the red brick one but it was too big for most rooms, and the cost was £50 (a lot of money in 1951). Mr Collingwood said it was a hindrance as everyone looked at it but once they realised it was beyond their pocket they lost interest in what was left. He said: "I need it sold. It takes up too much room. If I can find someone to take it, they could have it for £10, and I will throw in free delivery."

About a month later, a couple came in to look at fire surrounds. The wife of the couple saw the brick fireplace. "That's perfect for our cottage," she said. Her husband agreed but

wondered how much it would cost. I said: "The firm wants to sell it because it takes up too much room. You can have it for £10 and free delivery."

The husband said: "Go and tell your boss we want it." I told my supervisor we had a buyer. He asked: "Are they happy with the price?" I replied: "Very happy." He shouted: "Nelson, young David has sold the brick fireplace." Mr Collingwood said: "Well done, David. Are they happy about the price?" I replied: "Yes, not only about the price but about the free delivery."

"What are you talking about?" Mr Collingwood asked. I reminded him he had said: "£10 and free delivery." It turned out that was a tongue-in-cheek remark and not actually meant. However, they could hardly now say "no sale" to the couple and, after a bit of haggling, they got it for £20.

One day, Mr Collingwood pointed to a cupboard: "Empty that and put it in the incinerator." A few weeks later, I heard an anguished cry from Mr Collingwood's room: "Come here, David." It turned out he just meant the cupboard he was pointing at. I thought he meant all the cupboards. All the firm's records were burnt. You name it, it was gone. Members of staff said to me: "You are for the sack."

However, Mr Collingwood could never stay angry for long. I did have my useful points. I was the only member of staff who could go to the small tearoom across the road and carry six cups of tea on a tray without spilling any. Also, if Mr Collingwood needed to get some measurements from a building site, he would take me. He was too old to climb ladders or walk along planks on the scaffold.

The firm also had a light at the end of a long tunnel. It was called National Service. They knew one day I would get my call-up papers. When I passed my medical for two years in the RAF, they were pleased. Not bothered about my health, just happy, as I would be going away for two years. It was December 1953, a lovely Christmas present. They realised I could be back in two years but that was a long way in the future.

Blanchard & Burgess's managers were kind, friendly, helpful and considerate people. Maybe they felt it would be unfair to sack me because this would mean inflicting me on someone else.

David Sim

Normanby, Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire

Still on Track

Dear Simon,

In the August 2023 issue of Best of British, David Sim wrote about his memories of cycle speedway from the years when he lived in the Dorset town of Poole (Postbag: Pedalling Into Pole Position). He ended his letter by asking whether cycle speedway was still going and which towns/cities still had teams.

One morning in August 2025, I walked from Poole Quay on the waterside cycle/pedestrian path towards Sandbanks. When I reached the Harbourside area, users of the path were diverted inland due to works taking place. Following the diversion path, I found myself walking through Harbourside Park and past the home of Poole Cycle Speedway Club. The track itself and the rest of the compact stadium looked immaculate.

Posters on the entrance gate and on the club noticeboard advertised weekend home fixtures for Poole during August against Ipswich, Southampton, and Birmingham. Plus, Tuesday evening club nights when youngsters in the town are offered the



chance to have a go at cycle speedway. I was amazed to see that both free parking (spaces are limited) and free admission are offered to the fixtures.

Poole Cycle Speedway Club has a

Facebook page (facebook.com/Poolecsc) and email address (poolecsc@outlook.com) should any readers wish to find out more.

Jon Harris



Spot the Difference

Dear Simon,

One thing you should do to with memorable events is to take a photo. Sometimes you can take the same basic photo again, many years later to reflect change. It's a way of capturing a bit of nostalgia that we all seem to enjoy.

My son often does this, and he produced an example the other day. He'd taken a photo for my grandson's first day at senior school and then another, six years later in the same spot for his last day at school. In the recent photo, my grandson's hair style is one that young people often have. In years to come when styles have changed, he will no doubt look back in horror as I do when I see photos of myself with much longer hair that was once the fashion in the 1970s.

He also sent me a photo of him me and the grandson at a Father's Day lunch this year to compare with one he'd taken eight years ago. On Father's Day, I wouldn't go so far as to say that we always



go to the same venue and sit at the same table, but we often do. It's because my daughter-in-law, daughter and son-in-law also join us and not all venues have a choice of large tables. The main thing I find surprising about these two photos is that I'm not wearing the same shirt and jacket on both occasions (I haven't thrown any of them away, of course). If that had happened, I feel sure there would have been some comment, and I would have felt obliged to suppress the pictures.

It seems to me that another candidate for this practice would be reunions. A friend of mine still meets up once a year with classmates he went to college with in the 1960s. I must ask him if they have an annual photo shoot in the same setting. Seems like a good idea to me. Perhaps we should all give this practice a go?

Don Alcott
Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands



Can you help?

Would like to contact June Hatcher who lived in Smalldale Road, Great Barr, Birmingham. This would be her maiden name, so she may have married. Her sisters were Dorothy and Jaquelline who went to Perry Beeches School. June went to Erdington Girls' County Grammar School.

John Chilton, Email:
chiltonjohn2@gmail.com

Does anyone know the whereabouts of Peter Bonner. He has a brother, David Bonner. He went to Warren School, Chadwell Heath.

Sarah Cooke, Tel: 07354 406062

Is there anyone out there who took part in the Essex Senior Scout 4th European Expedition to Germany in the summer of 1959? If so, I would love to hear from you; I have a number of photos but no other paper records of our first ever visit abroad.
David Sansom, Email:
davidwsansom@yahoo.co.uk

A book edited by Sir George Dowty's last secretary is now available containing summaries of the diaries he kept, covering the years 1919 until his passing in 1975. It tells a remarkable story of how Sir George progressed from an apprentice in a Worcester engineering concern, forming a business

in 1931 amid a worldwide slump, to become one of the world's foremost engineers. Copies of this hard backed book cost £13 and can be obtained by emailing **martinrobins@btinternet.com**
Martin Robins

The Friends of Dover Castle are keen to find any information relating to anybody who was stationed at, or worked at, Dover Castle either service or civilian roles. The castle still had troops quartered in barracks there until 1958 and from the 1960s to the 80s, the castle tunnels were used as a cold war regional seat of government.

These tunnels had previously played an important role during World War Two. We are also interested in any information relating to Dover Home Guard for an ongoing project.

The Friends of Dover Castle, 1 Keep Yard, Dover Castle, Castle Hill, Dover, Kent CT16
1HU Email: fodc2025@outlook.com

Looking for any relations descended from the Buttle family of Little and Great Sampford, Essex. Also, anyone related to the Dixon family of Cockfield and Raby Co Durham.

Lee Gibson, 124 Cantley Manor Avenue, Doncaster DN4 6TN Email: lee.gibson124@yahoo.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, Kelsey Media Ltd, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6JR or by email to **info@bestofbritishmag.co.uk**





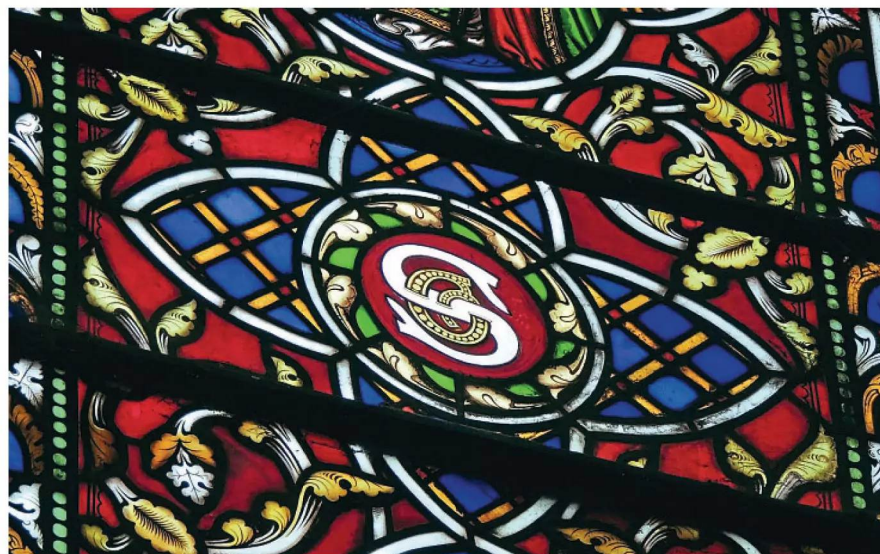
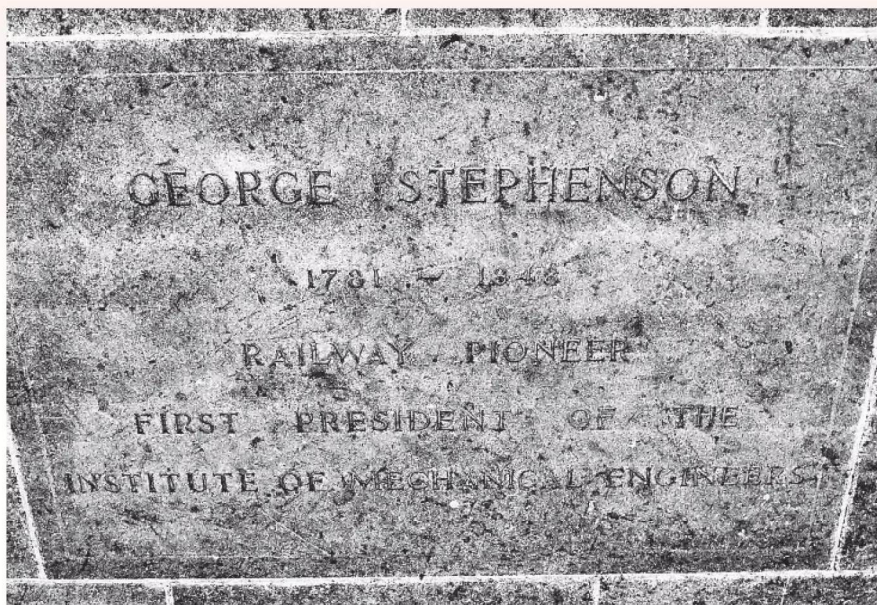
Twin Pleasures

Dear Simon,

The article Railway 200 in September's issue of BoB reminds me of a twin stop-off in Chesterfield on the way home from another railway hotspot, Doncaster.

The first call was to the church of St Mary and All Saints, where I had the pleasure of observing what is widely regarded as the world's wonkiest church spire. And, boy, is it wonky.

But it was the second stop that was the Railway 200 memory jogger, Holy Trinity Church, Chesterfield. It's the church where George Stephenson is buried. I was fortunate to call upon the church at a time when it was open for visiting just after a service was finishing. I say lucky, as his grave is inside near the altar. And here's the twist, the monument in the churchyard outside,



often mistakenly assumed as his, is not his at all. It's all down to spelling. The mistaken monument is for a George Stevenson (1833-1900). So many people have missed the spelling hiccup that the church has now placed a stone plaque alongside to direct visitors inside the church.

Behind the altar is the commemoration stone. But there's an added bonus, as the church has assembled a lovely selection of miniature railway ephemera. While the beautiful stained glass window behind the altar is decorated with sections containing the initials "GS".

A wonderful double event within a pair of delightful churches.

Best wishes

Barry Stone
Berkshire

...With Love

Dear Simon,

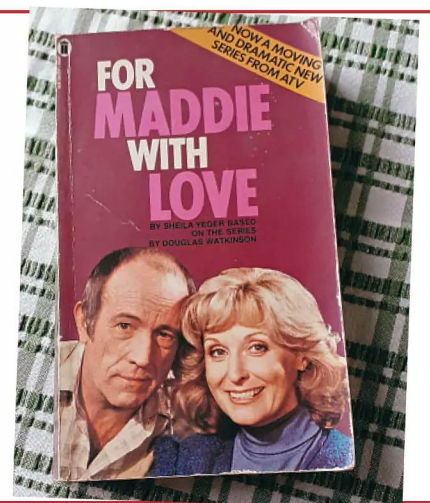
Reading Colin Baker's article in the September edition of Best of British and the mention of For Maddie With Love reminded me I had recently found the book based on the TV series. I remember thinking how moving the series was in 1980/81, on a subject although known, not often portrayed on television. It has inspired me to reread the book some 40+ years later. Thank you, Colin, for the memory jog.

For my retirement present back in March this year, a friend bought a subscription to

Best of British. It is a fabulous present. Full of interesting articles and features, most from around the years of my childhood and growing up. Now I can sit and relax, reflecting on many things, either forgotten or just a misty haze of fractured memories. I adore the magazine and read it from cover to cover (something I rarely do with a magazine), thank you for taking me back in time and awaken old memories.

Keep nostalgia alive!

Sue Goodsall
Burgess Hill, Sussex





Who to Believe?

Dear Simon,

Susan Batten's memories of Kew Gardens in the August edition (Yesterday Remembered: A Walk in the Park) brought back so many memories for me.

My grandfather Fred Hawkins worked in the boiler room of the hot house during the war.

He told me that one night, he was sitting in a wheelbarrow eating his sandwiches about midnight, when a woman walked through a wall beside him, across the boiler room and out through the opposite wall. Even today, I don't know what to make of it. Had he fallen asleep and dreamt it? I'll never know.

He also told me that the pagoda wasn't open to the public as someone had thrown themselves from the top and been killed many years before. Years later, while I was at secondary school, we were given a talk about Kew Gardens and were told that the pagoda wasn't open to the public as

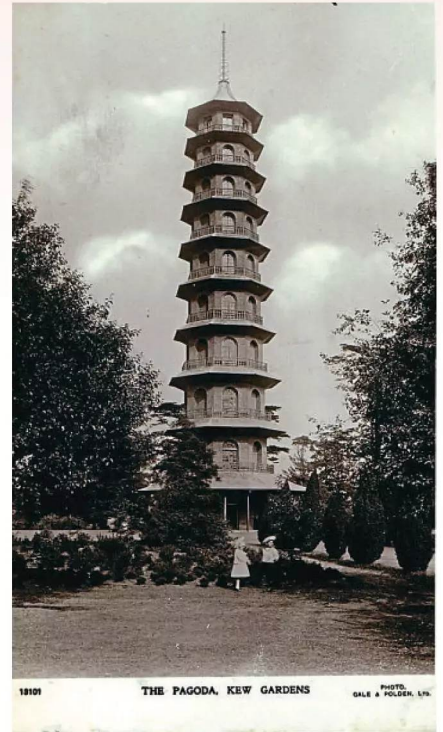
the stairs were too narrow for people to go up and down at the same time. Who to believe?

My grandparents lived in Clarence Road, a mile or so back from Kew Gardens. From their window could be seen the tallest flagpole in the world, 225ft high, in Kew Gardens. My mother would often visit Gran and Grandad on her birthday on 24 May, taking me, aged 5, and my brother, Keith, 3, with her. There was always a flag on the pole when we visited. When we asked why the flag was flying, Gran would say: "Well, it is my birthday!" It was only when I grew older that I realised that 24 May was Empire Day, and all public buildings were flying flags.

BoB is a great magazine, always something to relate to.

Well done.

Allan Wright
Cliftonville, Kent



I Hate This War

Dear Simon,

When I came to live at Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire, I was working as an area manager looking after up to 15 stores (or more) for the company I spent 24 years working for in the end. The depot at Calne was only four or five miles away so it was handy in many ways. I would always pop in to see the depot manager, Jack Davis, very early, because he was least busy then and we could discuss any stock lines he wanted to move out.

Jack was very proficient at his job despite a seriously twisted up left hand from, I guessed, his army days. Nobody had ever spoken to him about his war injuries, so I decided to do just that.

Jack began: "You've heard of Operation Market Garden and Arnhem? Well, that's where it happened. After I was dropped by parachute, I eventually found myself in what looked like a street. Bullets were flying everywhere. I was hit on the hand, which I nearly lost, and my arm still has the evidence of bullet holes.

"I felt my legs go and I rolled into what I thought was a trench and then rolled once more and then stopped in what was some kind of hole. It could have been the entrance of a cellar. The

main thing was I was out of the path of bullets. My arm and hand and part of my leg throbbed with pain, but at least I was alive.

"I lay still until I was certain there was nobody around but was now aware that there was a badly wounded German soldier. He was much more badly injured than I was – there was blood across his uniform. He moved his head and looked at me – and I at him. At that moment in time, the war meant nothing. Here we were two injured souls, unsure what the immediate future held and both losing blood.

"As the minutes passed, we tried to converse to see what we could do for each other. I remember how it affected me. I could not help it. 'I hate this war. I hate this war.' I said this loudly and with feeling. The badly injured German soldier moved his head, looked at me and said something like: 'Me too.' He could only speak a bit of English – I could speak no German. Nevertheless, we tried to exchange one or two words.

"After a few more minutes, we both realised we needed help – and quickly. I suddenly remembered I had a decent sized bar of chocolate in my uniform, and, with a struggle, I got it out. I broke

it in half and gave him half. He smiled and murmured: 'Danka.' That chocolate saved us as neither of us had eaten for many hours.

"What seemed like a short time later, there was serious movement at the entrance area to us and two soldiers came in – my heart sank as they were German. The badly injured German somehow hoisted himself to aim a barrage of German at the intruders."

Jack felt that the one he gave the chocolate had a high rank because he received such excellent treatment and care. He was placed in an ambulance and taken to a hospital somewhere. Jack had no doubt that the surgeon saved his hand. As you might expect, he spent time in a prisoner of war camp but had no idea where.

I had been lucky to hear Jack's story, or as much of it as I did. It was time for me to go: "Just one question, Jack. What's your view of the war – honestly?"

He looked at me for a moment and said slowly and meaningfully that he was off to get on with his work, as I was. Jack really was quite a man.

Colin Macleod
Beaulieu, Inverness



The Retro TV Times

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SKY 328 | FREEVIEW 82
FREESAT 306 | VIRGIN 445

Fate Takes a Hand (1961)

(Wednesday 1 October, 7am)

Drama. Director: Max Varnel. Starring: Ronald Howard, Valentine Dyall, Peter Butterworth and Angela Douglas. Letters recovered from a stolen mail bag significantly impact the lives of the recipients 15 years later.

The Brothers (1976)

(Thursday 2 October, 8pm)

The Christmas Party Starring: Jean Anderson, Patrick O'Connell, Colin Baker, Richard Easton, Kate O'Mara, Robin Chadwick and Derek Benfield. Barbara confesses her troubled marriage to Jennifer. Brian makes Christmas Party plans with an ambivalent Jane.

The Nightcomers (1971)

(Friday 3 October, 10.10pm)

Horror. Director: Michael Winner.



Starring: Stephanie Beacham, Thora Hird, Harry Andrews and Anna Palk. A groundskeeper of a country estate corrupts a virtuous governess and the children she looks after.

Sea of Sand (1958)

(Saturday 4 October, 2.25pm)

War. Director: Guy Green. Starring: Richard Attenborough, Michael Craig and John Gregson. The Long Range Desert Group go on an expedition through North Africa to destroy a huge Nazi fuel dump.

The One That Got Away (1957)

(Saturday 4 October, 4.45pm)

Drama. Director: Roy Ward Baker. Starring: Hardy Krüger, Michael Goodliffe, Jack Gwillim and Alec McCowen. A German flight officer is shot down over England and makes numerous attempts to escape to fight again.

Sergeant Cork (1963)

(Sunday 5 October, 8.05pm)

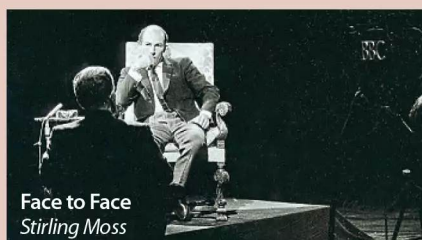
The Case of the Respectable Suicide Starring: John Barrie, William Gaunt and June Watts. A wealthy man takes his life, his will states that his money is left to his housekeeper not his wife.



bbc.co.uk/iplayer

Face to Face

Stirling Moss John Freeman interviews racing driver Stirling Moss. Nearly 30 years later, Freeman revealed that this was virtually the only interview that pleased him. Freeman had considered Moss a playboy, but their encounter showed the racing driver to possess a "cold, precise, clinical judgement... a man who could live so close to the edge of death and danger, and trust entirely to his own judgement."



The Sky at Night

The Moon First transmitted in 1960, Patrick Moore reviews the historic Soviet mission to launch a manned rocket into space and discusses with Gilbert Fielder, director of the Lunar Section of the British Astronomical Association, the atmospheric conditions to be faced on the moon and the problems that could be solved by a successful landing of instruments there.

Bird's Eye View

Beside the Seaside First transmitted in 1969, Bird's Eye View traces the origins of the British seaside holiday, said to lie with King George III.

Concentrating on the south-west, the flying camera captures the natural beauty and character of the British people beside the sea. The programme was written and narrated by poet John Betjeman, who was famous for being well versed in myth and mirth.



itv.com

Mr Benn

Remembering Ray Brooks acclaimed actor & narrator of this classic 70s children's series. When Mr Benn tries on an outfit in a magical costume shop, he's transported to a different time. Includes "new" 14th episode, The Gladiator.

Jekyll and Hyde

Fantasy drama series reimagining the classic good versus evil story. When Robert Jekyll discovers that he carries a family secret, it throws him into a web of intrigue in 1930s London.

Jewel in the Crown

Granada Television's serial about the final days of the British Raj in India during and after World War Two, based on the Raj Quartet novels by British author Paul Scott.

LEGEND**FREEVIEW 41, SKY 148,
FREESAT 137, VIRGIN 149****The People That Time Forgot (1977)**

(Friday 3 October, 12.40pm)

An explorer braves encounters with dinosaurs as he leads an expedition to a mysterious prehistoric island to rescue his marooned naval officer friend from a forgotten civilisation. Fantasy adventure sequel to *The Land That Time Forgot*, starring Patrick Wayne, Doug McClure and Sarah Douglas.

Day of the Jackal (1973)

(Monday 6 October, 11pm)

An international hit man and quick-change artist is hired by a secret organisation to assassinate Charles de Gaulle.

**The Curse of the Mummy's Tomb (1964)**

(Sunday 26 October, 2pm)

Archaeologists exhume an Egyptian mummy and take him to Victorian London, where he shuffles off in search of revenge on his evil brother who has been cursed with eternal life. Hammer horror, starring Terence Morgan, Ronald Howard and Fred Clark.

The Man Who Haunted Himself

(Wednesday 29 October, 1pm)

Tense psychological terror starring Roger Moore, Hildegard Neil, Anton Rodgers and Freddie Jones. Uptight Harold suffers a high-speed car crash in which he is momentarily clinically dead, only to awake to find he's no longer a saint.

U&GOLD**SKY 110, VIRGIN 124,
TALKTALK 310, NOW TV****Porridge**

(Wednesday 1 October, 2.20pm)

No Peace for the Wicked Fletch is furious that he can't get any peace inside Slade Prison, while MacKay shows visitors around the jail.

Bottom

(Thursday 2 October, 11.35pm)

Break Anarchic sitcom about a pair of repellent bachelors with former Young Ones Rik Mayall and Adrian Edmondson. Richie and Eddie prepare for their holiday with a vigorous fitness regime. But not all goes according to plan.

U&DRAMA**FREEVIEW/YOUVIEW/BT/
TALKTALK 20, SKY 143,
VIRGIN 130, FREESAT 158****Monarch of the Glen**

(Wednesday 1 October, 3.20pm)

Heartwarming drama series with the dashing young laird of a Highland estate. Archie wants to ignore his 30th birthday, but Molly and Hector have other ideas.

London's Burning

(Thursday 2 October, 4.20pm)

The popular drama series about the lives of firefighters at a London fire station. Stuart "Recall" MacKenzie joins Blue Watch and is challenged to prove his amazing talent.

U&YESTERDAY**FREEVIEW/YOUVIEW/BT/
TALKTALK 27, SKY 155,
VIRGIN 129, FREESAT 159****Nazi Hunters**

(Wednesday 1 October, 11am)

Hunting the Nazi Rocket Scientists Hear about the painstaking hunt for Nazi war criminals, beginning with the US Army task force in charge of locating key German scientists.

Antiques Roadshow

(Friday 3 October, 1pm)

The Royal Hall Harrogate Fiona Bruce and the team head to the Royal Hall in Harrogate, with Alastair Dickenson giving his highest valuation in 20 years on the show.

Bottom**U**

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BRITAIN NOW

TOPICAL SNIPPETS FROM AROUND OUR NATION

A Date With the Doctor

A theatre tour of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, produced as if it was in a radio studio and featuring three stars of *Doctor Who*, will take place next month. Starring Colin Baker as Ebenezer Scrooge and Peter Purves as narrator Charles Dickens, the Crime and Comedy Theatre Company production will also feature a pre-filmed cameo by Tom Baker as Jacob Marley. Opening at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury (01743 281281, theatresevern.co.uk) on 7 November, it continues at West Cliff Theatre, Clacton (01255 433344, westcliffclacton.co.uk), 9 November; Royal

Sutton Coldfield Town Hall (0121 296 9543, suttoncoldfieldtownhall.com), 10 November; Dorking Halls (01306 881717, dorkinghalls.co.uk), 12 November; The Hawth, Crawley (01293 553636, parkwoodtheatres.co.uk/the-hawth), 15 November; and Theatre Royal, Winchester (01962 840440, theatreroyalwinchester.co.uk), 16 November.

Colin Baker is also currently appearing in another Crime and Comedy Theatre Company production, Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four*, in which he plays Sherlock Holmes alongside another *Doctor Who* co-star, Davros actor Terry Molloy, as Dr Watson. For dates, and



Colin Baker is set to star in a stage production of *A Christmas Carol*, alongside fellow *Doctor Who* actor Peter Purves.

further information on both productions, go to crimeandcomedytheatrecompany.co.uk/dates

Have You Hoard?



National Museums Scotland curator Dr Matthew Knight examines the Carnoustie Hoard, which is to go on display from June 2026.

A bronze age hoard, discovered during the construction of two football pitches, is to go on display next summer at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh (0300 123 6789, nms.ac.uk/ScotlandsFirstWarriors). The Carnoustie Hoard, which was discovered near the town in Angus, has been acquired by National Museums Scotland and will form the exhibition *Scotland's First Warriors*, which runs from 27 June 2026 until 17 May 2027. Bringing together more than 250 objects spanning thousands of years, the exhibition will include a rare spearhead decorated with gold, one of only two such examples known from Scotland, and a bronze sword with an unusual lead-tin pommel, still sheathed in the remains of a wooden scabbard. Dating from around 1120-920BC, the weapons hint at the existence of a localised warrior elite in the Angus area more than 3,000 years ago.

Like Clockwork

A high street clock, which was hung on the front of a bank for almost 45 years, has been returned to its original site following a two-year restoration programme. The clock, a gift from Uckfield Rotary Club in 1980, was hung on the front of 49 High Street in Uckfield, East Sussex – then a branch of NatWest – until shortly after the bank left the site in March 2023.

Uckfield Town Council paid for a new master clock controller unit and antenna, as well as hiring two engineers to complete the installation, while new site tenants Greggs played a huge role in arranging for the removal, refurbishment and refitting of the clock, the refurbishment of the Uckfield Rotary Club plaque, which details the clock's history, and the running of a new electrical supply.



A gift from Uckfield Rotary Club in 1980, the clock has been returned to its original site following work funded by the town council and new tenants Greggs.

A Gala for Gresley

A year-long celebration in 2026 to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of railway engineer Sir Nigel Gresley has been announced.

Under the strapline "A legacy of innovation, speed and elegance", the Gresley Society (gresley.org), in collaboration with Doncaster City Council and other partner organisations, will host a series of events to commemorate the enduring impact of the designer of steam locomotives such as Flying Scotsman, Cock o' the North and Mallard.

The centrepiece of the celebrations will be a symposium and gala dinner on Saturday 20 June 2026. Held at the Mansion House, Doncaster, it will feature presentations exploring Gresley's personal history, professional achievements, and enduring influence on modern railways. The evening's 1930s-themed gala dinner will offer a nostalgic culinary experience inspired by menus from famous LNER trains including The Flying Scotsman, The Silver Jubilee and The Coronation. With

spaces limited to 100, tickets, priced £25 (members) and £30 (non-members) for the symposium, and £75 (members) and £85 (non-members) for the gala dinner, are available by completing the RSVP form available from chairman@gresley.org

Additional highlights include an exhibition showcasing Gresley's life and works at the Danum Gallery, Doncaster, with part becoming a permanent display, the digitisation of the Gresley Society Trust's archive to ensure broader access and long-term preservation, a short film on Gresley's life and achievements, and a series of events with partner organisations, including those connected to Gresley's Class A4 No 4498 Sir Nigel Gresley on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway.

Founded in 1963, to honour Gresley's life and works, the Gresley Society owns Gresley class N2 No. 1744, the oldest surviving Gresley locomotive, nearing the end of a major overhaul at the North Norfolk Railway, and Gresley Buffet Lounge Car No 1852, the sole surviving vehicle

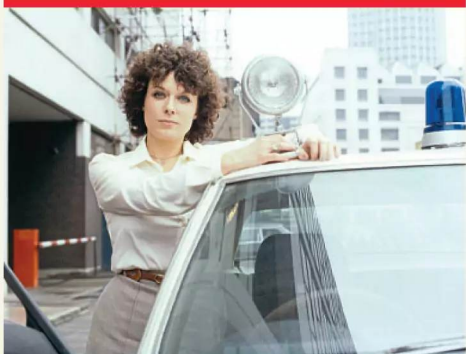


The Gresley Society, the organisation responsible for commissioning the statue of railway engineer Sir Nigel Gresley, has announced a year-long celebration marking the 150th anniversary of his birth.

from the 1938 Flying Scotsman train. The trust has also commemorated Gresley with a statue at London King's Cross station and plaques at Edinburgh Waverley and, more recently, Doncaster stations.



In the **November Issue** of
Best of British



The Gentle Touch

Behind the scenes of LWT's
groundbreaking police series

NEXT MONTH

First-class Stamp

A tribute to actor
Terence Stamp

More Than 101 Dalmatians

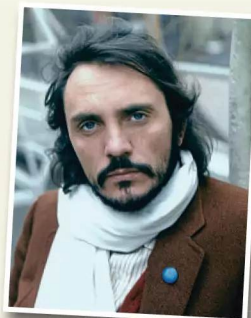
Remembering author
Dodie Smith

Sporting Immortality

We talk to Olympic
pentathlete Lady Mary Peters

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Question time

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Funny Girl

Q I've just watched *Billy Liar* with Tom Courtenay. Are you able to tell me about the actress Gwendolyn Watts who played one of his three fiancées?

Richard Bailey, Birmingham

Best of British says: Born in September 1937, one of Gwendolyn Watts' earliest stage roles was in 1955, as an "innocent lamb in the wolves' den" in *Ladies for Hire*, Dudley Harcourt's play about West End vice gangs. In 1958, she joined the touring production of *The Boy Friend*, then the third-longest running musical in West End history, replacing Violetta Farjeon as the French maid Hortense. The following June, she married the Czech-born actor Gertan Klauber at Hampstead Register Office. On their wedding day, Gwendolyn travelled to Manchester for that night's performance of *The Boy Friend*, while her new husband headed to Devon to film the military comedy *Don't Panic Chaps!*

That same year, she would make her television debut in *Call Me Sam*, the restaurant set comedy starring Eddie Byrne as restaurateur Sam Callahan. Also in the cast were Hugh Lloyd as barman Archie and Paul Whitsun-Jones as Italian chef Mario. Although she would appear in serious roles, guesting in shows such as *Probation Officer*, *Man from Interpol*, *Maigret*, *The Plane Makers* and *Softly Softly*, Gwendolyn was better known for comedy: "It's what I do best, although I think it's important to do straight parts as well," she once admitted to a reporter for the *Daily Mirror*.

Regular comedy appearances included the Harry Worth sitcom *Here's Harry*, Michael Bentine's *It's a Square World*, *The Benny Hill Show*, and as Iris the "clippie" in *On the Buses* and machinist Liz in *The Rag Trade*. Like her husband, Gwendolyn had small roles in several *Carry On* films, appearing in *Carry On Doctor*, *Carry On Again Doctor* and *Carry On Matron* as a patient, nursing sister and hospital receptionist respectively.

She returned to the stage in Lionel Bart's wartime musical *Blitz!* and, around

the same time, filmed *Billy Liar*, John Schlesinger's big screen adaptation of the Keith Waterhouse novel of the same name. Gwendolyn played the tough and brassy Rita, one of the three fiancées of Tom Courtenay's titular fantasist. The others were Liz, played by Julie Christie, and the virginal Barbara, played by future *Bad Girls* actress Helen Fraser.

In the mid-60s, Gwendolyn appeared at The Mermaid Theatre in Bernard Shaw's *Fanny's First Play*, and at the Royal Court in a season of DH Lawrence plays. *Motherhood* (son Daniel was born in 1969 and daughter Molly in 1973) led to a reduced workload, and Gwendolyn only appeared on television in a handful of roles – including Joan Booth in the pilot of *Love Thy Neighbour*, a part taken in the series by the similar looking Kate Williams – before retiring.

In 1995, Gwendolyn made a brief appearance in the opening episode of *The Final Cut*, the third of the *House of Cards* trilogy. As pianist Mrs Fraser in the musical



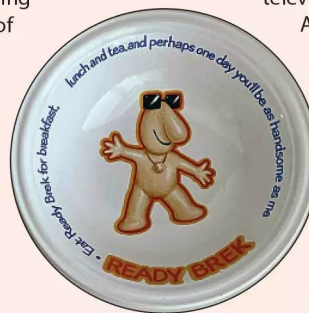
version of *Stepping Out*, she went on tour with the production from November 1996, followed by four months at the Albery Theatre, London from October 1997.

Her son died in 1995, while Gwendolyn herself died of a heart attack on 5 February 2000, aged 62. Gwendolyn Watts was survived by her husband (who died in August 2008), daughter and sister, Sally Watts, an actress who, coincidentally, played Barbara, in *London Weekend Television's* early 1970s sitcom adaptation of *Billy Liar*.

Central Eating

In the August issue, Lyndon Parker of Knaresborough, North Yorkshire wanted to know the origin of a spoon that belongs to his mother-in-law, believing it to be given away as part of a brand promotion in the 1970s or 80s.

Louise Wilcockson of Market Rasen, Lincolnshire has written to say: "It looks like a Ready Brek spoon. My late father owned one, along with a bowl. He always used them to eat his Ready Brek."



The bowl and spoon depict Ready Eddie, who was the mascot of Ready Brek from 1986 until 1989. First appearing in a 1986 television commercial created by Aardman Animations, Ready Eddie appeared on various pieces of merchandise including a bendy toy, glove puppet, backpack, badge and kite. The bowl and silver-plated spoon were part of a set that also included a mug, which was available by sending in proof of purchase and covering the cost of postage.

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 info@bestofbritishmag.co.uk or write to us at Kelsey Media Ltd, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle LN9 6JR.

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As If By Magic...

Chris Hallam pays tribute to an actor better remembered as the voice of Mr Benn

At 1.30pm on Thursday 25 February 1971, the character of Mr Benn walked cheerfully into many children's lives. The first episode of the animated series saw Benn, an ordinary resident of 52 Festive Road, walk to a fancy dress shop in pursuit of a costume for a forthcoming party. There, having chosen a striking red suit of armour, he proceeded to find himself involved in a fairy tale adventure, before returning home to his normal life shortly before the 15-minute episode reached its end. This would, in fact, happen every week. Sometimes he would dress as a cowboy and find himself in the Wild West, sometimes as a pirate,

sometimes a spaceman. But the formula would always be the same. Benn would turn up dressed like an old-fashioned stereotypical Englishman in a bowler hat, every week the mysterious fez-wearing store owner would arrive with the words, "as if by magic, the shopkeeper appeared," Benn would then dress up and have an adventure before changing back and leaving without buying any of the costumes.

Every single episode of Mr Benn (which was based on the books by the late David McKee) was narrated beautifully throughout by the actor Ray Brooks. For such an iconic series, it is something of a shock to learn that only 13 short episodes were ever produced in 1971 and

1972. By the end of the century, the BBC had repeated them close to 50 times. A final 14th episode, also featuring Brooks appeared in 2005.

Despite a long and varied career, Mr Benn is undoubtedly the most enduring thing Brooks ever did. Little wonder that he was keen (though unsuccessful) in his effort to get a picture of the character on the front of his autobiography, *Learning My Lines* (2009).

He grew up in Brighton. His mother had become pregnant after a fling with a soldier called John Brooks. As a Catholic, she was riddled with guilt over this and didn't reveal the true story behind Ray's conception to him until he was 20. His father was reportedly bringing up another family nearby. His mother was nevertheless determined to infuse him with as much culture as possible.

"I was born in 1939, just before the war, and I recall barbed wire along the beach and barrage balloons," Brooks recalled. "In those days, Brighton was full of cinemas, theatres and concert halls. My mum used to take me to concerts at the Brighton Dome. We saw the Italian tenor Tito Gobbi and the Australian pianist Eileen Joyce. I even saw Joan Collins when she was 19 and a Rank starlet." Ray's mother also invested in elocution lessons for him.

"She wanted better for me," Ray said of his mother, who worked as a bus conductor. "The idea was that I could go and work in a Barclays Bank if I wanted to. People who spoke well were considered trustworthy." The lessons paid off. Ray won a poetry recital competition held at the Royal Pavilion. Soon, he was taking acting lessons too. His confidence grew.

The move into theatre began soon after he left school.

In 1956, Ray left his job in the wages office of the local bus company to join the Nottingham Repertory Company and a production of *Treasure Island*. A number of theatre, film and TV roles followed. He was Lucius, the servant of Brutus in a 1960 production of *Julius Caesar*, a driver being trained up by veteran cabbie Sid James in all 26 episodes of sitcom *Taxi!* (1963-64) and played Norman Phillips an agency talent scout in *Coronation Street* (also

Above: Ray Brooks at the London premiere of *The Knack...and How to Get It*. The film had already won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, a high point in Brooks' career.

Photographs: (Main) Harry Myers/Shutterstock, (EastEnders) BBC



Above: During his time in *EastEnders* as Joe Macer, Ray endured a difficult relationship with Wendy Richard (left) who played his on-screen wife, Pauline Fowler. Also in the photograph are Niky Wardley (Megan Macer) and Betty the Cairn Terrier. Right: Among Ray Brooks' early film roles was the part of Freddy in the *Billy Fury* musical *Play it Cool!*




his Big Deal co-star Sharon Duce in *Growing Pains* (1992), a short-lived comedy-drama about two foster parents.

The 21st century brought significant personal tragedy for Brooks with the death of his daughter, Emma, a social worker, from cancer. In 2005, he seemed poised for another big comeback when he was cast as Joe Macer in *EastEnders*. "The cast greeted me with tremendous enthusiasm, and I thought it was going to be glorious," he said afterwards. Behind the scenes, Brooks endured a difficult relationship with Wendy Richard, who played his on-screen wife, Pauline Fowler. Ultimately, after a rocky ride on the show, Brooks' character was killed off in 2007, falling out of a window after admitting to killing Pauline.

"It was a good lesson, though admittedly one I didn't need at my time of life," he says. "If I'd done it a little earlier, I would have probably been more confident and been given better stuff. But I went in timidly, and timidity is not appreciated in the big bad world."

"I don't think I was ever that good an actor," he once reflected. "I was more an image of a young man. I was never as good-looking as, say, my contemporary David Hemmings. And don't forget this was the period of Terence Stamp. So, there was a lot of competition."

The reference to Terence Stamp is poignant. Stamp, in fact, died just eight days after Brooks' own death in August, at the age of 86. In truth, however, Ray Brooks was much too modest about his own abilities and in a career characterised by significant ups and downs, undeniably made his mark. 

1963-64). He also appeared in films such as period epic *HMS Defiant* and alongside musician Billy Fury in *Play it Cool* (both 1962). Meanwhile, he met Sadie Elcombe while playing a pinball machine in a Brighton coffee bar. They married in 1963 and had three children together.

For a short while, Brooks became a hot, in-demand, rising star at the heart of swinging London. The key to his success was his role as the arch-womaniser Tolen in the surprise hit *The Knack ...and How to Get It* (1965) alongside Rita Tushingham. Tolen's task in the film (directed by Richard Lester) was to attempt to school Michael Crawford's naive young teacher in the art of seduction. The film won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival even before it opened in London. Ray and Sadie found themselves whisked to the Carlton Hotel in a Rolls-Royce. These were heady times. The Beatles and Princess Margaret were among those to attend the film's premiere. But as Brooks later sadly reflected: "Little did we know that it would all turn to dust." His career would never scale such heights again.

"I think I was naive," he reflected later. "I thought that they would come to me. I was asked to go to a lot of places, lots of film festivals, people were offering me work, but the films that they were

offering me very often didn't materialise because they couldn't get the money." Admittedly, he did then take a major role in Ken Loach's *Cathy Come Home* (1966), one of the most important and impactful TV dramas ever made. But, after this, while remaining busy, he seemed to fall a couple of rungs down the career ladder.

He appeared in the Doctor Who film *Daleks' Invasion Earth 2150AD* (1966) but also in episodes of *Danger Man*, *Emergency Ward 10*, *Z Cars*, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* and *Doomwatch*. All fine shows undoubtedly, but it was as if his brief period of stardom had never happened. He played an over-sexed waiter in *Carry On Abroad* (1972) but in the 1970s generally grew disillusioned with screen acting, preferring instead to appear on stage or to take often lucrative voiceover work. This was the era of Mr Benn and a similar job on another animation, *King Rollo* (1980), also based on a series of books by David McKee. Brooks released an album, *Lend Me Some of Your Time*, in 1971.

In 1985, he enjoyed something of a TV comeback as Robbie Box, a card sharp in the BBC comedy-drama *Big Deal* (1985). He was later reunited with



LOST AND FOUND

Oliver Crocker discovers why film really is fabulous

It's now two years since a new initiative burst on to the scene to help preserve thousands of vulnerable film reels which, serendipitously, has become the best hope of finding long-lost British television treasures in years.

Film is Fabulous! is a voluntary organisation run by film collectors, cinema lovers and vintage television enthusiasts, working with film historians at De Montfort University. John Franklin, a film collector for 40 years and one of the visionaries behind the scheme, was

inspired to act in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. "We tragically lost a lot of film collectors overnight, including many friends of mine.

When their homes were cleared out, the films and equipment they had spent their lives collecting were lost; literally thrown into a skip. It was heartbreaking."

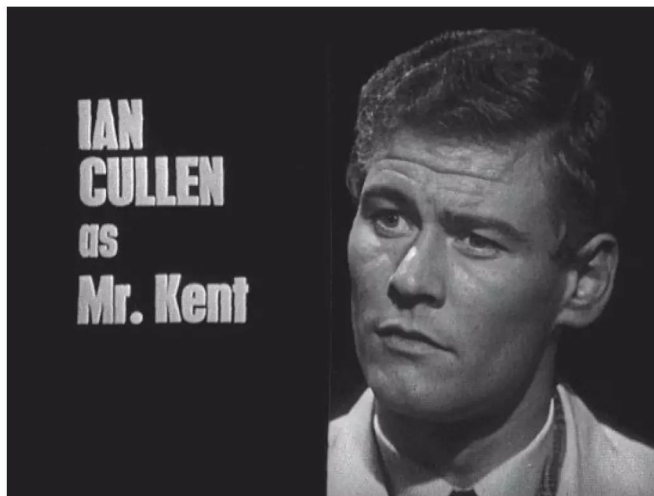
Films were junked because the collectors had left no instructions in their wills as to what should happen to their precious reels. With executors under time pressure, limited further

by Covid-19 restrictions, there was nothing that John or the wider collecting community could do to help. "That's when I thought that we should really try to do something to provide assistance for elderly collectors and their families."

In October 2023, Film is Fabulous! held its first event at Leicester's Phoenix Cinema and Art Centre, bringing more than 150 film collectors and dealers together for a special festival. "The original premise was to encourage the attendees to make a list of their films and to put clear instructions in their wills to avoid more collections being junked." However, following the successful event, a survey revealed that some collectors were having trouble cataloguing their films, as John explains. "Film collectors tend to be elderly people in their late 70s or older. While everyone wanted to make a list, their age meant they were now having trouble lifting their heavy film reels, or even seeing the information written on them."

This prompted the driving force of volunteers behind Film is Fabulous! to take action. Justin Smith, professor of Cinema and Television at De Montfort University, helped secure some funding and provided the university's first-class archiving facilities. Dr Peter Lester, an expert film archivist, was then brought on board to lead a six-month pilot scheme, during which a sample of vulnerable film collections was assessed and many thousands of films catalogued.

"The pilot scheme allowed us to help families who had inherited an overwhelming quantity of film," says Franklin, who clarifies that, rather than an archive, Film is Fabulous! operates as "a sort of triage for vulnerable collections,



Top: Film Is Fabulous!'s Paul Vanezis and John Franklin at the 2024 Blackpool Film Collectors' Convention. **Right:** Ian Cullen in *The Long Small Hours*, one of 31 missing Emergency Ward 10 episodes found in a Canadian collection.



Left: The restoration of *Four Against Three*, a 1959 episode of detective drama *Saber of London*, was something of a miracle as the 16mm film was deteriorating. Right: Thousands of films were catalogued during *Film Is Fabulous!*'s initial six-month pilot scheme.

where we identify exactly what the films are and then offer the best options to the estate. It could be that the films are returned to the copyright holders, or they are sold to a channel like Talking Pictures or Rewind TV."

Alternatively, some films could be sold at auction, while others could be donated to the Projected Picture Trust. The estate then makes a decision based on our recommendations and, because we've done everything possible to earn the trust of the people we have dealt with, to date everyone has followed our recommendations, which has been encouraging."

An unexpected by-product of the pilot scheme was the discovery of several rare and missing television programmes. "The vast majority of collectors collect feature films to recreate the cinematic experience at home. Others have nostalgic films capturing traction engines or steam trains from a bygone era. We were absolutely amazed by the amount of television in these collections, we had no idea there was going to be so much."

Before the advent of home media, television was largely viewed as ephemeral; programmes were initially broadcast live or recorded "as live" for a single transmission, while repeats were strictly limited. Recorded on expensive videotape, it would have been cost prohibitive for broadcasters to store master tapes in perpetuity when, at the time, they were unlikely to ever be shown again. They were therefore wiped and reused for new recordings.

Before erasure, many shows were transferred from videotape on to 16mm

film for international distribution. Once these prints had been played across the globe, they would be returned to the UK where, prior to the introduction of archiving policies in the late 1970s, they would be junked. "In London, BBC films were thrown into what was lovingly known as 'the Wood Lane skip,'" reveals Franklin. "Collectors would take piles of films out, enjoy them at home and then sell them once they'd finished watching them. We found two missing 1970 episodes of Basil Brush starring Derek Fowlds in one such collection. We screened one of these at our Missing Episodes festival in 2024, during which a gentleman in the audience announced: 'I've got a Basil Brush!' and it turned out to be a third lost episode from that same series."

The initiative's first Missing Episodes festival was held at Hereford's Courtyard Cinema and Art Centre in June 2024, showcasing a selection of recovered programmes, including classic comedy *Sykes* and a Marriage and industrial espionage drama *Mogul*. John reports that the buzz surrounding the festival propelled the profile of *Film Is Fabulous!* considerably. "Now when we announce a find, our website receives tens of thousands of hits a day. We recently posted an image on Twitter featuring stacks of film cans found in a collector's shed that was seen by more than half-a-million people!"

In May 2025, I was one of the many vintage television enthusiasts who travelled from across the country to attend *RECOVERED*, the latest *Film Is Fabulous!* exhibition of newly discovered wonders, at the Phoenix Cinema in Leicester. The first rarity shown was an

episode of *Saber of London*, the 1950s crime mystery starring Donald Gray as the titular one-armed private detective. Just months before its screening, the 1959 episode *Four Against Three* was perilously close to being lost forever, as the damaged film print was deteriorating from 'vinegar syndrome'. "Most collectors store their films in their home," says John, "but that means there's no climate control and, with none of the safeguards available in a professional archive, the films will invariably degenerate and erode." The 16mm film was painstakingly restored by R3store Studios following a successful crowdfund, which I and many other members of the appreciative audience had supported. The pristine presentation of *Four Against Three* was something of a miracle.

The highlight for many was a long-lost edition of *Emergency Ward 10*, the popular hospital drama produced by ATV between 1957-67. Originally a half-hour twice-weekly soap, in 1966 the series was revamped into an hour-long version and the episode screened, *The Long Small Hours*, was the first made in this new format. I was especially excited to see my much-missed friend, the late great Ian Cullen, appear as brain surgeon Warren Kent. Seeing him in the opening titles on the big screen for the first time was very moving.

Incredibly, *The Long Small Hours* is just one of 31 previously missing episodes of *Emergency Ward 10* found buried in a collection of reels from Canada. The impressive, ever-growing list of recoveries by *Film Is Fabulous!*, combined with regular and

Reel Memories

For many of us growing up in the 1960s, our first taste of bringing the silver screen into the living room came not from tapes or discs but from humble 8mm film reels, proudly projected on trusty machines such as, in our case, a Eumig cine projector. Other popular makes included Bauer, Bell & Howell, and Elmo.

Most of the reels we could afford with our pooled pocket money were just 50ft-long, about four minutes of footage, and cost around £5. To buy them, we'd head to Dixons, Boots, the local independent camera shops, or spend ages flipping through catalogues to order by post from Walton Films, Mountain Films, or the prestigious American distributor Blackhawk Films. Most films came in cardboard boxes with colourful covers, promising all the drama or hilarity those few minutes could hold.

While 50ft reels were the norm for casual collectors, longer formats were also available, including 200 or 400ft, offering 10 to 20 minutes of viewing. Enthusiasts could eventually get their hands on full-length features. These often came on four or five 400ft reels,



Laurel and Hardy expressive performances and physical gags translated beautifully to the home cinema even without sound.

which meant reel changes mid-film were part of the experience. For the diehard collector, there was pride in curating and threading together a complete film.

The content was often black and white and, for many years, silent. Sound was a luxury not widely available until later in the home cinema game. Still, we were far from disappointed. There was something magical about watching Charlie Chaplin's The Rink or Buster Keaton trying to outwit a collapsing house, silent but deeply expressive. The comedy needed no dialogue, and the laughs echoed regardless.

Of all the performers gracing our homemade cinema, Laurel and Hardy reigned supreme. Their unique chemistry, expressive performances, and physical gags translated beautifully even without sound. Watching Ollie's slow glance to the camera or Stan's puzzled expression, no matter how many times, never got old.

Of course, it wasn't all comedy. There were also excerpts from classic horror films, brought home in short, sometimes spine-tingling reels. Titles like The Mummy, The Wolf Man, the original Frankenstein, and Dracula were available in abridged form, often just a few key scenes, but enough to capture the eerie atmosphere and iconic performances. For younger viewers, they offered a thrilling introduction to vintage horror, scary enough to excite, but just short enough to sleep afterwards.

For years, the only sound during a home movie night was the rhythmic clatter of the projector. Many of us, in fact, remember adding our own dialogue or musical accompaniment just for fun using a strategically placed cassette player. But by the late 1970s, sound projectors began to make their way



Excerpts from films such as The Mummy offered younger viewers a thrilling introduction to vintage horror.

into the consumer market, allowing for synchronised soundtracks and even full dialogue.


Of course, the landscape began to shift in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the home video revolution arrived with the now-legendary format war: Betamax v VHS. Suddenly, you could tape a film off the telly and watch it again and again. And for those who wanted more, there were video rental shops.

Yet VHS also had its lifespan. DVDs followed, with crisper images and special features. Then came Blu-ray with high-definition clarity. And now, the idea of owning physical copies at all is fading fast in the age of streaming.

But even with all this convenience, something has been lost. The ritual. The anticipation. The flicker of light in a darkened room. For those of us who grew up rewinding reels and hearing the soft flutter of 8mm running through a projector, it wasn't just about watching a movie; it was about the joy of cinema itself. **Philip and David Williams**

open communication, has captured the imaginations of vintage television aficionados around the world. This has undoubtedly created some pressure for John and his dedicated team. "There's a certain amount of wishful thinking..." he confirms. "Fans are hopeful that we will find programmes like Dad's Army and Doctor Who, which are considered the holy grail. But, of course, we have no control over what we might recover within a collection."

Franklin is keen to emphasise that Film is Fabulous! is not a treasure hunt. "We have recently been contacted about a collection of 16,000 film cans. If that collector thought we were only going to go in and cherry pick a few reels and leave them to sort out the rest, they wouldn't deal with us. Why would they? Our approach is to catalogue their whole collection. Trust and integrity lie at the very heart of Film is Fabulous!, along with our love for the collectors and our desire that their film legacy is preserved."

To aid them in cataloguing collections of that size and continue preserving film rarities for future generations, the volunteers have applied for charitable trust status. "We feel that we've done something positive," concludes Franklin. "With a bit more support, we believe that we'll be able to recover more missing episodes, return them to their copyright holders and screen them to the public through our events. With charitable trust status, we'd be able to repeat that model over and over again." 



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Utterly Brilliant?

Chris Hallam celebrates the life and career of a children's TV favourite

If you watched any children's TV during the school holidays between 1985 and 1992, you would have quickly become familiar with the career of Timmy Mallett, the host of TV-am's Wacaday. Essentially a world of fun, chaos and jokes with the ever enthusiastic and energetic Timmy at its core, Wacaday made a reasonable stab at resurrecting the anarchic spirit of ATV's legendary Saturday morning show Tiswas a full decade on.

Unlike Tiswas, however, Wacaday was often very much a one-man band with Timmy, often clad in a garish tropical shirt and always sporting one of his many pairs of multicoloured glasses, keeping things going himself with no studio audience or even a studio of his own (Wacaday

shared its workspace with the grownup TV-am). Children could expect plenty of fun from Timmy himself as he interacted with Wacaday's resident pet cockatiel, Magic (today, Magic is buried in Timmy's garden). Later, there would be cartoons, perhaps Transformers, Batman or Galaxy High. The highlight was always the show's most famous item, Mallett's Mallet. Essentially a competitive game of word association, losers would be "punished" by being "bonked" on the head by a yellow-and-pink sponge mallet wielded by Timmy himself. As Timmy would say himself: "Utterly brilliant."

Having launched in 1983, ITV's breakfast station, TV-am, had been caught short when Roland Rat suddenly deserted the network in favour of the BBC shortly

before the autumn half-term school holiday of 1985. Wacaday, quickly dubbed by Timmy, "the show your telly was made for" had been hastily constructed as the puppet rodent's replacement. The new show was itself a spin-off of the Wide Awake Club, the Saturday morning favourite which had started in 1984 (the "Wac" in "Wacaday" came from an acronym of the Wide Awake Club's title). Timmy continued to appear on Saturdays with the show's other presenters, Tommy Boyd (formerly of Thames Television's Blue Peter rival Magpie), Arabella Warner, James Baker and Michaela Strachan. Timmy was always the most popular one, however. Despite being in his 30s, there was always a sense that the other presenters were essentially grownups,

Photographs: (Main) ITV/Shutterstock, (K6) Creative Commons/Karen Roe, (Tour) Creative Commons/Richard G Hilsden



Left: As an artist, Timmy was involved in the BT ArtBox scheme, which saw sculptures based on the K6 telephone box redesigned to raise money for Childline. Timmy's design, Ring-a-Royal-Phonebox, commemorated Queen Elizabeth II's diamond jubilee. Right: In the 2000s, toured many universities, bringing Mallett's Mallet to nostalgic students across the UK.

while the anarchic Timmy (and, to some extent, the younger Michaela who also co-hosted Wacaday for a while) were still, in their hearts, children. In the end, Wacaday outlasted Wide Awake Club (and its replacement, Wac '90) itself, continuing until TV-am lost its franchise in 1992.

Timmy's own childhood had begun when he was born, the youngest of three sons to Michael and Nancy Mallett in Marple, Cheshire in October 1955. His father had served in India during World War Two, before becoming a graphic artist and, finally, a clergyman. He retained a lifelong love of art, something he passed on to his youngest son. Timmy began wearing spectacles at the age of seven but only developed his penchant for multicoloured glasses after seeing Trevor Horn of the Buggles wearing a pair while performing Video Killed the Radio Star on Top of the Pops.

Timmy studied History and History of Art at Warwick University, although came close to getting thrown off his course due to his preoccupation with student radio. Soon after graduating, he found a job at Radio Luxembourg. From there, he moved to Manchester's Piccadilly Radio establishing a real following with his Timmy on the Tranny show.

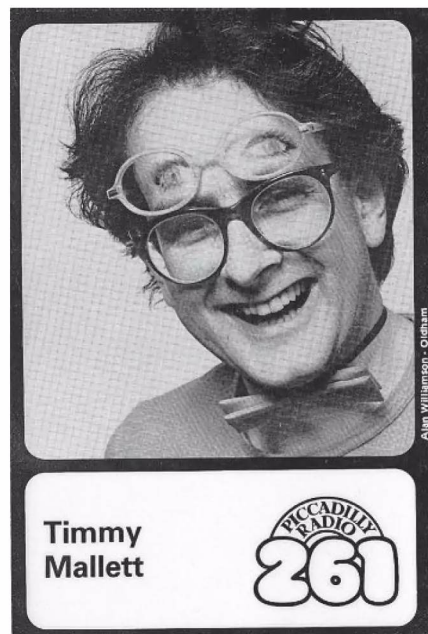
Keeping things fast and funny, he soon attracted a great crew. Andy "Big" Bird soon chimed as Radio Diggle, a pirate DJ supposedly breaking in and interrupting Mallett's links. Karen Walsh, subsequently a successful TV director would play Auntie Boney Kneecaps, an agony aunt offering

bizarre advice such as "worried about your looks? Put a paper bag on your head and no one will notice them!" Other regular contributors – such as a teenaged Chris Evans who appeared as character Nobby Nolevel, physicist and musician Brian Cox who wrote jingles for the show, and future BBC political correspondent Nick Robinson who memorably played a zit in one Piccadilly Radio sketch – all went on to much bigger things.

Having won two Radio Academy awards, Timmy now gravitated towards TV. When TV-am started in 1983, Timmy (who had narrowly escaped a potentially serious car accident after falling asleep while driving on the motorway a few days before), soon found a spot interviewing many pop stars of the day, something he also did as host of BBC Two's confusingly titled Manchester-based music show Oxford Road Show.

The Wide Awake Club saw Timmy introduce Mallett's Mallet and other items such as Singing in the Shower, essentially an early version of karaoke, and Book 'n' Boob, a spelling contest. Future Oscar-winner and Les Misérables star, Eddie Redmayne was an early contestant on Singing in the Shower (he lost), while Leigh Francis (later known for playing comedy character, Keith Lemon) won art competitions on the show by designing a new breed of dinosaur and prototypes for new pairs of Bermuda shorts for Timmy and Michaela.

Among other Wide Awake Club regulars were British comedian Neil



After a stint at Radio Luxembourg, Timmy moved to Manchester's Piccadilly Radio where he established a following with his Timmy on the Tranny show.

Mullarkey and Canadian performer Mike Myers who appeared together in an item called the Sound Asleep Club. Myers would soon enjoy enormous success in the Wayne's World and Austin Powers films.

Timmy travelled extensively during his time on Wacaday with the show taking many special trips to Japan, the US, South Africa and elsewhere. One such trip to

Australia changed his life forever, as it was there he met the woman who would become Mrs Mallett, Lynda Bingham, who he married in 1990. At the time of his wedding, Timmy was enjoying a three-week stint at the top of the pop charts as the head of a band called Bombalurina, which had been partly created by Andrew Lloyd Webber (the group's name is taken from that of one of the characters in his musical *Cats*). The song, *Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny Yellow Polka Dot Bikini*, was a cover version of a record first performed in 1960 by Brian Hyland. On Timmy and Lynda's wedding day, the church organist struck up a version of it as they walked down the aisle. They have one son together, Billy.

In the late 90s, Timmy fronted other children's shows such as *Timmy Towers*. In the 2000s, with his original fanbase now grown up, he toured many universities, bringing Mallett's Mallet to nostalgic students across the UK. In 2001, he saved the life of a woman named Geraldine who had fallen into the icy waters of Hartlepool Marina. Always a very positive and good-natured person, Timmy nevertheless, did not enjoy his 2008 stint in the jungle for reality show *I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!*

In later life, Timmy has achieved his greatest successes in the fields of art and cycling. An accomplished oil painter and acrylic and watercolour artist, Timmy received widespread acclaim for his range of portraits painted to commemorate the late Queen Elizabeth II's golden and diamond jubilees in 2002 and 2012. His work continues to sell in galleries across the UK and Europe.

In 2018, he cycled alone across a distance of around 2,500 miles from England to Spain and back along the pilgrimage route the Camino Finisterre. The journey had been partly inspired by his older brother Martin who had Down's syndrome and who had died just before Timmy's journey began. Timmy recounted his adventure in *Utterly Brilliant: My Life's Journey* (2020), part-travelogue, part-history book and part-memoir. The approach of old age does not seem to have hindered him. In 2022, he completed a near 5,000-mile journey when he completed a solo circumnavigation of the coast of Britain, following in the footsteps of the artist JMW Turner.

However, despite these massive achievements, Timmy Mallett remains better known for *Wacaday*, Mallett's Mallet and his brief pop career than for anything else. 🇬🇧



GREETINGS, POP PICKERS!

Derek Lamb celebrates 70 years of
BBC Radio's Pick of the Pops

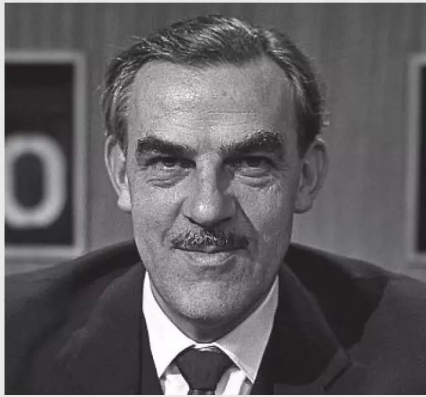
Although associated with the 1960s, *Pick of the Pops* began in 1955 on the BBC Light Programme. The 4 October listing in the *Radio Times* reads: "Presented by Franklin Engelmann in which Jingle (assisted by Belle) makes a selection from the top shelf of popular gramophone records."

Jingle was the nickname of Franklin Engelmann, an unlikely choice as host, since he was better known for chairing *Gardeners Question Time* and the quiz show *What Do You Know?* When Alan

Dell took over in 1957, there was a reference to the charts and the show edged closer to its format of new releases and the Top 10.

In May 1958, David Jacobs became host, and the show went out late on Saturday nights. Over the years, the duration varied from 40 to 75 minutes. In the autumn of 1961, the show became part of *Trad Tavern* and was broadcast in three 20-minute segments. By then, Alan Freeman had replaced David Jacobs.

Above: Alan "Fluff" Freeman, pictured here in June 1973, is perhaps most associated with *Pick of the Pops*.



Better known as the chairman of Gardener's Question Time, Franklin Engelmann AKA Jingle was the original host of Pick of the Pops.

From the relative obscurity of Saturday night, *Pick of the Pops* move to 4pm on a Sunday afternoon in January 1962. Freeman made other DJs' presentation sound pedestrian. From its opening seconds to its closing moments, it was quite unlike any other pop record programme. It was a pacey, choreographed hour, making full use of its theme, *At the Sign of the Swinging Cymbal*. As well as bookending the show, it was used to punctuate the progress of the programme as it moved from Unit One, new entries to the chart, to Unit Two the new releases. Unit Three featured a track from a current LP and then came the best 25 minutes on radio, Unit Four, the Top 10. It was also used to structure Freeman's chart run down, synchronising the titles to fit the structure of the tune.

The soon to be familiar format was enhanced by Freeman's opening of "Greetings, pop pickers!" to the closing "Stay bright". Salient facts and statistics ("there's five American and five British records in this week's Top 10") neatly augmented the "that was" and "this is" of the links.

It became one of the most popular music shows on radio. As the BBC acquired more needle time, it expanded to 90 minutes and then two hours in October 1967, running from 5-7pm.

It continued in this slot until Alan Freeman left in 1972. In his 10 or so years, the only change was the use of *Quite Beside the Point* as its theme, between 1966 and 1970, when a freshened version of *At the Sign of the Swinging Cymbal* was introduced.

The most stylish pop show on television in the mid-1960s was Associated-Rediffusion's *Ready Steady Go!*, which was broadcast on Friday evenings. The BBC reluctantly squared up to the challenge with *Top of the Pops* from January 1964. Adopting a policy of "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery", it was essentially a visual version of *Pick of the Pops*. There was a roster of four presenters; naturally, Alan Freeman was one of them.

At a time when the record charts were a major part of popular culture, it is remarkable that there was no official chart. In 1969, the British Market Research Bureau was contracted to compile a chart based on a sample of sales outlets. Until then, each music press publication produced its own. Faced with this situation, the BBC aggregated them and this average was used in its programmes.

The popularity of *Pick of the Pops* coincided with the availability of domestic tape recorders. Although illegal, home taping of the show was widespread. In some households the microphone was held against the radio speaker, often bolstered by a cushion to muffle any background noise. I was fortunate to have a dad with a soldering iron and some jack plugs, enabling a wired link from the back of the radio to the recorder.

The arrival of radio cassette recorders, in the early 1970s, made home taping foolproof and inexpensive compared to using reel to reel machines. However, not all problems could be avoided. An acquaintance of mine lived in Cornwall

and relied on the 1,500m long wave signal. His recordings all contained the 5.55pm Shipping Forecast in its entirety.

Tom Browne replaced Alan Freeman in 1972 with *Solid Gold Sixty*. However, by the mid-1970s, programmes featuring the Top 10 from previous years became a feature. Sunday lunchtimes on BBC Radio 1 had Jimmy Savile's *Double Top Ten Show*.

From 1982-88, Alan Freeman himself introduced *Pick of the Pops Take Two* on London's Capital Radio, before transferring the format – which now featured past charts – to BBC Radio 1 in 1989. Leaving the BBC in 1992, he hosted *Pick of the Pops Take Three* on Capital Gold from 1994-97 before returning to the BBC.

It has remained a weekend fixture on BBC Radio 2 for almost 30 years. Following Freeman's retirement in 2000, it was taken over by Dale Winton and has since been hosted by Tony Blackburn, Paul Gambaccini, Steve Wright and current presenter Mark Goodier, with stand-in cover from Noel Gallagher, Gary Davies and Scott Mills.

With access to unlimited popular music both online and on-air nowadays, it would be difficult for younger listeners today to grasp how important *Pick of the Pops* was in the 1960s. A high point of my weekend was tuning to the closing moments of *Semprini Serenade* or *Movie-Go-Round*, finger poised on the pause key of the Truvox, waiting for the most exciting three words of the week: "Greetings, pop pickers!" 🇬🇧



Mark Goodier has been the permanent host of Pick of the Pops since July 2024.



FOOD & DRINK

TASTES GONE BY AND THE FLAVOURS OF TODAY

In the Club

John Greeves pays homage to the great British pudding



British puddings are more than just desserts; they are edible history and remain a constant in our ever-changing world. For the last 40 years, the Pudding Club has met at the Three Ways House Hotel (01386 438429, threewayshousehotel.com/the-pudding-club), in the village of Mickleton, in the rolling hills of the Cotswolds to preserve the great British Pudding.

The 1980s was a period of culinary change, great British puddings such as treacle pudding, jam roly-poly and spotted dick were being deposed by newcomers like black forest gâteau, cheesecake and tiramisu, as well as off the shelf convenience puddings, something had to be done to save our great British pudding.

At the start, a small group of friends responded to the rallying cry and met once a month in the hotel and, after a light meal, sampled the delights of seven traditional British puddings with lashings of custard. Numbers grew year by year, as guests clamoured for their childhood favourites. Today, the Pudding Club meets every Friday at 7pm and hosts up to 64 guests in the Terrace Room.

The club has a national and international following, attracting people from all walks of life who come from all over Britain, the US, Australia, Japan and

Above: During the winter, guests are served with six hot and one cold pudding accompanied by literally gallons of Bird's custard.

South Africa, in fact, the Pudding Club now encompasses a worldwide guest list. What unites them all is their love for the traditional British pudding. One aficionado has described it as "the eighth wonder of the world." Rick Stein is a known follower of this eccentric pastime, and the Pudding Club has also attracted the likes of Lynda Bellingham, Rustie Lee and the globetrotting Michael Palin, who doubtlessly wishes to encounter the eighth wonder of the world for himself.

Guests meet in the lounge for a complimentary bucks fizz at around 6.45pm, where they're welcomed and greeted by pudding master and host Tim Goff who talks about the Pudding Club and its history before leading everyone to the Terrace Room. Once comfortably seated, Tim paces the floor with a giant wooden spoon, reeling off the rules of the club. The first rule of the Pudding Club is you may eat only one pudding at a time. The second rule is you may have your next helping of pudding only after you've finished the last and, finally, you must visit the pudding buffet table only by invitation and not hide surplus puddings in your napkin, although seconds are not out of order. The record helpings eaten, I'm told, is 27.

The Pudding Club does a Winter Pudding Club and a Summer Pudding Club. In winter, guests may be graced with favourites like Lord Randall's pudding, sticky toffee pudding, jam roly-poly, Sussex pond pudding, bread and butter pudding, spotted dick and syrup sponge. Guests are served with six hot and one cold pudding accompanied by literally gallons of Bird's custard. There's always a great dessert wine to accompany these wonderful puddings.

Summer Pudding Club, which runs



Left: For the last 40 years, the Pudding Club has met at the Three Ways House Hotel in Mickleton, Gloucestershire. Right: A larger selection of cold puddings including Charlotte royale – a lining of swiss roll filled with Bavarian cream – are enjoyed during the summer.


from June to September, serves three classic hot puddings and four traditional cold puddings like summer pudding, Eton mess, lemon posset and Charlotte royale. The puddings reflect the seasonal fruits. Summer or winter, puddings both follow a very light main course of chicken, fish or a vegetarian course so as not to spoil your appetite.

After the main course, the grand parade of puddings is announced, with the kind of pomp and ceremony you'd reserve for the opening of parliament. It's a combination of theatrics, tradition, nostalgia and fervoured anticipation. Each puddings arrives, with the drum roll of spoons, before the serious business of eating takes place with taste and smell bringing back a tide of nostalgia.

Savouring the traditional British pudding is certainly a social event and for the older participants who remember many of these from their childhood. Today, very few people cook from scratch, life has become too busy and there's never seems time like our mother and grandmothers had to make these traditional puddings, which were once considered an everyday occurrence.

After everyone has finished, there's just one more thing to do and that's to vote for the favourite pudding of the night and, as a fully fledged member now, to receive their bona fide certificate. Samantha Hughes (general manager) tells me that recent winners include sticky toffee, syrup sponge and sticky chocolate puddings, although

banoffee pie won last week. Samantha views the occasion as encompassing more than a social night out, where the "queen of puddings" Pat Brian produces many fine traditional puddings and where pudding master Tim keeps guests royally entertained. There's a serious side to all

this, Samantha reminds me: "It's very important to preserve these traditional British Puddings for the younger generation and to introduce them to what the previous generation enjoyed, so the great British pudding isn't lost forever." I can't agree more. 

Manuel Crossing

A popular dinner show, based on the BBC sitcom *Fawlty Towers*, has been adapted to be specially performed on a moving steam train. *Faulty Towers: The Dining Experience*, which is based at the President Hotel, Bloomsbury in London's West End will be making a visit to the Spa Valley Railway (01892 300141, spavalleyrailway.co.uk) on 11 October. Basil, Sybil and Manuel will be serving up mayhem onboard the five-mile heritage railway between Tunbridge Wells West in Kent and Eridge in East Sussex. A wholly immersive and highly

interactive experience where anything can happen, the trip departs from Tunbridge Wells West station at 6.40pm. Priced £75 per person, booking is required for the trip which includes a three-course meal and two hours of laughter.



A West End dinner show, based on the sitcom *Fawlty Towers*, will be making a visit to the Spa Valley Railway on the Kent-Sussex border.

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 80.**



1 Going well on Shell

This diecast model Shell petrol tanker sporting a Bedford cab was one of five different petrol tankers made by Modern Products of London. These toys were the forerunners of the Budgie Toy range which was launched in the mid-1950s to rival Matchbox Toys. Both Modern and Budgie brands were marketed and sold through Woolworths stores.



4 Smoothness & Flavour

This is how chocolate maker Rowntree of York described its twopenny Plain York chocolate bar when it was launched in the mid-1930s. Rowntree's was established in York by Henry and Joseph Rowntree during the early 1860s. Fruit pastilles were introduced in 1881, and Rowntree's Elect Cocoa was launched in 1887.



2 Funny man

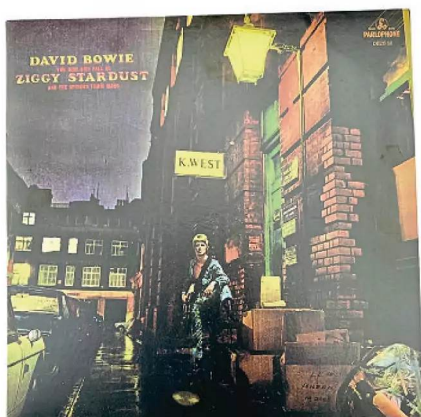
Kinema Toffee was made by TW Parker and company at its toffee works in Newcastle upon Tyne. These small tins were sold in cinema confectionery booths throughout the north-east of England, hence the appearance of that wonderful silent cinema funny man Charlie Chaplin on its lid. Charlie's persona was set after the release of the film *The Tramp* in 1915.

5 A saucy treat

This lovely little bottle once contained a sample of HP sauce which would have been handed out as a free sample. It was unearthed from a rubbish dump near Birmingham many years ago. It was in Birmingham that Edwin Samson Moore made HP Sauce after taking the original recipe from Frederick Gibson Garton in lieu of a vinegar debt.

3 Star man

I was just 17 when David Bowie released this classic album which was one of the first LPs I bought after starting my first job earning £7 per week. The track list included his classic early hit *Starman*, which climbed to No 10 in the charts in 1972. It was produced and recorded at Trident Studios in London.



6 Super Austin

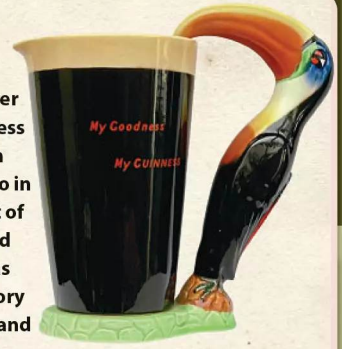
This super Dinky Toy Army Series 200 gallon water tanker was made from 1954 to 1963 and proved to be an extremely popular toy. It was based on the Austin K9 4x4 Loadstar which was modified for military service with increased track clearance.

The K9 was Austin's first new truck design after World War Two and was adapted to many uses.



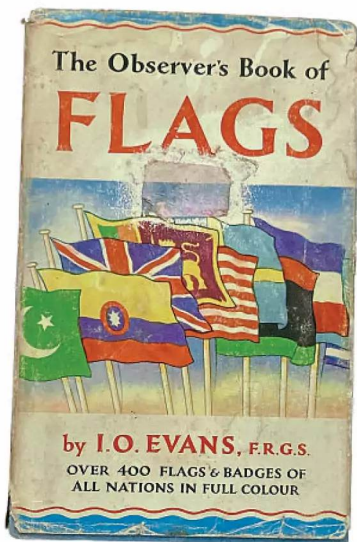
9 My Goodness, my Guinness

This clever ceramic bar top water jug features the famous Guinness toucan which made its debut in the Guinness advertising studio in the autumn of 1935. It was part of the Guinness Zoo Series created by artist Jon Gilroy. This jug was made by the Carlton Ware factory in Stoke-on-Trent in the 1950s and is totally original.



7 Flying the flag

This Observer's Book of Flags pocketbook was published by Frederick Warne & Co in 1959 with a cover price of 6s. It contained details of more than 400 flags of all nations within its 200 pages. It was edited by IO Evans assisted by Mr H Gresham Carr who was the editor of Flags of the World.



8 Catching the eye

This lovely eye-catching vase was designed and produced at the Bretby Pottery during the 1930s. Bretby was founded in the Derbyshire village of Woodville in 1882 by Henry Tooth and William Ault who designed its famous sunburst trademark. Bretby became renowned for its striking art nouveau and art deco designs.



10 Magic bus

The front cover of this August 1956 Meccano Magazine shows the iconic Routemaster which was then regarded as the standard London bus of the future. It was 27ft long and seated 64 passengers. Priced at 1s, Meccano Magazine was eagerly awaited every month by thousands of boys back in the 1950s.



11 Walkie-talkie

This Space Patrol walkie-talkie toy was made by Merit which was the trade name of J & L Randall Ltd. It dates from 1955 and did not require any batteries. The box states that it could operate over a maximum of 300ft by means of the use of clever vibrating sonic diaphragms. It's the wonderful box artwork that makes these space toys so appealing to collectors.



12 Penny for the Guy

With Bonfire Night fast approaching, our traditional fires, spectacular carnivals and Guy Fawkes parades will be in full swing once again. I still have fond memories of the days when we went out collecting pennies for the guy to buy our fireworks. This old badge represents the great British firework maker James Pain & Sons who merged with Wessex in 1964.





The Mystery on the Mantelpiece

David Bell uncovers the story behind a wartime gift to a young British soldier

On a frosty New Year's Day in 1944, a young soldier from Newcastle married the love of his life with barely four hours to spare. My father, Corporal George Bell, a conscript with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, had one eye on the altar and the other on the clock. His last train back to barracks left at 6pm that same evening.

George and his bride, Eva, my mother, exchanged vows in their local parish church in a hurried ceremony. Eva's hands would have trembled, not just from the cold, but from the weight of their impending separation. Within hours,

George was back in uniform and, for the next 650 days, their only contact would be ink on paper.

Regular letters filled with longing crossed the Channel as George embarked on a dangerous journey through war-torn

Right: A conscript with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Corporal George Bell embarked on a dangerous journey through war-torn Europe. Above: Given to George Bell by the Dutch family he sheltered with, the clogs lay quietly on a mantelpiece for decades until his son David set out to uncover the story behind them.





Above: The inscription on the clogs remained a mystery but, with the help of a renowned Dutch war historian, David began to trace the clogs' origin. Bottom Right: David's parents, George and Eva, on their wedding day, New Year's Day 1944.

Europe: landing in Normandy during Operation Overlord, then advancing through France, Belgium, the Netherlands and, finally, Germany.

George was no headline hero, just one of tens of thousands quietly doing their duty for king and country and, in George's case, holding on to the single hope of a safe return to his new wife Eva.

During Operation Market Garden, in the besieged Dutch city of Nijmegen, something unexpected happened, something that would outlive both the war and the man himself.

By the time George arrived in Nijmegen in September 1944, the city had become a frontline battleground. Only weeks earlier, allied bombing raids, tragically mistargeted, had already reduced swathes of the historic centre to rubble. Operation Market Garden had turned the city into a tinderbox. German snipers held the bridges; artillery fire fell daily; the air was thick with smoke, dust, and fear. Civilians and soldiers alike endured constant shelling, collapsing buildings, and a winter that seemed to come early that year. The Waal River, black and swollen, marked not just a tactical line but a thin thread between life and death.

George was billeted with a local family in the Galgenveld district, one of the few areas left relatively intact. Amid the constant threat of air raids and sniper fire, he found a brief respite in their proud home. There, he shared stories of his new wife and the future family he longed for.

Moved by his sincerity, George was

“ This simple gesture of humanity cut through the stifling terror, a quiet offering in the heart of chaos. ”

given a pair of tiny wooden baby clogs by the Dutch family matriarch, personally inscribed on each sole. A token of hope in a time when hope itself was scarce. Even as the front lines shifted and the fate of Europe teetered on a knife's edge, this simple gesture of humanity cut through the stifling terror, a quiet offering in the heart of chaos.

George survived the war. He returned to Eva in October 1945, clogs in hand and, nine months later, I was born.

I grew up with those clogs on the family mantelpiece at home. They were all my father brought back from the war apart from an enduring pride in having done his bit. My dad wasn't the sort to make a fuss. He didn't talk much about being a soldier but those clogs, they said everything he couldn't.

The inscription on the clogs, worn down by time, remained a mystery. Yet I never forgot them. Recently, inspired by curiosity and affection – and following an appearance on the BBC Antiques Roadshow VE Day Special – I contacted Joost Rosendahl, a renowned Dutch war historian, to help trace the clogs' origin.

Against the odds, Joost uncovered 1940s census records identifying four

possible homes in Nijmegen. One address stood out: a detached house on Curaçaweg in the Galgenveld district. A house still standing today.

Paula and Maarten Strijbosch knew the story well. Their father, Fons, had spoken of the British soldiers who stayed with him during the war and, yes, he had once given a pair of baby clogs to an English soldier for his new wife.

Eighty-plus years on, the threads of war had woven two families together. Plans are now underway for me to visit Nijmegen with my daughter to meet Paula and Maarten and to see the very house on Curaçaweg where, amid one of World War Two's most desperate campaigns, a Dutch family and a young British soldier shared shelter, uncertainty and hope.

I'm both nervous and excited. I feel like I'm stepping out of my father's shadow. I'll be taking his clogs home to meet the wonderful family who gave them to him, walking the very same streets my father once marched, and cross the threshold of the Curaçaweg dwelling – modernised, no doubt – but still echoing the quiet defiance and generosity of 1944, where Fons Strijbosch and a young British soldier once shared not just shelter, but belief in better days to come.

There's something incredibly grounding about it. In Nijmegen, a city rebuilt on courage and adversity, it's not about medals or battles. It's about a simple moment of humanity. 



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 193 Transport Auctions of London – Sale of Underground, Railwayana, Bus, Tram & Trolleybus Memorabilia, 5 July (transportauctionslondon.com)

This sale included the usual mix of treasure from across the broad transport collecting area of interest from paperwork to cast iron signs. The outstanding prices in the 500-lot sale went to two large collections of tickets. The top price paid was for 800+ BR(S) platform and train tickets (alphabetic range A to M), estimated at £120-150. A similar lot and estimate represented the M to Z range, again 800+ tickets, that sold for £3,000. The next TAL auction is to be held on 25 October.

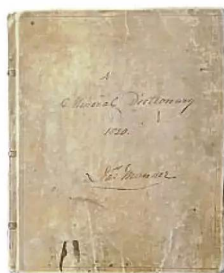
SOLD FOR £3,800



LOT 83 Rare Book Auctions – The July Library Auction, 15 July (rarebookauctions.co.uk)

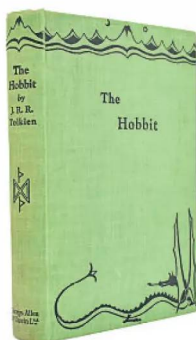
A 19th century dictionary of mining terms as used in Derbyshire proved to be more sought after than what even the auctioneers had in mind. A Mineral Dictionary of Words, Or Terms Used By the Miners in Derbyshire 1821, signed by the author, James Mander, was estimated at £200-300, but soon left those figures behind. Records show that 300 copies of the book had originally been printed and sold by the author, making him a profit of around £70 at the time.

SOLD FOR £17,000



LOT 1 Auctioneum – Books & Works on Paper Timed Sale, 6 August (auctioneum.co.uk)

A first edition, first impression copy of JRR Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (or *There and Back Again*), 1937, created great interest for collectors eager to own a copy never seen to market before. From the family library of botanist Joseph Hubert Priestley (1893-1944), the first edition had black and white illustrations by the author. This copy had no dust jacket to its publisher's



original green cloth cover, plus a few marks and imperfections, but nonetheless was highly desirable. The pre-sale estimate was £10,000-12,000.

SOLD FOR £43,000

LOT 129 Lay's Auctioneers – Antique, Interiors and Asian Sale, 7 August (davidlay.co.uk)

The final Cornish tin ingot to be smelted from the last Cornish mine was sold at a Penzance-based auction to raise funds for the Children's Hospice South West. The ingot came from the last consignment of concentrate following the closure of South Crofty mine in 1998. This final ingot weighs 12.5kg (the traditional 28lb) and includes the old lamb and flag hot marks in addition to a new hot mark. The ingot was sold complete with a certificate of authenticity, and a jar of concentrate.

SOLD FOR £6,400



COMING UP

LOTS TBA Crewe Railwayana Autumn Online Auction, 3-5 October (ukrailwayana.com)

Making its auction debut at CRA's Autumn Auction is the cast brass nameplate Brecon Castle from GWR Castle Class No 5023 – this is the right-hand side plate and comes complete with its original bill of sale. Also among the nameplates in this sale is Firth of Forth from BR Standard Britannia Class 4-6-2 No 70051 74 Squadron from Battle of Britain Pacific No 34080 and the nameplate 303 Squadron and plaque as carried by preserved No 34053 Sir Keith Park for 12 months to commemorate the actions of Polish squadrons that fought in the Battle of Britain.



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.



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10 minute drive from M55

SATURDAY 25TH OCTOBER 2025

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Yesterday Remembered

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The Hard Shell

Susannah White of Dawlish, Devon remembers:

When I was a child, we had a tortoise called Winnie who had belonged to my father when he was a boy in the 1950s. He called his pet Winston after Churchill, but this name had to be changed when he discovered she was female.

Winnie's first home was with my father's family in Purbrook, just outside Portsmouth. My grandmother cared for the tortoise while my father was away at school, doing National Service and in the early days of his marriage.

The little tortoise finally joined him again, when she became our family pet in the 1970s.

During my childhood, Winnie spent her summers on our back lawn in a wooden pen, and she hibernated for the winter in the garden shed. Her favourite foods were lettuce and dandelion leaves, and I loved feeding her, watching her wrinkly neck extending, and her tiny mouth opening as she took the food from my hand.

Winnie was not our only pet, we had a dog too, but she was not afraid of him. From time to time, the little white West Highland terrier would join Winnie in her pen. He sniffed her curiously then sat beside her looking rather embarrassed. He never resented her presence or barked at her for entering his territory. For the most part, they coexisted happily. Whenever the dog joined Winnie in her pen, it presented us with the perfect opportunity to take a photograph of them together.

At one time, Winnie escaped, and we launched a local appeal, asking people to help us find her. Interestingly, several other



lost tortoises were brought to our door before we found her. There seemed to be tortoises of all shapes and sizes wandering down Devon's roads and lanes.

Winnie was eventually discovered on a nearby estate, and we never knew what adventures she had had during her time away from us, but we were very glad to have her back again. We kept a closer eye on her after that, and we hoped that the other wayward tortoises were reunited with their owners too.

In those days, quite a few people kept tortoises as pets. The old ladies next door had two enormous tortoises which made poor Winnie look tiny.

But the most famous local tortoise was Timothy.

When I was a child, Timothy lived near us at Powderham Castle, but, prior to this, he had been a ship's mascot on the HMS Queen during the Crimean war. This brave little tortoise had survived the bombardment of Sevastopol. But, by the time we knew him, he was enjoying a peaceful retirement in Devon, having given to the Courtenay family of Powderham in 1892.

We loved visiting Timothy in Powderham Castle's beautifully kept gardens. We were told that he came when his owners called his name, and that he loved eating strawberries, but we were not allowed to feed him or touch him due to his great age. He had a small label tied to his shell saying: "My name is Timothy. I am very old Please do not pick me up."

Timothy the tortoise lived until 2004 and was believed



Above: For the most part, the family's West Highland terrier coexisted peacefully with Winnie, often joining the tortoise in her pen. Below: Susannah in fancy dress as a tortoise at a local carnival.

to be around 160 years old when he died. After his death, the artist Jane Perkins created a commemorative portrait of him in fine clothes as if he was a member of the

Courtenay family, which I guess he was.

I commemorated our own tortoise, Winnie, by collecting a wide range of tortoise memorabilia. I had tortoise toys, brooches, various tortoise ornaments, and a tortoise shaped birthday cake. I also dressed up as a tortoise for the local carnival, and looking back at the photos, I should think my shell was pretty hard to make.

I still have some of my tortoise ornaments, and whenever I pick them up, I remember dear old Winnie and Timothy. Interestingly, just like Winnie, Timothy turned out to be female tortoise many years after being given a male name.



Going to Granny's

Cathy Naylor of Waltham Chase, Hampshire remembers:

Some of the happiest memories I have of my childhood involved spending time with Granny and Grandpa, not just because we saw a lot of them, but because it always felt so special. Between 1960 and 1974, my mother's parents lived with their black pug, Joe, in a Victorian mansion house in central London that had the grand name of Westminster Palace Gardens.

In the early days, we went on the train, firstly from Woking and then from Ash, Surrey, changing at Guildford for the fast train to Waterloo. I remember sitting by a compartment window watching the telegraph lines rise and fall, and the stations flashing past. Sometimes, if Mother took the double pram for my younger siblings, we rode in the guard's van with mail bags, and baskets of pigeons. At Waterloo, I remember handing my ticket to the porter at the gate who tore it and gave half back to me. Later, we went in the car, which was not nearly such fun.



Those early days in Westminster sparked a love of London in Cathy and she continues to visit her old haunts.



Entry to Westminster Palace Gardens was through two vast iron gates, under the first floor at the front of the house, and into a narrow courtyard where a fountain played. I drank from it once when we were staying there and was sick in the night. I was kept at Granny's while my siblings went for a treat the next day. Serves me right.

Their flat was on the sixth floor, which meant going up in the lift, a huge delight for my brother who loved pressing the buttons. I remember that he wanted to be a liftman when he grew up.

Mostly, we went there for the day and had lunch with Granny. Grandpa, a retired university professor from New Zealand, caught the No 11 bus on weekdays to the London School of Economics, where he had spent most of his career, and where he still had an office. He loved peppermint creams and always left a bag for us to have one after lunch. He was at home on Sundays, and I remember one of his catch phrases was "Clever old Grandpa", and he could crack open a nut with his fingers.

Granny sometimes gave us an Animal Bar each to eat after lunch. She told us to give Mummy a bit, and we did – the tiniest of corners. These bars had animal faces imprinted on them. The monkey was my favourite.

There were plenty of toys to play with too, some of which had been my mother's and her siblings when they were children. They were kept in a tallboy in the spare bedroom, and we had hours of fun with them.

Granny, a former teacher, was highly creative. She told stories she had made up, or we would imagine them together. She also made a scrapbook full of colourful pictures, short stories and poems, which I still have today. When we weren't seeing her, I would send a shipping order of doll's clothes for her to make and look forward to receiving a package through the post.

Most visits included taking Joe for a walk to St James's Park, to feed the ducks



Cathy's grandparents in their garden at Putney in 1976.

and pelicans, or to have a picnic tea. At the entrance opposite Queen Anne's Gate was a white statue that was also a drinking fountain. We were allowed a drink from it, but only in a cup.

We took it in turns to stay with our grandparents in the holidays. I loved going out with one of them to take Joe for a walk. Granny went to St James's Park in the mornings so that I could play in the playground, or to a patch of grass in Victoria Street in front of Caxton Hall where we fed the pigeons. Grandpa took Joe out in the evenings, and he would smoke a cigarette. This was followed by a Polo mint, and we had one too. We all gave him Polos for his birthday and for Christmas, so I doubt he ever had to buy any.

My grandparents stayed with us too, particularly at Easter, and for a week in August. We met them at Ash Vale station in the car, and I wonder how poor Granny and Joe managed to squeeze in the back of Mother's old Ford Popular with the three of us. Walking the dog in Ash was a special treat because Granny took him over to the local recreation ground, and we could play on the swings. We weren't allowed to go on our own, because it meant crossing a busy road.

In 1974, they moved to a flat in Putney, where they continued to be a highlight in my life, but those early days in Westminster sparked a love of trains and of London. I still like to visit those old haunts today.

Art Attack

David James of Redhill, Surrey remembers:

Are children's art competitions still "a thing"? They certainly played a big part in my 1970s childhood, and the prizes I occasionally won were a welcome source of additional treats in the long intervals between Christmases and birthdays.

Art was my favourite lesson at school and, without wishing to boast, I was pretty good at it. So, juvenile art competitions – which seemed to be used as a promotional tool for any number of products and services back then – were tailor-made for me. Whether they were a sound marketing strategy on the part of their promoters is anybody's guess. But the competitions must have attracted numerous entries, and there was usually a requirement to provide some proof of purchase to accompany whatever daubs were forwarded optimistically to the organisers. So, they must have covered their costs at the very least.

I managed to net quite a haul of prizes while the age range window remained open for me (entry to most competitions was capped somewhere between ages 14 to 16, as I recall). At my peak, aged around 12, I was probably earning more from art than Van Gogh did when he was starving in Antwerp. Although Van Gogh was presumably never paid in book tokens.

Some prizes I liked better than others. Some tended towards the educational (groan). Others less so. A box full of Snoopy-themed stationery was very welcome. I think I still have the Snoopy pencil sharpener



somewhere. A prize of books to be selected from a local independent bookshop was gratefully received too.

My father accompanied me throughout the selection process and, with hindsight, I think he may have been nudging me towards the highbrow and away from the frivolous. I'm sure he meant well, and I might otherwise have returned with an extensive library devoted entirely to the topics of ghosts, UFOs and sea monsters.

There was no escaping education when I somehow won a selection of titles from the Everyman's Library, which published cheap editions of the classics. Why 13-year-old me thought I would enjoy Plato's *The Trial and Death of Socrates* I really can't say. Did I somehow mistake Plato for Pluto and thought it was science fiction, my then-obsession? At any rate, I have that book to this day, with its dull red cover and yellowing pages. I know that cover well, because I still haven't got past it.

Was there a knack to winning kids' art competitions? Some ability with a pencil or brush was needed, for sure. But I did have another weapon in my arsenal. Or paint box, rather. And that was shameless flattery of the competition's sponsors. I deployed a particularly egregious example of this technique when I entered a competition run by the Co-op, which invited children to depict their hometown as it might look at some far-off future date. Which was no doubt meant to sound impossibly distant, like the year 1999 or something. I lost no time in rendering a poster paint vision of a dystopian nightmare but made sure that above the desolation I depicted a glittering glass skyscraper, topped by a beacon-like neon sign that read: "Co-op: International

Distribution". And it worked – I won. I think the prize that time was a Star Trek board game. A bit like snakes and ladders, but with dilithium crystals.

What was my best prize? That distinction must go to a Raleigh Chopper bike, in silver with fluorescent orange trim, much like the jet fighters of the era. This was courtesy of John Menzies, who then rivalled WH Smith on the nation's high streets. I still have the



With the photographs of David collecting the Chopper from the Bournemouth branch of Menzies not coming out properly, a photographer was despatched to take some of him at home.

letter telling me I had won the company's Doctor Who-themed competition, sent from its Edinburgh HQ. The envelope even featured a drawing (appropriately enough) of a grinning Tom Baker as the Fourth Doctor. Metaphorical fireworks exploded in my head as I read the letter with glee.

Collecting the Chopper required a visit to the Bournemouth branch of Menzies, where a photographer had been hired to take multiple pictures of me sitting self-consciously in the saddle, as Saturday afternoon shoppers watched indifferently. But in a hiccup unthinkable today, none of those pictures came out. So, the unlucky photographer had to travel from Bournemouth to my home in Portsmouth to take the pictures again, this time against the backdrop of my mother's now fantastically inappropriate African artefacts.

I'd love to conclude with some of the many wonderful adventures that the Chopper made possible, just like Nick Mandis on his Raleigh Grifter (BoB, November 2024). But my parents were adamant that as we lived on a busy main road, I had to sell the bike and put the money into a Post Office savings account, as an investment for my future. So, it was with some slight sense of defiance that, years later, I spent the very last few quid of the £50 I got for that bike on 20 Marlboro.



David's best prize from countless art competitions was a Raleigh Chopper bike provided by John Menzies.

Heaven is a Half-pint

Ken Duke of Harrogate, North Yorkshire remembers:

Grandpa was born near the end of Victoria's reign. He died 79 years later.

An ordinary working-class Londoner, brought up in the north-east corner of the capital; hard-working, cheerful and always respectful of authority, as most were at that time.

His family home was a local off-licence. On leaving school, he followed both his father and his grandfather into the trade, learning how to run the off-licence that they had in their turn managed on behalf of a well-known brewery for many years.

He reached conscription age midway through the Great War and did his bit for his country, soldiering in Mesopotamia against the Turks. In true Tommy fashion, he didn't elaborate on the ghastly experiences he went through but came out with the occasional story laced with dark humour. We never did find out if he'd killed anyone, but he certainly saw sights that were the stuff of nightmares.

Married when peace returned once more,



his wife produced a son and daughter (my mother) before she sadly died when Mum was seven years old. Grandpa remarried later and, together with his new wife, ran the off-licence up to their retirement in 1970, when they had to vacate, moving into a nearby house which Grandpa had shrewdly purchased before retirement.

As a youngster, we visited the grandparents about once a week. To a kid, the off-licence seemed a wondrous place. We climbed a couple of what to me looked like giant steps up to the big double doors which, when pushed open, activated a jangling bell. Inside, we were confronted by a solid oak bar complete with three polished brass handles for pulling pints. This gave a clue that in earlier times the off-licence sold ale direct from the barrel, with the locals bringing their own jugs to fill up. Grandpa would buff up the handles religiously each week until they shone, even though they no longer served a purpose.

On the wall at the end of the bar hung a huge and ancient barometer. I had no idea how it worked but usually gave it close scrutiny in case anything interesting was taking place on the dial; nothing ever did.

At the end of the serving area was a trapdoor in the floor. This was where I could act out my own journey to the centre of the earth. Once opened, a wooden ladder was revealed which descended to hidden depths – well, perhaps 6 or 7ft to the cellar floor. I often went down there with Grandpa among the barrels and crates with dim lighting hardly penetrating into the dark corners; it was the next best thing to potholing.

Grandpa used to enjoy telling us that the cellar was used as an unofficial air raid shelter during World War Two, and that some of the most memorable times were spent there in the company of a dozen or more neighbours and customers as bombs rained down overhead. I've got my own reason to be pleased the cellar was used in this way – my mum met my dad while sheltering.

Parked in the back yard was an ancient three-wheeled handcart which had been passed down to Grandpa through the generations. He used it up to the day he retired to deliver drinks to local customers who couldn't get to the

off-licence – probably the last in his trade to provide such a service. I often wonder what happened to it after he retired, it should have gone into a museum. An ancient tortoise shared this outdoor space and had its own wooden hutch, naturally built by Grandpa.

Although my grandparents enjoyed a holiday each year, usually in Clacton, Grandpa always seemed pleased to get back, he was definitely a creature of habit (characterised by his jaunty whistling – always the Eton Boating Song). When at the seaside, weather permitting, he sat in a deckchair on the beach wearing his trilby hat and best jacket and tie; in fact he never went outside unless "properly" dressed and after a close shave using a lethal cut-throat razor.

The highlight of all our visits to our grandparents was at Christmas, when we went there on Boxing Day. My parents didn't make too big a deal of decorations or a tree, but my grandparents always had a nice, big spruce with branches adorned with real candles that were lit for our visit and, to my delight, small parcels containing presents. In return, Grandpa was given tobacco or pipe cleaners (he and his pipe were inseparable) or a box of turkish delight which he particularly enjoyed.

After my grandparents retired and left the off-licence they never really settled into a new routine. I had the sense that Grandpa especially didn't know how to use his time, how he must have missed his regular flow of customers and the friendly chat that was such a feature of his working life.

I was in my late 20 when Grandpa finally took his leave of us following a heart problem. It was the only time I recall him being ill, let alone in hospital. As was his way, Grandpa slipped quietly away without making a fuss.

I now live many miles away but went past his old off-licence a while back. It has been converted to a house and is unrecognisable except for the backyard, enclosed by its high brick wall and appearing unaltered, but probably lacking a tortoise. Luckily my mum passed to me a fine old photo of the place taken when all three generations lived and worked there, all standing in front of the building in a typical Edwardian pose.

I hope you are still pulling those celestial bar handles up there, Grandpa, it's thirsty work inside the pearly gates. Thanks for the memories.



The Mann, Crossman & Paulin owned off-licence, which Ken's grandfather would run, just like his father and grandfather, pictured around 1900.

Imperfect But Charming

Roger Bowen of Blaenavon, Torfaen remembers:

It was 1974 and the joy of having my first personal transport was very special. Mind you, the financial outlay of £130 did represent twice my monthly take-home pay. The motor in question: a white Hillman Super Imp of 1965 registration.

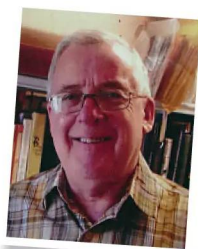
The Imp was the Rootes Group's direct competitor to the Mini: two-door, similar size but with the small capacity engine in the rear (like its foreign contemporaries the Fiat 500 and NSU Prinz). It promised economical motoring, good roadholding and ease of maintenance, at least that was the hope. I believe that the Imp was the last car you could buy in Britain for an on-the-road price of under £500. Mind you, this package excluded certain luxury optional extras such as a heater.

Of course, as an embryo boy racer, my preferred set of wheels would have been a Triumph TR6 roadster, as driven by my good friend Jimmy who had a far better job than me or, better still, that great product of the Welsh motor scene – the Gilbern Invader. The latter sported a 3-litre V6 engine and, with a glass fibre body, was light and extremely nippy. If I had been able to afford either of these fine motors, I would probably have been an even greater danger to other road users and to myself.

The Imp was a much safer option, but the problem was the model was sprung on an unsuspecting British public with many of the teething problems associated with the new car still to be resolved. I soon found myself on what we might call today a "steep learning curve".

Young drivers might be surprised to learn that cars from the 1960/70s could not be relied on to always start on cold mornings. My remedy of covering the engine on winter nights with a wool blanket worked well until the morning when, late for work, I forgot to remove the engine cosy, and the smell of singed material told its own tale.

What today's motorists might find surprising is that, 50 years ago, there was a still an outside chance of the amateur



DIY mechanic getting a broken-down car moving with their own knowhow. Today, of course, with ECUs, warning lights and buzzers for every perceived risk, and sensors which are by no means foolproof, what chance do we have other than to take the vehicle to a dealer who may have little more idea than ourselves how to solve the problem? As it was, I became quite proficient at removing the Imp's distributor cap and fiddling with the innards. My efforts even sometimes worked.

Learning to drive, I discovered that lessons came cheaper if you learnt in your own car. Taking my test in Abergavenny on a Tuesday – the busiest day of the week – I had to negotiate roads crammed with farm vehicles taking animals to the livestock market. On the emergency stop, the Imp's moveable back seat collapsed, whacking the tester in the back and almost propelling him through the windscreen. Bizarrely, in those days the examiner did not have to wear a seatbelt; I mischievously supposed that this was so they could exit the car rapidly if things got scary.

Petrol was 6s 8d and, with the Imp doing 40mpg, I felt the world was my oyster, or at least the south Wales valleys were. The car allowed me to explore formerly unexplored

places. One foray into the depths of the country with our pub quiz team led us to a tavern from which came the apparent sounds of ricocheting bullets; was there a Western on the television I wondered? Entering the bar revealed the answer to the mystery – inside was a group of men firing airguns at a line of tin cans.

Ownership of the Imp sadly lasted just 18 months. This short period was marred by a succession of engine cooling issues and failed cylinder head gaskets, not to mention an alarming episode when the rear compartment filled with exhaust smoke almost asphyxiating my sister.

The end came on a visit to London to help my brother move flat. Approaching the A4, the Imp started to belch black smoke. Discretion meant a detour down the Fulham Palace Road and the sale of the car to an Esso garage for scrap value. It was never going to get me back to Wales.

Despite its many good points, only 440,000 Hillman Imps (of all varieties) were sold, whereas the original Alec Issigonis-designed Mini sold more than 5m units. Today, many Imps are still on our roads, maintained by devoted followers who have learned to overcome the early cooling problems. I wish them well.



Although Roger sold his Hillman Imp after 18 months, many are still on the road.

Photograph: Creative Commons/Allen Watkin

A Sad Finale

Maggie Cobbett of Ripon, North Yorkshire remembers:

Lawnswood High School in Leeds, an all-girls grammar school until the start of the 1970s, had a whole host of proud traditions, both formal and informal. If called upon, I could still sing every line of the school song, drilled into me from the age of eleven and performed annually from the "risers" of Leeds Town Hall on speech day. "Shadowy the throng, yet thousands strong, the loyal hearts who built this school," it began and now, with some of my contemporaries already in the ranks of the shadowy throng, memories are becoming even more precious.

Things had relaxed a bit since Miss Longworth took over the headship at the end of my first year at LHS. Her predecessor, Miss Holden, revered by all, was a very hard act to follow. In post for more than 20 years, she had seen the school through the war years, including its brief evacuation to Ripon. Changes came gradually, but by the time I reached the sixth form, the complex system of prefects and sub-prefects had



given way to a school council and we had all been grateful to say goodbye to compulsory headgear. Up to that point, a stiff hat or soft beret with the school badge on it had to be worn at all times when we were on our way to and from Lawnswood. Anyone spotted bareheaded received a hat detention as a badge of shame and had to wear the loathed object all day long. (I think an exception was made for swimming lessons.) Bouffant hairstyles were popular for a while, though, and some of us honoured the hat rule more in the breach than the observance. We used to fold our berets in half, secure them to the backs of our heads with hair grips and then backcomb vigorously over them until they all but disappeared. Older girls were allowed to replace their gabardines with duffel coats, which were popular because they made us look more grownup when we encountered students from Leeds University on the bus. Otherwise, the uniform remained much the same, with navy blue tunics for first and second formers (on the grounds that they had no waists) and A-line skirts of respectable length for everyone else, worn with a white blouse and school tie. The summer term saw us all in blazers over blue, green, pink or yellow and white candy-striped cotton frocks.

Back then, there was no leaving school as soon as our A-levels were over. Rather it was expected that we would complete the summer term and take a full part in whatever activities were planned. One of the most cherished traditions was the concert put on by sixth form leavers for everyone below us in the pecking order. It generally consisted of a mixture of musical items and sketches with well-worn themes

familiar to everyone at the school. Stars and black marks, the rivalry between the four houses, segregation of the sexes enforced by the invisible border line down the middle of the playing field that we shared with the boys' grammar school, confusingly called Leeds Modern (Alan Bennett is probably the best known of its former pupils) or the delights of the ice cream van parked by the back gate, where our 99s were topped with "bug juice". The area outside the headmistress's office had always been called the "Crush Hall", although nobody ever seemed to know why, and featured in the first verse of the unofficial school song. There were also, of course, references to members of staff and the administration and these were as cheeky as the performers thought they could get away with. School meals were a good target, particularly the huge variety of sponges served up by the dinner ladies: treacle sponge, chocolate sponge, lemon sponge, raspberry sponge etc with the persistent rumour that rainbow sponge was created by combining all the leftovers from the rest.

All went well until a group of girls performed a sketch which would scarcely raise an eyebrow nowadays but proved disastrous. The curtain rose on two large empty flowerpots. Between them was a sad-faced and heavily pregnant Little Weed in a maternity smock. As the audience was taking this in, one of the sopranos from the school choir trilled from backstage.

"Which of these two flower pot men, was it Bill or was it Ben?" Everyone in the hall was familiar with the lines sung towards the end of every episode of the well-loved children's television series, but it took a few seconds

for the implication to sink in. When it did, there was a shocked silence, punctuated by a few nervous laughs, before Miss Longworth rose to her feet. Condemning the sketch as "completely unsuitable for first form consumption," she closed down the whole show. What a sad end to what had been a joyous finale for those of us soon to leave Lawnswood High School forever.



Maggie and her Lawnswood High School colleagues on the day of the sixth form concert in July 1966.



The Grand Tour

Memories of going to the museum from The Francis Frith Collection

The Chadwick Museum, Bolton, Lancashire

(Photograph taken in 1893)

Built on land bordering Queen's Park, it was simply a wonderful and exotic place. As a five-year-old first-timer, until it closed for good (when I was 11 years old), I visited the place so many times you would have thought I lived there. The custodian and his helpers were always explaining to me the items and where they were from and how important they be preserved for children and grandchildren. Because I was there so often, the custodian let me enter areas that were off limits, affording me a better in-depth visit. Some 35 years later, when I visited Egypt the first time, my memories of those Chadwick days came flooding back. At the National Museum in Cairo, I saw those things that I learned so much about from the custodian at the Chadwick Museum.

Mike Wilson



Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow

(Photograph taken in 2005)

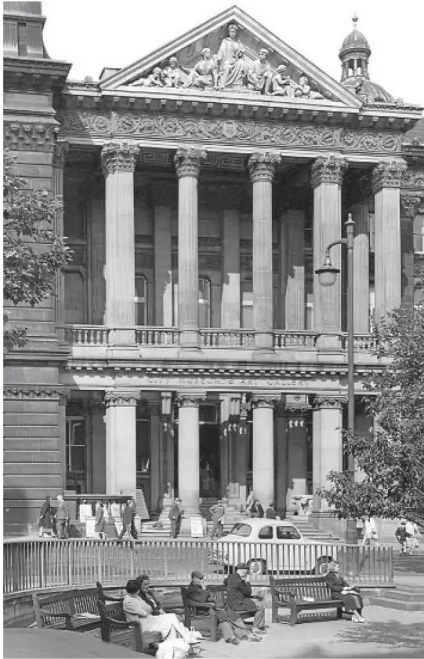
We used to go to the art gallery and museum on Sundays, especially if it was raining. We took the tramcar from Possilpark right to the door. My sister and our four brothers spent many happy hours there, looking in wonder at all the amazing things in the display cabinets. We did not appreciate the art until much later, especially when we had to pay 1s to stand in line to view Salvador Dalí's painting of the crucifixion, as it had apparently cost the museum its entire budget that year. I am anxious to go back home and see the renovations that have taken place, I only hope they have not changed too much as it is one of my favourite places to visit.

Mary Dudgeon



Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham

(Photograph taken around 1960)



I used to take my three children to the art gallery and natural history museum in the 1970s/80s, but they liked the science museum in Newhall Street best. I used to love the natural history part with the stuffed animals and skeletons. However, I recently visited the art gallery and used the headphones and it was great to have the paintings described so that you could notice things that you would otherwise have missed. We are so lucky to have all this culture in Birmingham.

Sheila McKinstry

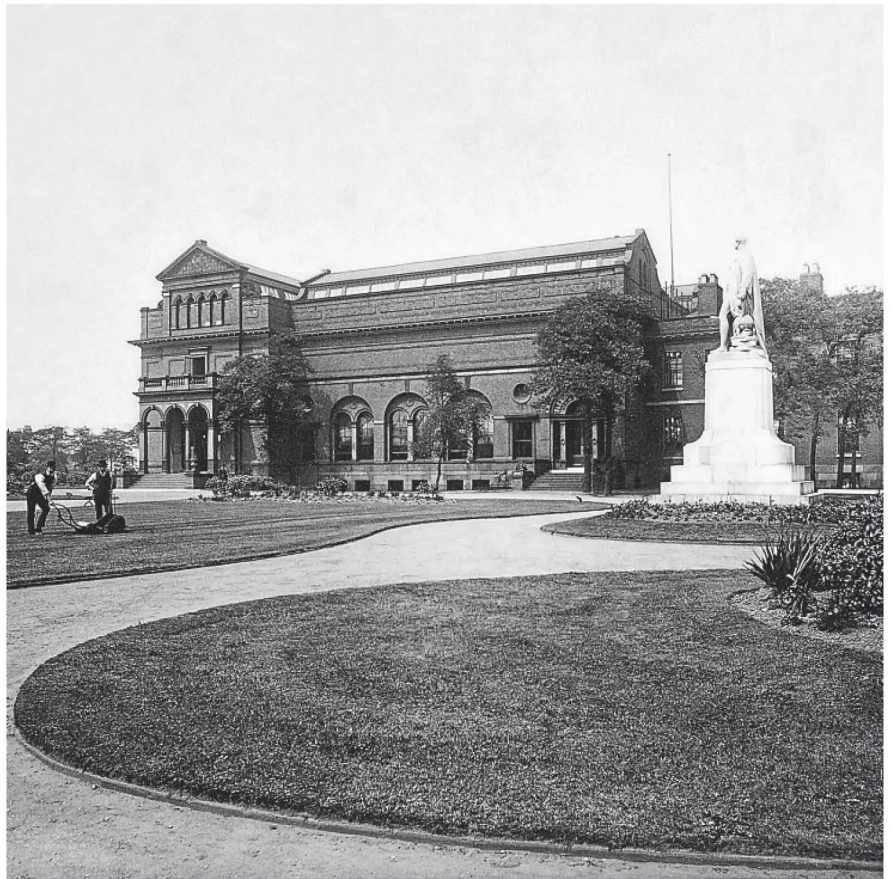
Salford Museum and Art Gallery, Peel Park, Salford

(Photograph taken around 1889)

In about 1950/1951, I used to go to a museum club each Saturday morning at Salford Museum, Peel Park. When the statue of Queen Victoria was removed because of extensions to Salford Technical College (now Salford University), I remember they found a "time capsule" under it and it was an old sweet jar which had coins and

newspaper articles in it. They passed it around our group at the museum club. Once, we were taken down into the cellar, and I remember seeing an Egyptian sarcophagus and how scary I thought it was down in that cellar.


Mal Woods



The Francis Frith Collection

More than 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? 



Although you can no longer get into Kew Gardens for 3d,
Bob Barton finds plenty to do in the capital for free

As a youngster with a limited amount of cash, I used to spend days out in the capital enjoying delights that were totally free. These included getting lost in the maze at Hampton Court Palace, window shopping in the multifarious toy section of Gamages' department store and exploring the roof garden of Derry & Toms in Kensington, with its exotic flamingos. I could spend a day in the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew by handing over a threepenny bit.

These bargains may have gone but there's still lots that can be enjoyed free of charge. London's National Museums, hundreds of acres of Royal Parks and the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace included. However, I'm devoting this Postcard from... to some lesser-known bargain attractions that I've visited recently.

I beg your indulgence, as I've been pining for a machine that no-one uses anymore. The subject of my preoccupation is a search for the humble typewriter. This was a quest during recent forays in the capital. Ever since I was given a 1930s Royal "sit-up-and-beg" as a nine-year-old (it cost £5 secondhand), I've been an ardent fan of this largely abandoned technology. (Though not as committed as Tom Hanks, who has reputedly collected



300 typewriters and often replies to fan letters using one.) I bashed out an article for my school magazine and was hooked. Before long, I was typing stencils for the school's Roneo duplicator and using correction fluid like a pro.

Reading-born television personality Simon Doonan, a former creative director of Barneys New York department store, said the soundtrack to the 20th century was the clacking and clanging of typewriters. I couldn't agree more, though my first clunky Royal involved more hammering than clacking.

TOP: Coal Drops Yard, a former goods yards for King's Cross station, has been redeveloped while keeping its historical interest. **Left:** Refurbished Remingtons jostle for space with Coronas at the Typewriter Emporium inside the Tea Rooms at the old Truman Brewery.

Photographs: Bob Barton



Left: The old Truman Brewery, a brick-built monument to London's industrial past, is at the heart of Brick Lane Market. Right: On the riverside, near Tate Modern, typewriter poets will compose and type an original poem on any subject for a modest fee.

Markets are wonderful places in which to wander, daydream, find a bargain and, sometimes, typewriters. Among my favourites is Brick Lane in the East End. At weekends, the old Truman Brewery, a brick-built monument to the city's industrial past, comes alive with buyers, sellers and cafe dwellers. Its Tea Rooms (020 7770 6028, bricklane-tearooms.co.uk) are full of curio and art stalls, a haven for collectors. One is called the Typewriter Emporium (01895 237748, typewriter-emporium.co.uk), where an array of vintage machines line metal shelves. Remingtons jostled for space with Coronas and I picked up a copy of hardback typist's course book, Pitman's Business Typewriting (fifth edition, 1952) going for a song. The proprietor allowed me to browse and take photographs, though wasn't keen on my reminiscences. Apparently, his days are filled with people eulogising about their careers beginning on Imperials and finishing on IBM golf-balls.

I find the South Bank is always worth a wander, often with the destination of Tate Modern (020 7887 8888, tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern) – in the former Bankside power station – in mind. On the riverside, near this modern art gallery, one can usually find one or two typewriter poets plying their trade. These artists-with-a-difference will compose and type an original poem on any subject for a modest fee. If not too busy, they're just as happy to chat. I first came across this arcane trade in a Cheltenham pub, during the Literary Festival, a few years ago. A young man named Lewis "Tumbleweed" Parker was typing verses for customers on his Adler portable. I spoke with a poet on the South Bank who told me that Lewis sometimes works there but it must have been his day off. An American lady was also having a go, possibly for the first time, and seemed to be enjoying every minute of the experience.

Nearby, at Waterloo Bus Garage, I tried a good value cafe that I'd heard about. In effect, it is the Go-Ahead company's drivers' canteen but the public is welcome. Walking past red electric buses and a large sign saying "no revving of engines" I entered this no-frills diner. I enjoyed the generous all-day breakfast for £5.50, sitting next to two theatrical types from the Old Vic, which is close by.

After lunch, I continued my exploration of SE1 at the community-run Red Cross Garden in Redcross Way. Laid out by social reformer Octavia Hill in 1887, this oasis, with its pond and flowerbeds, was designed as a place for Southwark's poor to relax and enjoy nature. It was known as "Octavia's open-air sitting room". Along one side are the toytown-like Red Cross Cottages, built for the "working poor" and still providing social housing today.

The Science Museum (033 0058 0058, sciencemuseum.org.uk) is a perennial favourite. Leaving aside its "rock star" attractions such as big steam engines, aircraft and an early computer the size of my kitchen, I head straight for the displays of gadgets that were once everyday items. There, among the gramophones, candlestick telephones and radiograms, are several notable typewriters. I studied the Underwood No 1 (1897) "among the first with fully visible writing" and a curious "noiseless" machine dating from 1921. According to a catalogue entry, it "gives that absolute quiet so essential for clear thinking".

Some museums are less well-known. Earlier this year I was lucky enough to visit the volunteer-run Wandsworth Prison Museum. Housed in a prison-issue shed outside this intimidating Victorian building, there are hundreds of items relating to its history. I felt as though I was entering a strange cabinet of curiosities. Exhibits include uniforms, a cell door, escape risk



Celebrating the social reformer Octavia Hill with a blue plaque at Red Cross Garden, which was designed as a place for Southwark's poor to relax and enjoy nature.

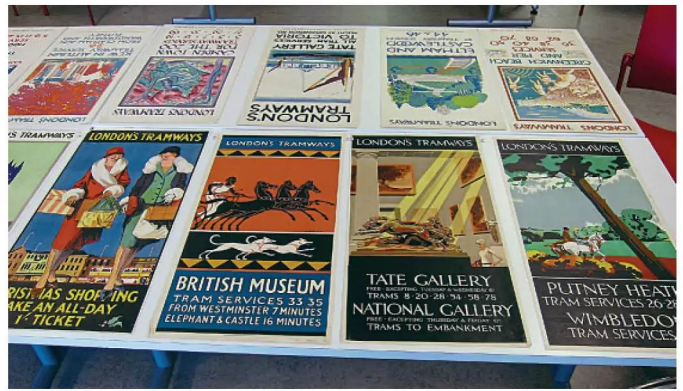
noticeboard for warders and documents connected with famous inmates, Ronnie Biggs, Oscar Wilde, and spies and traitors such as William Joyce (Lord Haw-Haw) among them. It was the last prison to have operational gallows – executions took place until 1961 and the gallows were tested every six months until 1993 and dismantled the following year. A sombre inclusion is a Home Office issued "execution box" containing original items.

Press cuttings and photos show that rock group Hawkwind performed a concert to inmates in 1973; and Elton John has visited more recently. Entry is free but it's necessary to book a visit by emailing wandsworthprisonmuseum@justice.gov.uk

Treasures of the British Library is a wonderful, permanent exhibition at the British Library (01937 546060, bl.uk), which is next to St Pancras International station. Objects on display range from William Shakespeare's First Folio and handwritten Beatles' lyrics, to the manuscript of Alice's Adventures Under Ground, penned by Lewis Carroll. A less visited treasure house of printed



Left: Wandsworth Prison Museum contains hundreds of items relating to the history of this intimidating Victorian building. Right: At the London Archives, Bob enjoyed a talk celebrating these colourful tramway posters, commissioned by the LCC in the 1920s.




items that I've enjoyed recently is the London Archives in Clerkenwell (020 7332 3820, thelondonarchives.org). As well as a changing exhibition (London in the Second World War until February 2026) there is a regular programme of Archives in Focus talks, illustrated with original documents. I first attended an event celebrating a collection of colourful tramway posters of the 1920s, commissioned by the London County Council. I so enjoyed it that I returned to hear about the Zeppelin Raiders: giant airships and early bombers that terrorised the capital during World War One.

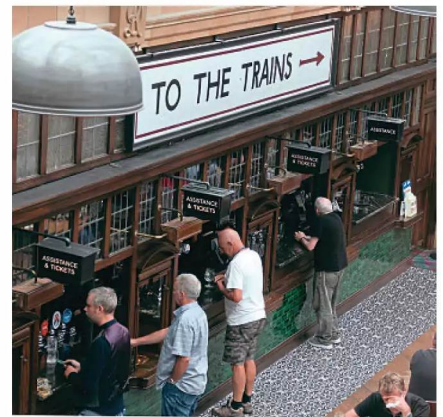
That led me to discover the leafy Victorian Valhalla that is Brompton Cemetery. It's London's only garden cemetery managed by the Royal Parks (royalpark.org.uk/brompton-cemetery). I wanted to see the grave of Reginald Warneford VC, the first fighter pilot to shoot down a German airship. He died in a flying accident just 10 days later, in 1915: 50,000 attended the funeral. The monument, funded by readers of the Daily Express, depicts the blazing Zeppelin and his aeroplane. Other graves include Emmeline Pankhurst's and the Sioux chief Long Wolf's. He died when

performing with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show in 1892.

Canals are an oft-missed delight, playing second fiddle to the more glamorous Thames. The nine-mile Regent's Canal towpath (canalrivertrust.org.uk/canals-and-rivers/regents-canal) has provided me with many enjoyable strolls. I think of it as a back door into London's hidden delights, although you do have to watch out for bicycles. Sights include Little Venice, London Zoo's aviary, Camden Lock and Hackney's Victoria Park.

In the heart of the capital, I was surprised to find a nature reserve; the canal also fringes Coal Drops Yard. It's a former goods yard for King's Cross station that has been redeveloped while keeping its historical interest.

While ambling here, I found a floating bookshop called Word on the Water (07976 886982, wordonthewater.co.uk). Based on an old narrowboat and decorated with plants, it's crammed with new and secondhand titles. The floor was gently rocking as I browsed; comfortable chairs encouraged me to linger. Best of all, I spotted some timeworn typewriters punctuating the bookshelves. No wonder I felt at home. Please pass me the carbon paper. 



Walham Green is a JD Wetherspoon pub, housed in a restored District line station.

REFRESHMENTS

Beppe's Café, 23 West Smithfield Street, EC1A 9HY (020 7236 7822)

Street corner cafe near old Smithfield Market, opened by Giuseppe Papini in 1932 and now run by the fourth generation of the family. Daily specials including pasta. Open Monday-Friday until 2pm.

Bus Café, Waterloo Bus Garage, 6 Cornwall Road SE1 8TE

Bus operatives' diner reached via a signposted path alongside the vehicles. Monday-Friday until 4pm.

Walham Green, 472 Fulham Road SW6 1BY (020 8106 6523)

JD Wetherspoon public house, opened 2025 in a restored District line station of 1910, adjacent to Fulham Broadway tube. Meals and real ales served.



Left: The grave of Reginald Warneford VC, the first fighter pilot to shoot down a German airship, at Brompton Cemetery. Right: Floating bookshop Word on the Water on Regent's Canal is crammed with new and secondhand titles.



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loveliest girls were in the services, but we decided to run a contest that year on modest lines and test the public's reaction. Male members of the forces were known to have more than passing interest in pin-up girls, so it was agreed to let them judge the preliminary heats."

Lydia Reid, a civil service typist from Morecambe, made history by becoming the first winner of the famous silver rose bowl, along with the other prizes: seven guineas and a swimsuit.

"Even buying a bathing suit back then was difficult as clothing coupons were so precious," Lydia recalled many years later. "Luckily, my mother was a dressmaker and was able to run up a swimsuit for me out of a piece of white satin."

As the pageant grew in popularity and prestige, as did the prize money and, by the early 1970s, the winner was taking home a cheque for £3,000.

One of the most famous faces to take the title was Violet Pretty from Birmingham who, after reigning as Miss Great Britain 1950, soon became known to the world under her stage name Anne Heywood. She appeared in dozens of movies throughout her career and was nominated for the Golden Globe Award for Best Actress in a Motion Picture – Drama in 1967, for her role in *The Fox*, one of the first Hollywood films to portray a lesbian couple.

Another winner who would become a household name was 1957 victor Leila Williams, who went on to become the first female presenter of *Blue Peter* in 1958.

The first big scandal had hit the pageant two years earlier in 1955, when married



Top: Susan Hempel, Miss Great Britain 1977, sits in the front seat of one of her prizes, an Austin Allegro Vanden Plas. **Above:** Civil servant Lydia Reid was the first winner of Miss Great Britain, then called the National Bathing Beauty Contest, in 1945.

The Best of British Beauty

Sally-Ann Fawcett looks back at 80 years of Miss Great Britain, the UK's oldest national beauty pageant

When the Sunday Dispatch newspaper joined forces with Morecambe & Heysham Corporation to create a new tourist attraction for the town, few would have bet more than a shilling that it would still be going strong 80 years later.

But the Miss Great Britain pageant celebrates its big anniversary this year, with the national final taking place on Friday 17 October at the Athena, Leicester and has cemented its status as the country's longest-running beauty contest.

When recalling its history, it is little mentioned that Eric Morley, the creator of the Miss World contest, was instrumental in the origins of Miss Great Britain. As publicity officer for Mecca, the huge dance hall and bingo entertainment group, he agreed that some of the weekly

heats could be held in his ballrooms, thus bringing new audiences to his venues, and instant prestige to the pageant.

But, on 29 August 1945, there were no such luxurious surroundings for the contestants in the very first National Bathing Beauty Contest, as it was originally named. Watched by a crowd of 4,300 people, the finalists paraded round the windswept lido in a continuous downpour.

Morecambe's Super Swimming Stadium had opened in 1936 and was said to be the largest outdoor pool in Europe. Built to rival Blackpool's South Shore Swimming Coliseum, it provided the perfect backdrop for the weekly heats and grand final of Miss Great Britain until the site's closure, and subsequent demolition, in 1975.

As Charles Eade, then editor of the Sunday Dispatch, explained: "Britain was still at war at the time and many of her

**PREVIOUS WINNERS
OF THE
"MISS GREAT BRITAIN"
CONTEST**

 1950 Miss Walter Gurnham	 1951 Jennifer Chimes from Louisiana Tex
 1952 Patricia Butler from Stoke	 1953 Dinah May from Dorset
 1954 Doreen Dancer from Leamington	 1955 Christine Mace from Aberystwyth
 1956 Leda Williams from Walsall	 1957 Heather Day from Hove-on-Sea
 1958 Anne Howard from Birmingham	 1959 Eileen Price from Bolton
 1960 Pamela Butler from N. Ireland	 1961 Ann Minnett from Birmingham
 1962 Ann Hiley from Manchester	 1963 Leda Reed from Walsingham & Hingham

'Miss Morecambe'
Bathing Beauty Contest
WEDNESDAY NEXT, 5th SEPT., 1959,
here in the
SUPER SWIMMING STADIUM
at 3 p.m.
SEE SPECIAL BILLS



Left: Among the famous names to win Miss Great Britain was film star Anne Heywood, under her real name Violet Pretty, and original Blue Peter presenter Leila Williams. Right: Dinah May, Miss Great Britain 1976, became one of the score girls on *It's A Knockout* and, as an actress, appeared in *Blake's 7*, *Harry's Game*, *The Optimist* and *Brookside*, where she became the soap's first bride.

winner Jennifer Chimes sensationally left her husband for one of the judges, comedian Max Wall. Their union didn't last when Jennifer left the comic a few years later, causing the Miss Great Britain organisers to rethink their policy of allowing married women to compete.

They decided that, despite the controversy, the rule should stand, and to this day, the contest welcomes single, married and divorced women on stage, the only major British pageant to do so.

The top entertainers of the day were recruited to judge, coinciding with their summer season appearances at the local Morecambe theatres: Morecambe and Wise, Lionel Blair, Frank Ifield, Tommy Cooper, Bob Monkhouse, Les Dawson, Cannon and Ball, to name just a few.

Miss Great Britain finally burst on to the small screen in 1970, following negotiations with Yorkshire Television to broadcast the contest across the Independent Television network. The agreement remained until 1980, when the contract was transferred to the BBC.

The televised show didn't always run smoothly. In 1975, some of the contestants stormed off stage when the winner was announced, convinced the results had been fixed. The producer had to try and persuade them to return to the stage so they could rerecord the crowning glory without their protest.

In 1985, Michael Grade, at that time

controller of BBC One, banned beauty pageants from the airwaves, calling them "anachronistic, bordering on the offensive", resulting in Jill Saxby – the future wife of snooker star Willie Thorne – becoming the last Miss Great Britain to be crowned on national television.

Soon, the rumblings of political correctness became deafening; in 1989 Lancaster City Council voted to end its 45-year association with the contest and put the title up for sale. Over the next three decades, the pageant changed hands several times, but still managed to stay in the headlines, courtesy of some newsworthy winners: Danielle Lloyd, the 2005 winner and *Celebrity Big Brother* contestant, sacked due to her relationship with judge and footballer Teddy Sheringham, and Zara Holland, who lost her 2015 crown following her antics on ITV's *Love Island*.

The biggest tragedy in the pageant's history came with the suicide of Sophie Gradon, Miss Great Britain 2009, who took her own life after an appearance on *Love Island* and the ensuing mental health challenges that followed.

In the decades before the advent of reality TV, the winners sought fame via the quiz show hostess route. Susan Cuff (1975) was a longstanding hostess on *Mr & Mrs*, Marilyn Ward (1974) and Dinah May (1976) updated the *It's A Knockout* scoreboard, while 1983's Debbie

Greenwood presented breakfast television alongside the late Frank Bough.

The 75th Miss Great Britain was Jen Atkin from Grimsby, who made headlines by losing eight stones to win the title. She was also the first married winner since Debbie Greenwood in 1983.

Alongside Jen, the very first Ms Great Britain was crowned in 2020, a new category for women over the age of 28. The winner was April Banbury, a bridal wear designer from London – an apt-enough victory considering she had finished second in the Miss section twice before and was a contestant on *Married at First Sight* UK.

The following year brought yet more innovations to the contest, the creation of Classic Ms Great Britain, for women aged 40 and over, earning it the reputation as being the most inclusive beauty pageant in the country.

Miss Great Britain has come a long way since that first line-up of young women stood shivering in the Morecambe rain, but with entries for the 2025 contest reaching new heights of popularity, we raise a glass to the next 80 years of Britain's oldest and best-known beauty pageant. 🇬🇧

Miss Great Britain 1945-2020: The Official History, by Sally-Ann Fawcett is available from Waterstones, Blackwells and online booksellers.



Baxter Basics

Chris Hallam pays tribute to the formidable woman who made Blue Peter what it is

Biddy Baxter was the single most important figure in the history of Blue Peter. She rarely appeared on screen in the long-running children's magazine show herself but was nevertheless more famous than many of its presenters. A generation of viewers could easily identify her unusual name as the last one to come up during the Blue Peter closing titles sequence.

She was not there at the very beginning. The task of creating Blue Peter in 1958 had fallen to producer John Hunter Blair, an eccentric, pipe-smoking bachelor and model railway enthusiast. By 1962, Blair had retired due to heart problems (he would die in 1964) and Biddy Baxter, a woman barely in her 30s was taken on as a permanent producer.

Born in Leicester in 1933, Maureen Baxter had been nicknamed "Biddy" early on to distinguish her from all the other Maureens at her grammar school. The daughter of a teacher who later ran his own sportswear company, she went to Durham University and originally aspired to be either a social worker or a prison officer. She instead joined the BBC in 1955 after replying to an advertisement, initially working in radio.

By the time Biddy clambered onboard, Blue Peter was in crisis. Original co-host Leila Williams, a former Miss Great Britain had just been fired, and her replacement, Anita West, was already on her way out as she faced what was then the potential scandal of imminent divorce. The BBC privately regarded the children's magazine show as being like "a rundown property with potential for improvement", while the channel as a whole was under constant siege as a result of the continued success of ITV.

Working first as its producer from 1962 and then as editor from 1965 until 1988, Biddy Baxter completely revolutionised the show. Imbued with a relentless reforming zeal, she fought and won countless battles to ensure Blue Peter received all the recognition and resources which would be typically afforded to a programme made for adults. She pushed successfully for a second weekly episode and got the programme moved into Studio 1 (TC1) at BBC Television Centre – then the biggest in Europe – enabling ambitious items such as the occasion 500 Girl Guides marched into the studio.

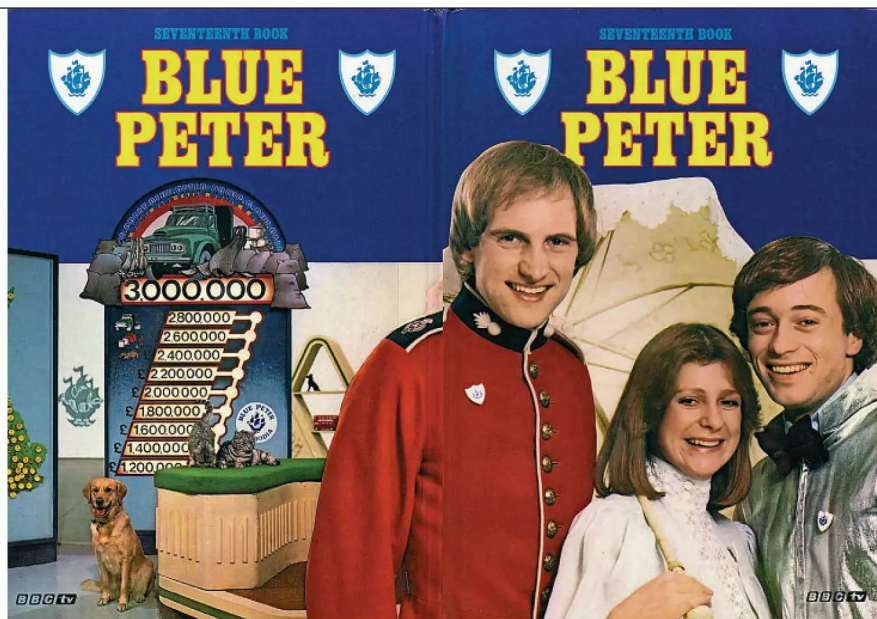
“If anyone deserves to be recognised, Biddy does. Blue Peter is a legend and she is Blue Peter.”

As luck would have it, Biddy's arrival in 1962 roughly coincided with that of new presenter Valerie Singleton. Biddy joked that Singleton's onscreen manner was so unflappable that if the studio ever collapsed midway through a broadcast, she would emerge from the rubble and complete the item, word-perfect. Singleton would soon become a household name. With original presenter Christopher Trace leaving in 1967, she was joined by John Noakes (1965) and Peter Purves (1967), forming a fondly remembered dream lineup. The trio were all present for such memorable events as the elephant running amok on set (1969) and the planting of the Tree for the Year 2000 time capsule (1971), which sadly proved to be waterlogged when it was retrieved 29 years later.

In the meantime, Biddy's sweeping changes made an enormous impact. She herself was most proud of the Blue Peter appeals, the first of which – in December 1962 – urged viewers to send in easily collectable recyclable items like used stamps, silver paper and broken watch straps rather than hard cash. Later appeals helped victims of the Nigeria-Biafra War (1968), the Lifeline Lebanon Appeal (1976) and the Treasure Hunt (1982) which raised funds for cash-strapped British hospitals. The concept of Bring and Buy sales also came to form a vital part of this strategy.

Biddy was also keen to introduce pets to the show, recognising that many children watching, for a variety of reasons, might not be able to have any of their own. "Fur and feather are more important than flesh," Biddy used to tell presenters. Sadly, the first Blue Peter pet, a black mongrel puppy died of distemper a few days after its first appearance in 1962. Biddy and director Edward Barnes were forced to quickly and discretely purchase a similar-looking replacement from a Lewisham pet shop to spare audience upset. The replacement dog, Petra, though bad-tempered, proved a popular audience favourite until her death in 1977. Other Blue Peter pets included the dogs Patch (Petra's daughter), Shep, Goldie and Bonnie (Goldie's daughter), cats Jason, Jack and Jill, and the tortoises Maggie and Jim (the last named after 1979 election rivals Thatcher and Callaghan) and Freda, who was originally called Fred until it was realised that she was female. Although generally well-behaved, Shep once attacked guest Roy Castle live on air,

Top: Among Biddy Baxter's many achievements on Blue Peter was the introduction of the Blue Peter badge.



Left: Blue Peter pets Jack, Jill and Goldie appear on the cover of the Blue Peter Book alongside presenters Simon Groom, Tina Heath and Christopher Wenner. Also shown is the totaliser for the Great Blue Peter Bring and Buy Sale for Cambodia. Below: The bronze bust of Petra, one of the show's best-known pets, was relocated from the original Blue Peter Garden in Shepherd's Bush to its new home at Salford's MediaCityUK.

after becoming overexcited by the noise produced by some musical instruments in the studio.

For Biddy, interaction with the audience was essential. As a child in the 1940s, she had been delighted to receive a personal reply to a fan letter she had sent to Enid Blyton, only to be completely crestfallen when a second letter received an identical response supposedly from the author. She was now determined to ensure Blue Peter fans would not be treated in the same way. A special correspondence unit was set up to ensure letters were dealt with properly, a much more unusual thing then in the pre-computer age, than it would be today. By the 1980s, Biddy estimated 75% of the show's content came directly from the audience.


Biddy introduced the notion of the Blue Peter badge in 1963, worn by presenters and the programme's guests, and awarded to viewers in recognition of their letters and artwork. The special privileges conferred on badge-owners (namely free access to museums and National Trust properties) soon made them much sought after. Among the famous names who received a badge as a child, Rik Mayall wore one throughout his time on *The Young Ones*, while Sophie Aldred clearly sported one during her tenure as Ace on *Doctor Who*. Other categories such as gold badges (awarded for special acts of bravery or achievement) were introduced later.

Biddy was undeniably a formidable character and the sound of her high heels echoing across the studio floor as she approached filled some with apprehension. Peter Purves described her as a "control freak" but concluded that even though he had often disagreed with her, she had usually been right. John Noakes, the longest serving presenter in Blue Peter history, in contrast, fell out with her badly. According to him, she regarded him as "some country yokel from Yorkshire", stating on another occasion: "She was an awful woman. I don't want to talk about her." Yvette Fielding, who joined in 1987, described her as "incredibly cruel", while Fielding's co-presenter Mark Curry was fiercely berated by her after he was caught making an off-camera joke

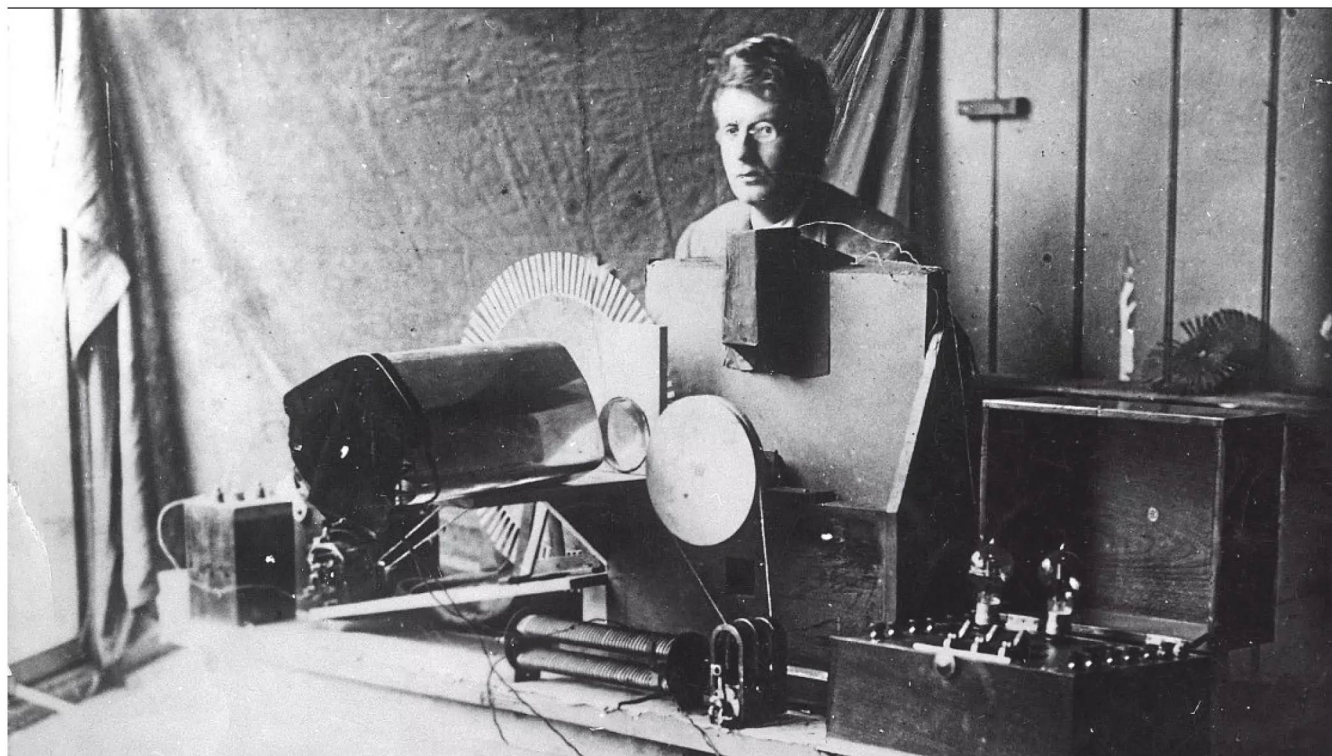
about doing an item on stuffing the recently deceased Blue Peter dog Goldie to members of the crew. Many others, of course, had only good things to say about her and, of course, her tough no-nonsense personality was undeniably a major factor in achieving everything she did.

The circumstances behind Biddy's departure from Blue Peter when she was still in her mid-50s, nevertheless, remain slightly mysterious. According to the shows later editor and "unofficial historian" Richard Marson, she was "manoeuvred out in the summer of 1988 by a new head of children's programmes who wanted the show to evolve without its all-powerful matriarch." She didn't complain publicly but was said to be privately devastated.

Biddy enjoyed a long relationship with musical educator John Hosier who she married shortly before his death in the year 2000. She herself died in August 2025 at the age of 92.

In 1981, Biddy Baxter was awarded the MBE. In 2013, she received the Special Award at the Bafta Children's Awards. On that occasion, Anna Home, the former head of BBC Children's Television spoke about her. "If anyone deserves to be recognised, she does," adding, "Blue Peter is a legend and she is Blue Peter". 





TeleVisionary

Dene Bebbington celebrates the work of the engineer who gave the first public demonstration of television

So crude was television in the beginning that the BBC took time to be convinced by John Logie Baird's invention.

Born in Helensburgh on 13 August 1888, Baird enrolled at Glasgow's Royal Technological College to study maths and electrical engineering when he was 18. The course involved practical apprenticeship work in addition to study. His curiosity in that period led to the visionary idea of sending not just sound but also pictures over wires and airwaves. It wasn't an original notion, since others had already thought of it, and credit goes to Russian Constantin Perskyi for the word "television" which he coined years earlier in 1900.

Dogged by poor health for much of his life, Baird was classified as unfit for active duty during World War One and instead found work with the Clyde Valley Electrical Power Company. Baird often suffered with cold feet and his solution to this, the Baird Undersock – which, according to advertising "instantly absorbs and neutralises all perspiration, keeping

the feet clean, healthy, and comfortable" – was to become a profitable exercise, allowing him to leave his day job.

Less successful inventions included an attempt to create diamonds by heating graphite, which shorted out Glasgow's electricity supply, a rustproof glass razor that shattered, and air-cushioned shoes – a similar idea to Dr Martens' Air-Wair sole – containing semi-inflated balloons that burst.

Looking for a warmer climate, Baird sailed to Trinidad in 1919, where he opened a jam factory. However, problems with flies eating the sugar supplies and falling into the vats of jam caused the business to fail and, in September 1920, Baird returned to the UK. After a period in London, where he began his television experiments, Baird moved to Hastings, Sussex in 1923 and, the following year, transmitted an image of a Maltese cross over his equipment.

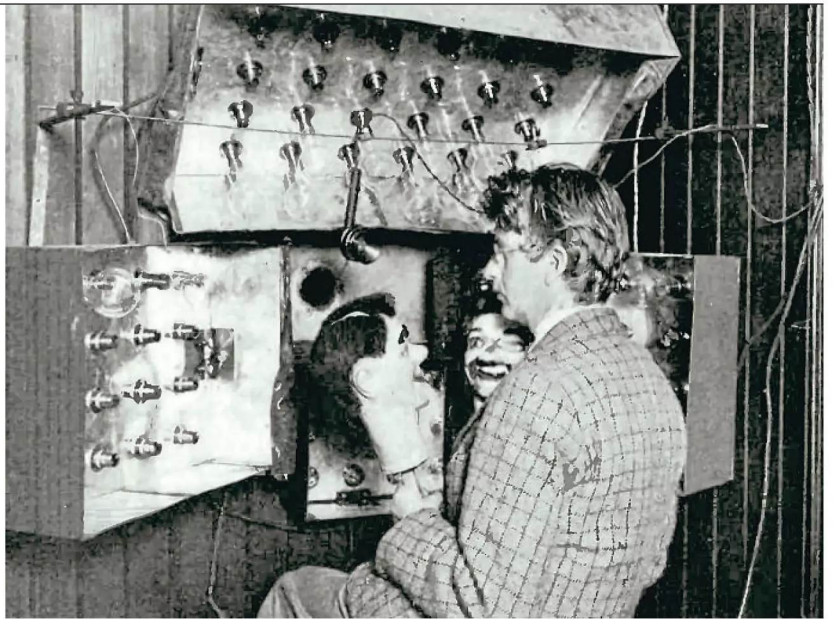
Fortuitously, Gordon Selfridge Jr heard about Baird's experimental attempts at television, prompting him to visit

the inventor since he thought it would make a great attraction for his Selfridges department store.

Baird's original equipment to scan and display images used basic electro-mechanical methods. Working with a shoestring budget, he crafted rudimentary apparatus from pieces of cardboard and bicycle parts. A spinning disc containing inset lenses scanned a subject through a photosensitive cell. Powerful arc lamps were necessary to generate enough light in those early days because of its limited light sensitivity. Unfortunately, they gave off too much heat for a human subject to endure for long. Instead, a dummy head nicknamed Stooky Bill took their place.

The Selfridges deal brought Baird publicity and cash. For a few weeks in the spring of 1925, Baird showed off his invention at the store for a payment of 50 guineas. Thankfully for him, and the store, they didn't set false expectations for the visiting public as an advertisement modestly noted that: "The picture is flickering and defective, and at present only simple pictures can be sent successfully." A few curious scientists also attended and wrote about the device in notable journals like *Nature*, and *Popular Wireless* and *Radio Review*. Despite the achievement, it was pointed out that many technical challenges needed to be

Top: John Logie Baird, pictured in 1926 with his televisior equipment.



Left: Arthur Davis Thorpe, mayor of Hastings, pictured with John Logie Baird in 1929 outside the studio where Baird transmitted the first television image, a picture of a Maltese cross. Right: Baird with his equipment and the dummies James and Stooky Bill.

overcome for television to mature into a viable system.

Improving the light sensitivity was key to picking up more detail in subjects. Months later, Baird achieved that in his laboratory, transmitting a better 30-line picture of Stooky Bill at five frames per second. Though he isn't reported to have used the word, this was surely his eureka moment. Office boy William Taynton got buttonholed by his excited boss and given a few shillings to appear on the television, sticking out his tongue and moving his head until the heat became unbearable.

In retrospect, we'd imagine that the BBC would have been delighted at the prospect of broadcasting images along with sound. Surprisingly, it wasn't. Renowned director-general John Reith admitted that he had been frightened of television and that it would go against the BBC's audio monopoly.

Baird's enthusiasm for television and his prescience that someday TVs would be watched in homes across the world contrasted with Reith's reluctance. Not one to accept defeat, he continued to lobby the BBC, and the General Post Office, which licensed frequencies on the airwaves. Helped by Sydney Moseley – a journalist who went into business with him – they persuaded the corporation to collaborate on an experimental broadcast on 30 September 1929. The television screen, as Baird called it, still only produced low definition and flickering 30-line pictures. At this stage it amounted to a proof of concept.

Around the same time, Baird created a complementary technology, Phonovision, where his televisor signals were recorded

“ Working with less resources than his competitors, and suffering frequent bouts of illness, Baird achieved much despite not enjoying commercial success. ”

on to gramophone discs. Unable to play the discs back, it wasn't until the 1980s when Dr Donald F McLean, a fellow of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, was able to use computer technology to uncover the images on the discs.


Of course, Baird wasn't alone in developing television. Better funded competitors in Britain and abroad vied to have their systems adopted and, crucially, some worked on electronic cathode-ray tubes rather than electro-mechanical technology. Formed in 1931, the British Electric and Musical Industries Ltd (EMI) company could produce so-called “high definition” 405-line pictures. A blow to Baird came in 1936 when the BBC chose Marconi-EMI over his inferior 240-line system.

Though a massive disappointment, the corporation's decision didn't crush Baird's dream. Yes, he'd been slow to adopt the cathode-ray tube, which went on to rule the television world until flat screen TVs became the norm this century. However, he continued to work on television during World War Two and, in August 1944, demonstrated a 600-line colour television receiver.

Always one to look ahead, Baird had proposed to the Hankey Committee (whose aim was “the reinstatement and development of the television service” in postwar years) that a 1,000-line colour system should be the aspiration.

That's pretty similar to 21st century high-definition TVs before the recent boost to 4K. Other peacetime priorities in a shattered Britain left black and white 405 lines as the standard until 1964, when BBC Two arrived on UHF, and even then, it only increased to 625 lines. Colour TV took another three years to arrive.

As early as 1928, Baird had invented a stereoscopic television, albeit one requiring the viewer to wear special glasses like 3D films at the cinema and, in wartime, devised a method that dispensed with the need for glasses. A milestone achieved in 1931 is commonplace thanks to the public's love of sport. Cooperating with the BBC, Baird televised the Epsom Derby, which people could watch either at a cinema or on their home televisor. Due to the cost of a set, only the well-off could afford the luxury of watching from the comfort of their home.

Considering that Baird worked with less resources than his competitors, and suffered frequent bouts of illness, he achieved much despite not enjoying commercial success. Dying in June 1946, he is another example that Britain has never lacked creative and tenacious pioneers prepared to push technical and social boundaries. 

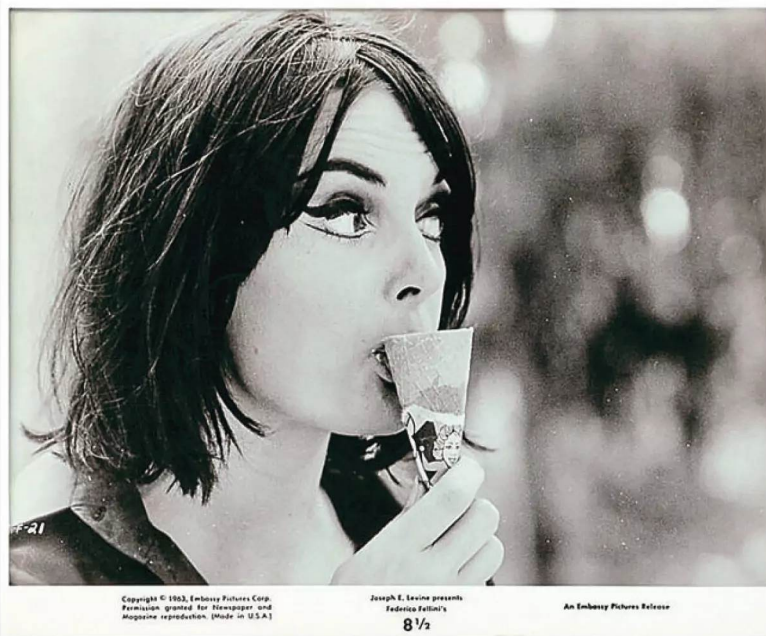
British Steele

Liking her look of "exotic mystery", director Roger Corman hired Barbara Steele to play Vincent Price's wife in *The Pit and the Pendulum*.



John Stoker celebrates "the only girl in films whose eyelids can snarl!"

Photographs: (Pit) THA/Shutterstock, (Frightmare) Creative Commons/Ian Aberle, (War and Remembrance) Jeff Hilton/US Navy



Left: Cast by Italian director Mario Bava for *La Maschera Del Demonio*, which was released as *Revenge of the Vampire* in the UK, Barbara proved her versatility as the terrified heroine and her evil ancestor. Right: Barbara considers Fellini's *8½* to be the highlight of her career.

When Barbara Steele was born, on 29 December 1937, her parents could never have foreseen that, in just over 20 years, she would become one of the icons of horror cinema. Growing up, the girl from Birkenhead had only one ambition, to study art. But fate had other plans.

During a college holiday, Barbara agreed to help a theatre company and soon found herself playing a leading role. It was a performance that was seen by a talent scout for the Rank Organisation who signed her up to its programme for breeding future talent. However, after she had been given a number of small parts, Rank didn't seem to know what to do with the new arrival and sold her contract on to 20th Century-Fox.

The first thing Fox decided to do was to dye her hair blonde, which Barbara hated. Still, such a sacrifice did give her a major role opposite Elvis Presley in the western *Flaming Star*. All seemed fine until filming started and Fox decided she sounded too British. She also clashed with the director and was replaced by Barbara Eden. Her career took another dive. She may have been down, but she certainly wasn't out. Director Mario Bava had seen her picture in a magazine and was captivated by her face. He made an instant decision and offered her a dual role in his movie *La Maschera Del Demonio*.

Barbara arrived in Rome to discover that Italian studios were totally different

to those in Britain and America. No sound was recorded and she and her co-star John Richardson, a former Rank discovery, performed their parts in English while most of the other actors spoke Italian. A music and effects track would be created later, and the required language would then be added in dubbing. The director had limited English and Barbara felt isolated. In later years, she would admit that she was difficult to be with on set. She was fitted with vampire fangs, which were later discarded by the director and her wigs were constantly changed. There were also daily rewrites to the script. But, somehow, everything came together, and Barbara proved her versatility as the terrified heroine and her evil ancestor.

“Becoming tired of her image as a scream queen, Barbara declared: ‘I never want to climb out of another coffin again.’”

The movie was a success in Europe, and American International Pictures snapped up the US rights. Prints were shipped to Tetra Studios in New York where the movie was renamed *Black Sunday*, given a new musical score and dubbed without Barbara's voice. But it was her looks that really counted. One critic summed her

up perfectly: “She is the only girl in films whose eyelids can snarl!”

The film was a great success in the States, but when Anglo Amalgamated Film Distributors presented a print to the British censor, only expecting to have to make a few cuts, no changes were demanded as the movie was banned outright. It wasn't until 1968 that the censor relented and allowed it to be screened, with minor cuts, under a new title, *Revenge of the Vampire*.

Black Sunday played so well in America that American International brought Barbara back to the States to play Vincent Price's wife in *The Pit and the Pendulum*. At one point in the filming, Price was supposed to strangle Barbara and nearly damaged her throat in the process. But she forgave him when she saw how well the scene looked. Director Roger Corman said that she had a look of “exotic mystery” but, when the shoot was over, he had her voice dubbed by another actor.

Back in Rome, the offers were coming in and Riccardo Freda gave her the lead in *The Horrible Dr Hichcock*. Freda was a volatile director who would scream and shout and sometimes walk off the set. But he met his match in Barbara, and a mutual respect was born. This strange, if violent, relationship worked so well that they were reunited for *The Spectre*. By this time, Freda had noticed that British horrors were doing well in Italy and that many cinemagoers would not consider watching the homemade product, so the names on



Above: A regular at film festivals and signing events, Barbara Steele is pictured (centre) at the 2009 Texas Frightmare Weekend.
Below: As producer of ABC TV's *War and Remembrance*, Barbara was awarded a Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Miniseries.

the credits were now anglicised and Freda became "Robert Hampton". Being English became a decided advantage for Barbara.

She had now become associated with horror and the offers kept pouring in as the international market was lucrative. For America and Britain such catchpenny titles as *Terror Creatures from the Grave* and *Castle of Blood* were used to tempt her fans into the cinema. Another movie, *Nightmare Castle*, was also the first production which featured her actual voice as she was able to take part in the English dubbing. She did try and break free from being typecast when she turned up for an audition with Federico Fellini who was so impressed that he offered her a role in *8½*, one of his most memorable features. Barbara would always say it was the highlight of her career.

Her agents continued to provide her with lucrative roles, even if some of them were questionable. When she was booked for a day's work on *The She Beast* for a fee of \$1,000, Barbara was amazed to discover that a day's work meant an exhausting 18 hours. But, in 1965, she was tempted back to Britain by an offer to star opposite Boris Karloff and Christopher Lee in *Curse of the*

Crimson Altar. She was back to playing a witch in green makeup and the role gave her few opportunities. In fact, she was becoming tired of her image, stating: "I never want to climb out of another freakin' coffin again."

Back in America, she married screenwriter James Poe who was contracted to write and direct *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* He was determined to prove that Barbara was more than the scream queen she'd been branded. There was a role he'd specially written for his wife, and he demanded that she should play it. Unfortunately, the studio disagreed and gave her part to Susannah York. Poe protested and was replaced by director Sydney Pollack who brought in another writer to make changes to the script.



But there were others who still embraced her talents. Joe Dante couldn't wait to work her on his cult classic *Piranha* as he was a fan, and David Cronenberg gave her a satisfying role in *Shivers*. But Cronenberg was to incur her wrath when she accused him of mistreating another actor and slammed the director against a wall. She was literally a force to be reckoned with and that's probably why she became a producer.

In 1983, she served as associate producer on *The Winds of War*, a miniseries based on the bestselling book by Herman Wouk. It was so successful that it spawned a second series, *War and Remembrance*, which Barbara produced and was awarded the Primetime Emmy for

Outstanding Miniseries. She was also surprised to discover that her fanbase had increased thanks to the arrival of home video. On top of this, she was now being invited to fantasy film festivals as a major attraction.



Barbara Steele once said that she had "never been given a good role". Most fans would disagree, but they would know what she meant. Even in her 80s she still seeks the one role that would truly satisfy her. She has lost none of her powers, and those eyelids can still snarl. 🇬🇧



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NOT FOR THE NERVOUS!

Ian Wheeler remembers a short-lived horror comic that is enjoying a resurgence

In 1984, a new children's horror comic hit British newsstands. It was destined to last for only 15 issues, but it would strike terror into the hearts of a generation and build up a cult following that it still enjoys today.

Horror comics had traditionally enjoyed a mixed reaction in the UK. Comic publishers

had to exercise caution following the 1955 Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act. The act sought to prohibit comics that were thought to be harmful to children and was in part a reaction to the imported American horror comics that had flooded into the UK in the 1950s.

Misty, a girls' comic featuring

supernatural stories, had enjoyed success from 1978 to 1980 but, by 1984, the boys' market was dominated by adventure comics such as Eagle and 2000AD. Barrie Tomlinson was group editor of the Boys' Sport and Adventure department at IPC Magazines, one of the main comics publishers in the UK.

As Barrie recalls: "IPC managing editor Gil Page had always wanted to do a 'horror' comic. Eventually, the management agreed, and it was given to my group. I wasn't given any lectures about what we could or couldn't do but I knew we had to keep to certain levels of horror"

A dummy version of the first issue was produced, with Barrie carefully balancing the content so that the horror elements were not excessive. The dummy was torn apart by IPC senior management. Massive alterations to both stories and artwork were demanded, toning down the more horrific content. Inevitably, the first issue was late going to the printers.

But, despite these challenges, publication of the new horror comic went ahead. Barrie assembled a top editorial team to work on the title, with Ian Rimmer as editor and Simon Furman as subeditor. Both would go on to enjoy considerable success in the comics industry. Under this winning team, Scream! was launched on to newsagents' shelves in March 1984, with the dramatic tagline "Just when you thought it was safe to sleep in the dark..."

Gruesome free gifts accompanied the first two issues – a pair of Dracula fangs for issue one and a scary rubber spider in issue two. The story lineup was a strong one. The Dracula Files featured the classic Bram Stoker character, transposed to the present day. With dark atmospheric artwork by Eric Bradbury and scripts by Gerry Finley-Day and Simon Furman, it was an instant hit.

Monster was a scary and at times very moving tale about a disfigured man who was confined to an attic by his family. Together with his nephew, he escaped and set off on a series of incredible adventures. The first episode was written by comics legend Alan Moore, with subsequent instalments scripted by Alan Grant and John Wagner, writing under a pseudonym as they so often did. Jesus Redondo provided the artwork for most of the story's run.

Perhaps most iconic of all was The Thirteenth Floor, a beautifully realised story also by Grant and Wagner, and drawn by

Above: Launched on to newsagents' shelves in March 1984, gruesome free gifts accompanied the first two issues of Scream!

Jose Ortiz. It told the story of Max, a highly intelligent computer responsible for running a tower block who was fiercely loyal to his tenants. If anyone dared threaten those tenants, they would be transported to the mysterious 13th floor, a terrifying domain inhabited by all manner of hideous creatures created by Max's imagination. It was ahead of its time in terms of speculating on how artificial intelligence might one day go rogue.

Like 2000AD, which, from the reader's point of view, was edited by the alien Tharg, *Scream!* had a fictional editor in the form of Ghostly McNasty, a sinister hooded figure who was to make an impact on the imagination of many a young reader.

Scream! proved to be a big hit with its readers but its success was to be short-lived. Industrial action by the National Union of Journalists was to cause problems for many IPC titles and after the strike, *Scream!* did not return.

As Barrie reflects: "By this time, I think, management were getting very nervous about what we were producing, and the strike was a good opportunity to make sure the title disappeared. Had it kept going, I think the title would have been a success."

Gil Page sadly died in 2016 but when I interviewed him in 2002, he also had his views on why *Scream!* came to an end.

"*Scream!* suffered from an overdose of censorship by an ultra-sensitive senior management. Editorially, we had to operate with one arm behind our backs and if they'd trusted our judgement and expertise more, the title could have been so much better."

But *Scream!* did not disappear completely. It was merged into another IPC comic, *Eagle*, with two of its stories becoming a popular part of the *Eagle* line-up.

Barrie recalls making the decision as to which *Scream!* stories would carry over to *Eagle*. "Monster and The Thirteenth Floor were the most popular stories in *Scream!*, which is why I decided to put them into *Eagle*. If we had put a third story into *Eagle*, I think it would have been *The Dracula File*."

There were also five *Scream!* holiday specials. And *Scream!* was never forgotten by its loyal readership. When the internet came along, the popular Back from the Depths website became a focal point for fans to exchange views and memories of the comic.

Such was *Scream!*'s continuing popularity that, from 2017, Rebellion Publishing began publishing specials with new stories based on *Scream!* characters. For the most recent special, Alex Paknadel, writer of comic characters such as Spider-Man and the Flash, has reinvented *The Dracula File* for a new generation. What drew him to write for

Scream!? "I was only peripherally aware of it until my wonderful editor, Chiara Mestieri, furnished me with a proof of that wonderful treasury that came out last year. As a huge Hammer and Amicus fan, I clicked with it instantly."

What is it about the character of Dracula that continues to resonate through the ages and with ever-changing audiences? "I have no idea why a malevolent aristocrat who preys on his perceived inferiors and literally drains them of their essence and vitality might still be as relevant today as he was over a century ago.

"I mean, I kid, but that's the crux of it, right? There are convulsive periods in history – wars, pandemics, natural disasters – when it becomes blindingly obvious that individuals who've been permitted to amass entirely too much power really do think of ordinary people as resources to be tapped at their convenience. The Count – at least in the Western imagination – is the horror of that realisation made flesh. Dracula will be relevant for as long as human beings are treated like livestock. So, probably forever."

Alex touches on some important contemporary issues in his story – is it important to him to examine political and social issues in his work? "Not to the exclusion of a ripping yarn, if that makes




Left: Scripted by Alan Grant and John Wagner, and drawn by Jose Ortiz, *The Thirteenth Floor* told the story of Max, a computer responsible for running a tower block. Right: An instant hit, *The Dracula Files* transposed Bram Stoker's character to the present day.

sense. And certainly not all the time. People respond to stories, not lectures. That said, I think British attitudes to immigration and asylum have become profoundly toxic in recent years, and it would have felt irresponsible not to address that concern somewhere.

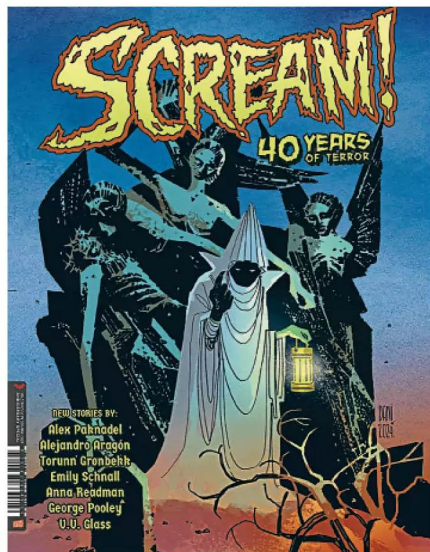
"I have no desire to be comics' Ken Loach, but I do believe that the best comics are made with passion. So, if you're writing about something that arouses strong passions in you then chances are the work will be good."

In 2024, for the 40th anniversary of *Scream!*, a compilation of the original 15 issues proved to be a massive hit. A second volume, based on the *Scream!* holiday specials, will be released soon.

Barrie Tomlinson is philosophical about *Scream!*'s continuing popularity. "I think the popularity of *Scream!* today indicates that we got the balance right. It is very rewarding that what we produced all those years ago is still so popular."

As for Alex Paknadel, he has strong views on which *Scream!* story he'd like to have a go at if another special is produced. "I always feel very nervous answering these questions because I don't want anyone to think I'm thirsting after their gigs, but if – many, many years away, if at all – the opportunity arose to pitch some *Thirteenth Floor*, I would be very happy to throw my hat into the ring." 

***Scream!* books and specials are available from Rebellion Publishing. For more information, go to 2000ad.com**



Above: The 40th anniversary of *Scream!* Was marked with a compilation of the original 15 issues, which proved to be a massive hit.

GAME CHANGERS

Chris Hallam uncovers the history of wargames creators and publishers Games Workshop

You find yourself in a room. It is a bedroom, in fact, in Cheshire in the year 1966. Sitting in front of you are two teenaged boys. It is the year of England's World Cup victory, and the two friends are busily playing Subbuteo, though it could just as easily be Monopoly, chess, Buccaneer or Risk. Both attend the nearby Altrincham Grammar School for Boys. At 16, the older of the two boys is Ian Livingstone. The other boy, 14-year-old Steve Jackson, has spent half of his life so far in Canada.

You then find yourself in another room, a pub, in Cheshire in 1972. Three long-haired young men now sit in front of you. All are old school friends, now making their way in the world. As you might have guessed, Ian and Steve are here again, the other friend is John Peake. John is moving to London soon to take up a position as a chartered engineer, helping develop the Fleet line (later renamed the Jubilee line) on the city's tube network. Ian and Steve will soon end up in the capital too with all three sharing a flat in Bolingbroke Road W14 where, in 1975, they will end up establishing Games Workshop. Today, there are 134 Games Workshop stores across the UK with another 400 or so operating throughout the world. The company's value on the London stock exchange now runs into billions.

John had started making backgammon and solitaire sets in his spare time and selling them to his colleagues at work. Initially, they weren't sure what to call the new company. Cosmic Overflow Games and GASS Games (Games and Situation Simulation Games) were among the other names considered. John's room certainly resembled a workshop as it was littered

with tools, a layer of sawdust and piles of board games. On the other hand, there be no shops or even an office for some time.

Ian and Steve were both fanatical gamers. As a student, Steve had founded the Keele University Games Society, the first university board games society in the country and still produced freelance work for a magazine called *Games & Puzzles*. Ian had also contributed to a postal games fanzine called *Albion* which specialised in history-themed tabletop wargaming. In February 1975, they launched *Owl & Weasel*, their own regular homemade fanzine dedicated to promoting Games Worship. Steve dreamed up the title,

based on the idea that the two qualities a gamer most needed were the wisdom of an owl and the sneakiness of a weasel. Copies cost 10p each.

The concept of a fanzine barely

exists in the internet age, but *Owl & Weasel* transformed Games Workshop's fortunes forever. In the summer of 1975, they were sent a parcel from a man called Gary Gygax who had chanced upon a copy of *Owl & Weasel* that had somehow made it to the US. Inside were several packs for a new American role-playing-game which Gary hoped they might review. The idea behind the new game, which was called *Dungeons & Dragons*, was that one player would take on the role of Dungeon Master and narrate a steadily unfolding fantasy narrative. The other players would then adopt the personas of a number of other characters within the game, perhaps a hero, wizard, cleric or thief and would then embark on their own monster-filled adventure, all without leaving their chair. Ian and Steve were instantly hooked. Ian's first D&D character was called Anvar the Barbarian.

Events moved rapidly. Issue 6 of *Owl & Weasel* was declared a "*Dungeons &*

“ Given the rights to distribute *Dungeons & Dragons* across Europe, Games Workshop's fortunes were changed forever. ”



Left: Schoolfriends Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson founded Games Workshop from their west London flat in 1975. Right: Superseded by the glossy magazine White Dwarf, newsletter Owl & Weasel brought news of developments in gaming.



Dragons Special Issue.” An important business deal was also established: having already sold a few versions of the packs which Gary had sent, Games Workshop was given exclusive rights to distribute Dungeons & Dragons across Europe for the next three years.

Despite this success, the company remained a small-scale operation at this stage. For example, John, Ian and Steve often became aware that certain confused individuals could be seen gathering in the street in front of their flat. Having seen their address in Owl & Weasel, these visitors had travelled there, expecting to find some sort of shop or office. On spotting them, one of the team would politely shout through the window before inviting the potential customer up and trying to sell them things. The flat did not even have its own phone, instead borrowing the landline of their increasingly resentful landlord who would often hang up on receiving a games-related query.

A turning point came with the first ever Games Day, effectively a one-day convention held at Seymour House in London on 20 December 1975. Such gatherings would become a regular event in the years ahead. Off the back of this success, early in 1976, Ian and Steve decided to quit their day jobs and devote themselves to Games Workshop full-time.

But they were in for a shock, as John Peake pulled out of the company completely. He had never enjoyed the role-playing aspect of gaming and had no interest at all in quitting his job. The split was not acrimonious, but Ian and Steve now embarked on an extended holiday/business trip to the US to formally meet Gary Gygax and the other D&D people without their old friend.

A long road still lay ahead. On returning to the UK, amid the turbulent economic waters of 1976, Ian and Steve completely failed to convince their bank manager that their unusual-sounding business was deserving of a loan. They rented a poky office behind an estate agent's for £10 a week, dubbing it “the Breadbin”. Now homeless, they slept for a few months in the van (affectionately known as “Van Morrison”) in which they had just travelled across the US, taking showers at a nearby squash club.

The next decade would see various landmark events in the rise of Games Workshop. In 1977, for example, the Owl & Weasel newsletter gave way to a glossier, more professional-looking White Dwarf magazine, dedicated to promoting Games Workshop and spreading all the latest news from the RPG (role-playing game) world. By the mid-1980s, its circulation had reached 20,000 copies a month. It continues today.

In April 1978, the first Games Workshop store opened in Dalling Road, Hammersmith. It was followed by shops in Manchester, then Birmingham, Sheffield, Nottingham and so on. The company expanded dramatically in the 80s, developing its own board games such as Talisman, Blood Bowl and, most popular of all, Warhammer 40,000. The last of these has been so successful that many Games Workshops have rebranded themselves under the name Warhammer in recent years. In 1982, The Warlock of Firetop Mountain was published, the first in the hugely popular Fighting Fantasy series of role-playing, fantasy adventure game books created by Ian and Steve which would later lead to the books, Deathtrap Dungeon, Island of the Lizard King and Appointment with F.E.A.R. By the second half of the 1980s, the two men were so busy devising these books that they backed away from their role in Games Workshop completely. Fifty years after its humble origins, however, Games Workshop remains a hugely popular and influential force within the global entertainment industry. The names Sir Ian Livingstone – who was knighted in the 2022 New Year Honours for services to the online gaming industry – and Steve Jackson will always remain legendary in the world of gaming.



Green By Name and Nature

John Greeves visits the first carbon neutral and vegan football club in history

It's a wonder how a small football club like Forest Green Rovers, with just seven seasons experience in the English Football League (EFL), can be recognised as a world leader when it comes to bringing eco-thinking and technology to a new level. Recognised by the United Nations as the world's first carbon neutral football club, this amazing little club, tucked away in the quaint Cotswolds town of Nailsworth is undertaking a green revolution, which is gathering momentum year by year.

The club has a long and varied history. Founded more than 130 years in 1889, the team currently plays in the National League, the fifth tier of English football. The club initially played its football at The Lawn Ground but moved to its present ground, The New Lawn Ground, in 2006, which was built to Football League standards and was only 400 metres away from the former ground.

Four years later, the club faced mounting debt and was on the edge of folding, before it was taken over by entrepreneur Dale Vince to become the world's first carbon neutral football club. Vince's wealth came from Ecotricity, a renewable energy supplier that he had developed from the windmills erected in the 1990s. He also created Nemesis, a Lotus Exige chassis, modified

with electric motors and batteries, in which he broke the UK speed record for electric cars in 2012.

Forest Green Rovers' performances on the pitch certainly improved after Vince's takeover. From teetering on the edge of relegation to the sixth tier of the English football pyramid, the club joined a professional league for the first time in 2017 when it was promoted to EFL League Two. This saw Nailsworth become the smallest town in England ever to host an EFL club. Ending the 2021-22 season as EFL League Two champions, they spent a season in League One before back-to-back relegations saw them drop into the National League, where they remain today.

The club has hit the headlines in recent times, perhaps more for being the first vegan football club, than for its football on the field. In 2017, FGR was officially recognised as the world's first vegan football club and received the Vegan Trademark from the Vegan Society. Today, many athletes successfully follow a vegan diet, finding it beneficial for performance and recovery. Some notable examples include Formula 1 champion Lewis Hamilton, tennis star Venus Williams, and boxer David Haye.

As well as the obvious benefits to its

player's performance, the club was also fully aware of the huge environmental and animal welfare impact of livestock farming when it decided to move to a meat-free menu. The question remained, how would fans take it? Back in 2015, the club replaced its former menu with fresh, vegan food. From the start, the club used locally sourced and quality ingredients. The club also worked in close partnership with national and international brands like Quorn and Oatly to perfect the new menu. Quality and variety were key to the changes. Fans wouldn't be deprived, they could still have their burgers, chips and pies, but what Forest Green Rovers offered instead was the award-winning Q-Pie and delicious pasties and other choices.

Nowadays, the Q-Pie is served with mashed potato, deep-fried leeks, peas or beans and onion gravy. The Green Devils spicy vegan burger comes in a brioche bun with loaded sliced gherkin, fresh tomato relish, guacamole and lettuce. Even those

Top: With Covid restrictions meaning that the majority of his first season with Forest Green Rovers was played behind closed doors, Jamille Matt's first goal in front of the club's fans, in December 2020, contributed towards a 2-0 win over Cambridge United.



Left: Made almost entirely from wood, Forest Green Rovers' Eco Park stadium will boost biodiversity while bringing a world-class sustainable football stadium to the Stroud district. **Right:** The world's first vegan football club, Forest Green Rovers' Q-Pie, which is served with mashed potato, deep-fried leeks, peas or beans and onion gravy, is a favourite of fans and visitors alike.

away supporters who turn up in butcher's aprons chanting: "Where's your burger van?" have to admit the quality food on offer is second to none and on match days the food is soon sold out.

In addition to its food regime, the club has introduced a series of initiatives to reduce the impacts of its activities on the environment. The club is keen to conserve their grassland site situated just outside the Cotswolds' Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This comprises a range of plant species, with bordering trees, which are often visited by wildlife, badgers and small owls, from neighbouring farmland. The club uses 100% green electricity, with 20% coming from the solar panels mounted on the roof and also from ground-mounted solar powered car ports. The rest of it comes from the club's windmill on the hill. Instead of using LED lighting, considered too energy intensive, the club has opted for low energy floodlights instead to reduce its carbon footprint.

The pitch uses no pesticides and is watered with a mixture of rain, drain and spring water, independent from the water mains. It's maintained with injected sand to help drainage, sown with grass seed containing six types of rye grasses and fed with organic fertiliser with seaweed, magnesium and soil improver. The collected rainwater not only waters the pitch, but is recycled around the stadium, while waste cooking oil is repurposed to make biofuel. The pitch is mowed by the first solar powered robotic lawn mower to be used in British football. The "mow bot" uses GPS technology to automatically guide it around the pitch without the need for human intervention. Local farmers then use the grass cuttings from the stadium to condition their soil.

The club has also installed charge points to make it easier for players and visitors to use electric vehicles and has provided a park-and-ride scheme to reduce congestion and vehicle emissions. Even the players kits are sustainable – made from used coffee grounds, bamboo and recycled plastics.


Community involvement appears to be a central tenet of the club, and it plays an active role in the locality, supporting programmes to help with mental health, loneliness, social issues (such as drugs) and promoting educational programs on sustainability and eco-friendly practices.

Through initiatives like the Premier League Primary Schools programme, the club helps to teach and promote life skills, physical activity and enhanced learning. During the summer holidays, the club runs a community soccer camp, including free places for children, and offers work experience for those contemplating a future career in the sport's industry. Local charities are well supported, and the club provides free football kits, clothing, and boots, as well as match-day tickets to those in need.

For such a small club, FGR is a big hitter. Planning permission to build a new all-wood stadium, called Eco Park, near Junction 13 on the M5, has been granted. The stadium, designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, will have a capacity of 5,000

with the ability to go up to 10,000 or 12,000 without too much difficulty, which would be big enough for a Championship side. It's billed as the "greenest football ground in the world", and the news of its future construction is already heading out to some of the Premiership clubs who would like to reduce their own carbon footprint. The future site will include landscaping with 500 trees and 1.8km of hedgerows to promote biodiversity and a landscaped parkland. The stadium's completion is still some years off and aims to be a truly sustainable business park creating up to 4,000 jobs.

Of the 50-hectare site required, 20% is to be wetlands alongside a restored stretch of the canal and the intention is to provide far greater biodiversity than the present farmland affords. The plans emphasise community engagement, with input from disabled supporters considered in the stadium design. Two training pitches, one with an all-weather 4G surface, are already in use, and the club aims to consolidate all training and playing facilities at Eco Park.

It is intended that the new stadium will have the lowest carbon footprint of any stadium in the world and then it can be rightfully called the "greenest team in the world". 

**The New Lawn, Another Way,
Nailsworth, Gloucestershire GL6 0FG
(0333 123 1889, fgr.co.uk)**





BRUNEL'S BRISTOL

Simon Stabler goes in search of Britain's greatest engineer

Although the journey between London Paddington and Bristol Temple Meads stations is faster and more comfortable than it was when services began at the end of June 1841, there are plenty of reminders along the way of the brilliance of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the civil engineer who built the Great Western Railway (GWR).

The route between Paddington and Swindon – where the fascinating STEAM: Museum of the Great Western Railway (01793 466646, steam-museum.org.uk) is housed in part of the former railway works – was known as “Brunel’s billiard table” because of its flat gradients; while the Box Tunnel, descending on a 1 in 100 gradient between Chippenham and Bath, was, at the time of its construction, the longest railway tunnel in the world.

Today, with the modern GWR’s Class 800 and 802 Intercity Express Trains running at up to 125mph through the 1.83-mile tunnel, most passengers take the descent in their stride. However, back in the 1840s, passengers apprehensive about travelling through the tunnel could disembark at one end and travel by coach to the other side.

Direct trains from London Paddington to Bristol Temple Meads take approximately 95 minutes, a third of the time they did in the 1840s. Many of the company’s Class 800 and Class 802 trains have been named after people who have inspired the region it serves. Among them is 800004, which was officially unveiled on 30 June 2016 – 175 years since the first train ran from London to Bristol – with the names of Isambard Kingdom Brunel and Sir Daniel Gooch (the first superintendent of locomotive

engines from 1837 to 1864) adorning the driving ends.

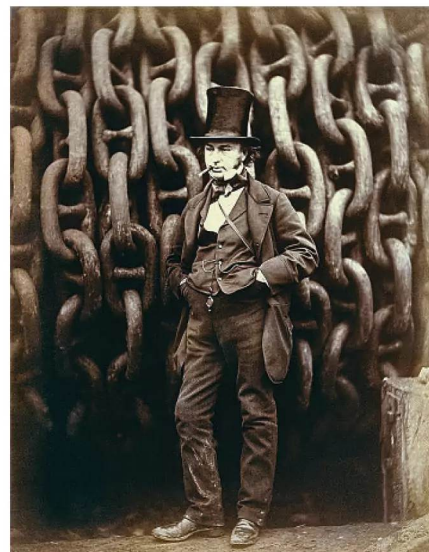
If there’s one image that synonymous with Bristol, it’s the site of the Clifton Suspension Bridge, Brunel’s first major commission. Spanning the Avon Gorge – and linking Clifton, an inner suburb of Bristol, with the village of Leigh Woods – it has been used as an establishing shot in countless TV programmes set in the city.

Crossing over to the Leigh Woods side of the bridge, you’ll find the free to enter Clifton Suspension Bridge Museum (0117 974 4664, cliftonbridge.org.uk/visit-explore/museum). Open daily from 10am-5pm (closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year’s Day) and 11am-4pm on Boxing Day, you’ll find informative displays and hands-on exhibits telling the story of the bridge’s protracted construction, which opened in 1864, five years after Brunel’s death and 33 after construction began.

In addition to access to the museum and gift shop, there are paid for tours available including a climb down into two of the 12 vaulted chambers inside the Leigh Woods abutment. These chambers were only discovered in 2002, shining a new light on the bridge’s construction.

Another of Brunel’s bridges, albeit a much smaller size, can be found in Cumberland Basin, the main entrance to Bristol Docks. A swivel bridge, now known as Brunel’s Other Bridge, the Grade II*-listed structure was decommissioned in 1968, following the construction of the nearby Plimsoll Bridge.

A short walk away is Underfall Yard (0117 929 3250, underfallyard.co.uk), a historic boatyard where Brunel designed the sluices that remove excess silt and mud from Bristol’s Floating Harbour.



Above: Isambard Kingdom Brunel, pictured in 1857, by the launching chains of the SS Great Eastern. Top: Although Brunel’s design for the Clifton Suspension Bridge marked the beginning of a great engineering career, it wasn’t completed until after his death.

One of the locations of this year’s Docks Heritage Weekend, visitors to Underfall Yard on 4-5 October will be able to enjoy live demonstrations of historic machinery, along with rope-making and blacksmithing. Another location taking part in the weekend is the M Shed (0117 352 6600, bristolmuseums.org.uk/m-shed) maritime museum at Prince’s Wharf. During the heritage weekend, you’ll be able to visit the electric cranes, take a trip onboard one of the heritage boats and



Sitting proudly on a glass “sea”, the SS Great Britain now rests in the very dock where it was built, the Great Western Dockyard in Bristol’s Floating Harbour.

see cargo handling demonstrations and dockside performances.

M Shed occupies the former site of William Patterson Shipbuilder yard, where the SS Great Western was constructed. The first ship to be designed by Brunel, the wooden-hulled paddle steamer made its first crossing between Bristol and New York in 1838. The largest passenger ship in the world from 1837 to 1839, the SS Great Western was scrapped in 1856, after serving as a troopship in the Crimean war.

Surviving against all the odds is another of Brunel’s ships, SS Great Britain, the world’s first screw-propelled, iron-hulled, ocean-going steam ship. Brunel’s SS Great Britain (0117 926 0680, ssgreatbritain.org) is Bristol’s top tourist attraction, and as well as access to the ship itself –

restored and recreated as it would have been in Victorian times – tickets offer admission to the Dockyard Museum and Being Brunel, an immersive museum that features a recreation of Brunel’s drawing office and a significant collection of items to really give you a flavour of the man.


Achieving an average speed of 9.4 knots, SS Great Britain was so big that the entrance to Bristol docks had to be widened to allow the ship to leave. Making its first transatlantic voyage, from Liverpool to New York, in July 1845, SS Great Britain ran aground off the coast of Ireland in September 1846 and wasn’t refloated until the following August.

Under new owners, the refitted SS Great Britain was to become a passenger liner, travelling between England and

Australia for the next 30 years, briefly serving as a troopship during the Crimean war. Sold again in 1882, and converted to sail, it became a cargo ship but was badly damaged during a voyage to Panama. Damaged beyond economic repair, the ship became a storage hulk for coal in Port Stanley, Falkland Islands, where it remained until 1937, when the ship was towed to nearby Sparrow Cove and beached.

In 1967, the naval architect Ewan Corlett wrote to *The Times* calling the SS Great Britain “the forefather of all modern ships” and suggested that the ship be documented, at the very least, or at best recovered and put on display “as one of the very few really historic ships still in existence.”

As a result, the businessman and philanthropist Sir Jack Arnold Hayward paid for the ship to be raised, mounted on a pontoon and towed across the Atlantic Ocean. Setting off from Port Stanley in April 1970, approximately 100,000 people witnessed the SS Great Britain’s return to Bristol on 5 July as it was towed up the River Avon, under the Clifton Suspension Bridge and to the dry dock from where it was launched, 127 years earlier, on 19 July 1843.

Attending the launch was Prince Albert, who had travelled to Bristol by train, a journey – taking a then speedy 2 hours and 40 minutes – which had been arranged by Brunel himself. Prince Albert wasn’t the first member of the royal family to travel by train but, as you’ll discover overleaf, he wouldn’t be the last... 

Getting There

GWR operates long-distance services along the Great Western Main Line to the most popular cities, historic towns and beautiful regions in the south-west of England and Wales.

Save more than 50% when you book your ticket at GWR.com (terms apply) and no booking fees. You can also get up to 2FOR1 entry at top attractions including Brunel’s SS Great when you travel by train with GWR. Go to daysoutguide.co.uk for further information.

The Waterbus is a great way of getting around Bristol Harbour, home to plenty of museums, restaurants, bars and cultural venues. Operated by Bristol Ferry Boats (0117 927 3416, bristolferry.com), it operates on weekends and

school holidays from October to March, and daily from April to September, serving stops such as Temple Quay (a short walk from Bristol Temple Meads station), Prince Street Bridge (ideal for M Shed), SS Great Britain and the City Centre.



Thameslink (thameslinkrailway.com) runs fast, frequent services into London – from the likes of Cambridge, Peterborough, St Albans and Brighton – that connect with the Elizabeth line at Farringdon, where travel to London

Paddington takes approximately 10 minutes. In the off peak – that’s outside busy times on weekdays, and all day on weekends and bank holidays – up to four children can travel on Thameslink for just £2 each with an adult, while groups of three to nine adults can use GroupSave to save 1/3.

For more information on attractions, accommodation and food and drink in Bristol, go to visitbristol.co.uk



Royals on the Rails

Michael Montagu tells the story of the royal train

Lovers of interesting and unusual trains and, indeed, of tradition, will be disappointed by the announcement from Buckingham Palace that, from 2027, the royal train will be taken out of service, because it is too expensive. That's quite strange, because for many years it was said that the security and convenience offered by the train made it one of the less expensive royal travel options. Times change and, apparently, we have to change with them. Personally, I'm reminded of the old saying about knowing the cost of everything and the value of nothing.

The pioneer royal for rail travel was

Queen Adelaide, widow of William IV and aunt of Queen Victoria, who made her first journey from Nottingham to Leeds on 22 July 1840. In 1842, a private carriage, described as a bed-carriage, was built for her. Looking like two and a half horse drawn coaches stuck together, it was made for use at night, when the seats could be made up into a short bed.

The first reigning monarch to take to the rails was Queen Victoria who, on 13 June 1842, travelled on the Great Western Railway between Slough and London Paddington. The journey took 25 minutes, after which she wrote in her diary that it was "delightful and so quick". She was

initially reluctant because there was then a belief that rail travel could lead to insanity or damage the optic nerve. After having found that it didn't, she travelled more, believing that it was her duty to go around her kingdom and be seen by her people.

The railway made the journey to her beloved Balmoral easy and convenient. However, she didn't like to eat when the train was moving, so the train would stop at a station where refreshments would be taken. The first stop was always Buckinghamshire's Wolverton Works, which is still the home base for the royal train. She commissioned a pair of coaches for use on the London and North Western Railway in 1869, which cost £1,800. The queen personally contributed £800 of the cost. A flushing lavatory was included in the fittings, but her majesty would only use it when the train was stopped.

Speed was always a concern, and the queen decreed that her train was to travel at no more than 40mph during the day, reduced to 30mph at night. A personal signal was fitted to the roof of her carriage, so that she could signal the driver to slow down if she felt the train was exceeding her speed limit. New royal carriages were commissioned regularly, both for the queen and the Prince and Princess of Wales. Several sets were made by the different railway companies that were then operational. When the concertina type carriage connection was introduced, the royal trains had them fitted. Victoria didn't like them, though and would only walk through when the train was stationary.

Those early trains were very different to the modern royal train, upholstered in sumptuous, padded silks and velvets and panelled in mahogany and satinwood. Thick carpets muffled the sound, and the carriages were filled with the usual Victorian multitude of draped tables and armchairs. The queen's sleeping compartment held two single brass beds. Privacy was maintained by blinds and heavy, elaborate curtains. They really were palaces on wheels.

To celebrate Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897, the Great Western Railway constructed the first purpose built full royal train, comprising six coaches. Her

Above: Carrying the names Queen Elizabeth II and Queen Victoria on its driving ends, GWR's Class 800 Intercity Express Train 800003 was named by Elizabeth II on 13 June 2017 – 175 years since Queen Victoria became the first monarch to travel by train.

Photographs: (Elizabeth II) GWR, (Queen Adelaide's saloon) Creative Commons/Alan Wilson, (Armoured saloon) Creative Commons/Hugh Llewellyn



Left: Queen Adelaide's Saloon, built for the first royal to travel by train, is now on display at the National Railway Museum, York. Right: Built by the LMS in 1941, George VI's saloon, previously on display at Glasgow Transport Museum, was originally armour plated.

“After making an unscheduled stop at a small, remote station, a member of staff walked through the train and found a lady sitting in the household dining car.”

last train was built by the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway in 1899, with five carriages. The queen's personal saloon was in the middle, with household saloon cars either end. Her final train journey was in February 1901, after her death at Osborne. Her coffin was taken from Gosport to London Victoria and then on to Windsor from Paddington for her funeral.

King Edward VII had modern ideas, and, in 1902, he commissioned a new train. This had electricity installed for lighting and heating, replacing the hot, smelly and highly inflammable gas lamps. Initially, the power was provided by the steam from the engine. A separate smoking room was included in the royal carriages, which were decorated to look like the interiors of the royal yacht Victoria and Albert.

King George V ordered the first baths to be installed. When in use, the driver was told to travel slowly. A red line was painted around the inside of the bath to indicate the safe depth to fill it. Any more and the water was likely to slosh out when the train was moving. A separate dining carriage, also suitable for meetings, was included in the rake for the first time.

An electrical generator, in its own

carriage, was added in 1941, along with telephones and radios, which were plugged into whatever system was available when the train was stopped for the night, preferably in a deep cutting or tunnel, to hide it from German aircraft. Three new carriages for use by the king and queen were fitted with heavy armour plating, including steel shutters over the windows. Just the roof of each carriage weighed 56 tons. Secure safes were added for sensitive government papers. During the war, even the existence of the train, and its workings, were state secrets. After the war, the armour plating was removed.

The current royal train, which can be used with up to nine special carriages is painted in the same colour as the state cars, Royal Claret, a colour, along with Royal Black, produced by just one manufacturer and not available to anyone else. The train was formed in 1977, to coincide with the silver jubilee of the late Queen Elizabeth II. There are private carriages now for both the king and queen, which have inward opening double doors, allowing for a dignified exit. The royal sleeping compartments have beds that face the direction of travel, unlike standard sleeper cars, where the bed is sideways to the direction of travel. The drivers are chosen for their ability to stop the train to within six inches of a designated point.


While the royal carriages are comfortable, they are hardly opulent. Members of the royal household, railway staff and security officers have their own quarters on board, including a dining car and kitchen. Some years ago, it was reported that the train was travelling to pick up Elizabeth II when it had to make

an unscheduled stop at a small, remote station.

Shortly after, a member of staff walked through the train and found a lady sitting in the household dining car. For some reason, the train had been running with the doors unlocked, and when it had stopped, she just got onboard and sat down. She was given something to eat and set down at a station further along the route. The lady must have thought that her local service had been given a significant upgrade.

In 1937, while it was standing at London Euston, waiting to leave for Scotland, a police officer guarding it heard a tap on the window behind. The 11-year-old Princess Elizabeth urgently beckoned him onboard. Then she said: "Here's a shilling. Can you go and get me a comic, please?" Which he did. Such a lapse of security would be unthinkable now, as would buying a comic for five pence.

Another story concerning the late Queen happened when the train was upgraded in 1977. The man in charge of the project asked if her majesty was content. Her response surprised him; "No. Where is the old ironing board?" Apparently, her dresser was used to the old one and didn't like the modern replacement. The old one was found in store at Wolverton and hastily put back onboard.

Now it is being retired but will go on tour before being decommissioned. It will probably end its days in a museum. Apparently, some members of parliament have referred to it as "an expensive under-used relic". The term pot and kettle comes to my mind. 



A Garden Fit for Royalty

Claire Saul looks at plans to unite historic royal gardening at Hampton Court and Kew with sustainable design for the 21st century

Initiatives honouring horticultural history, while reversing the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss, is an ongoing focus for heritage sites across Britain. Earlier this year, for example, National Trust Grade I-listed landscape Sheffield Park and Garden in Sussex opened its new Garden for the Future, a half-acre visitor experience which aims to inform and inspire on sustainability and climate resilience. And now, this autumn, an ambitious new planting scheme has commenced in the Great Fountain Garden at Hampton Court Palace in Surrey.

Since the formal Anglo-Dutch style garden was first laid out in the 1690s, during the reign of King William III and Queen Mary II, it has evolved to reflect contemporary tastes and priorities. Its original grand lime tree avenues and sculpted yew topiary were aligned with the Queen's State Apartments on the palace's magnificent East Front. Some simplifications were made during the reign of Queen Anne, and further transformation came with Queen Victoria, whose gardeners introduced bold annual bedding and herbaceous borders, in keeping with 19th century fashion.

The new iteration of the Great Fountain Garden will continue to deliver its usual visual spectacle, while representing ecological progression fit for the 21st century. Historic Royal Palaces, the independent charity that looks after Hampton Court, is working with award-winning garden designer Ann-Marie Powell to produce a living example of

how heritage spaces can lead the way in climate-conscious landscaping. The bold transformation will create a climate resilient and biodiverse landscape rooted in the site's royal heritage. The project is a key expression of the charity's Sustainability Action Plan and its ambition to be nature-positive and carbon net zero by 2050.



Top: The new iteration of the Great Fountain Garden will continue to deliver its visual spectacle, while representing ecological progression fit for the 21st century. **Above:** The Great Fountain Garden's new design introduces 32 planting beds and borders across 1.5 acres.

Photographs: Historic Royal Palaces and Ann-Marie Powell, (Main) Historic Royal Palaces, (Kew) RBG Kew



Top: The bold transformation will create a climate resilient and biodiverse landscape rooted in Hampton Court Place's royal heritage.

The Great Fountain Garden's new design introduces 32 planting beds and borders across 1.5 acres, interspersed between its historic yew trees, and features nearly 300 species, to which will be added naturalised bulbs. The planting has been selected for climate resilience, biodiversity value and long seasons of interest. It follows a striking colour progression from cool blues and violets to brilliant reds, oranges and golds, intensifying in brightness as they approach the edge of the River Thames. The planting will evolve through the seasons, offering a succession of colour and texture, simultaneously providing vital habitats for pollinators and wildlife. Peppered with self-seeding

annuals and areas of traditional bedding, the garden will continue to offer its historical charm, all the while delivering greater resilience and response to future environmental needs. A National Collection of *Echinacea Purpurea* is being established across Hampton Court Palace's grounds, featuring more than 60 distinctive varieties, some soaring to 1.5 metres in height. These sculptural, nectar-rich blooms will be a biodiversity beacon and a striking focal point within the new landscape.

"We're not just planting for visual impact – we're planting for pollinators, for changing weather, for longevity," says designer Ann-Marie Powell. "Every plant has a purpose and a place. This isn't

just about making something beautiful, it's about creating a living, breathing landscape that connects people to the natural world, evokes the history beneath their feet, and inspires new ways of thinking about gardens today. It's our hope that everyone who walks through this space will find something that speaks to them, whether it's a plant they recognise, a bee at work, or just a moment of wonder."

Historic Royal Palaces is implementing the new planting scheme using a no-dig approach, with the aim of preserving soil structure, locking in carbon, and promoting long-term soil health. It is hoped that the redesign will provide inspiration for all visiting gardeners, from casual waterers to full-grown horticulturists.

"This garden honours centuries of royal horticulture while setting a bold new benchmark for sustainability," concludes Alex Wigley, head of Parks and Gardens at Historic Royal Palaces. "With low-water requiring species and smarter layouts, it's designed not just to endure, but to thrive, supporting biodiversity, inspiring visitors, and helping us reach our goal of being nature-positive and carbon net zero by 2050." 🇬🇧

Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9AU (0333 320 6000, hrp.org.uk/hampton-court-palace)

Kew's Carbon Garden

While ongoing research is conducted on 11,000 trees to assess species resilience, attempting to determine which plants will not only thrive in a changing climate but also mitigate the effects of the climate crisis, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew also recently opened its Carbon Garden. Featuring 35 new trees and 6,500 plants, it aims to illustrate the critical role carbon plays in sustaining life on Earth and the scale of the climate crisis. Carbon is the building block of life and can be found in all living things, but the balance has been upset. Human activities release too much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, trapping heat and warming the planet. The Carbon Garden shows how plants and fungi are our natural allies in repairing this damage, in capturing carbon and restoring balance.

The Carbon Garden includes a dry garden featuring drought-tolerant plants

to illustrate some of the ways we can work with plants to adapt to a changing climate, and a rain garden illustrating ways to manage water flow, prevent soil erosion, reduce flooding, recharge moisture into the soil and support moisture-tolerant plants that maintain soil stability and carbon storage. The central focal point of the Carbon Garden is a fungus-inspired pavilion, created using natural materials. A forward-tilted canopy directs rainwater into the rain garden, and the sheltered space will support school visits and community activities.

The Carbon Garden encourages visitors to become

advocates for nature, highlighting actions we can all take in our everyday lives to support the health of plants and the planet.

Kew Gardens, Kew, Richmond, London TW9 3AE (020 8332 5655, kew.org)





BEST OF BRITISH

puzzle page

Twenty Questions

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

- Which Wish You Were Here...? host played the original Susan in BBC Radio's The Clitheroe Kid?
- What was the first major military campaign fought entirely by air forces?
- Who was the original lead singer of the glam rock band Sweet?
- Who is the frontman and co-founder of the Human League?
- Launched on 21 October 1960, what is the name of Britain's first nuclear submarine?
- Which Holby City actor's physical and vocal performance was combined with the CGI likeness of Peter Cushing for the role of Grand Moff Tarkin in Rogue One: A Star Wars Story?
- Who, on 26 October 1965, became the first member of the Labour Party to be appointed speaker of the House of Commons?
- Who played Damien Day in Drop the Dead Donkey and Father Peter Clifford in Ballykissangel?
- Who was the first British monarch to make a state visit to the Vatican?
- Who originally performed percussion and backing vocals in Tyrannosaurus Rex?
- Which Auf Wiedersehen, Pet star was the frontman of the band Heavy Metal Kids?
- Who designed the Penguin Pool at London Zoo?
- What range of large family hatchbacks and saloons was unveiled as a replacement for the Vauxhall Cavalier on 20 October 1995?
- Who came second in the 1960 Eurovision Song Contest with Looking High, High, High?
- Which small car ceased production, after 41 years, on 4 October 2000?
- Who was the inaugural first minister of Scotland?
- Which actor and comedian wrote under the pseudonym Gerald Wiley?
- Which long-standing performer of pantomimes at the King's Theatre, Glasgow played gangster Callum Finnegan in Brookside?
- Which diocese is Rachel Treweek, the first woman to take her seat as a bishop in the House of Lords, the bishop?
- Which Carry On actress was painted gold for the Goldfinger title sequence, posters and soundtrack cover?

And I quote...

Which building, according to postmaster general Anthony Wedgwood Benn, was "lean, practical, futuristic, [symbolising] the technical and architectural skill of this new age?"

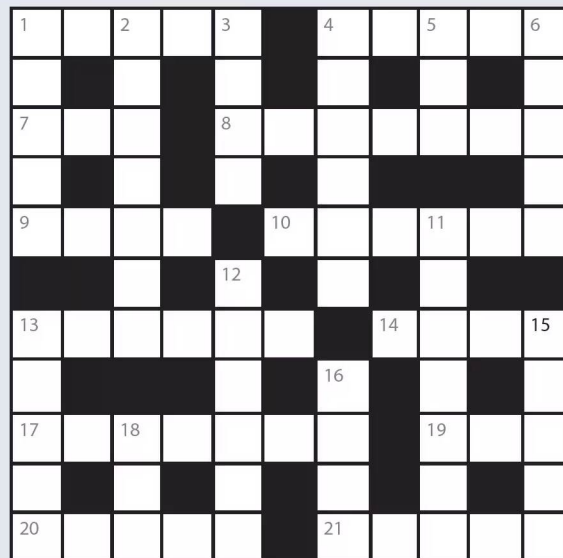
Dialect Detective

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

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Glumping (<i>Somerset</i>) | 3. Scampurt (<i>Lancashire</i>) |
| a) Sullen | a) Timid |
| b) Noisy talk | b) Scarce |
| c) Squinting | c) Run fast |
| 2. Newelty (<i>Norfolk</i>) | Vleer (<i>Somerset</i>) |
| a) Novelty | a) A field |
| b) Yeast | b) A flea |
| c) Needles | c) A blow |

Cryptic Crossword

Compiled by CADOC



Across

- MP in public transport – what one might find along 1 Down? (5)
- Trad is cool – there's a nightclub included. (5)
- See 12 Down
- Not very brave people. Noël's sounding like them (7)
- He wrote children's books and had around 50 (4)
- Good reasons for not being there, Your Worship (6)
- See 11 Down
- Overcomes, by the sound of it, my childhood game (7)
- I get an artist to find Gershwin (3)
- Good tennis players who may flower one day (5)
- Remains yet often go down under (5)

Down

- The pretty way, perhaps and wide so to speak (1-4)
- Um....miss school? Quite the opposite, Robert... (7)
- ...being unwell but such a note can be useful for the truant (4)
- Divine intervention with alluring lights ignited at first for the festival (6)
- Did John Alderton please when he was called this? (3)
- Pop group giving you a drink when you're dry? (5)
- 11 and 13 and 14 Across. Period ending in October when Tim Smith's rum and beer I get mixed up (7,6,4)
- 12 and 7 Across. Eventually comes to an end when Martin is not picked (6,3)
- He is Andrew – and "he knows nothing" (5)
- It was Godfrey who once had them all stumped (5)
- A lot of land that is returning as part of appraisal (4)
- Sounds to me as if Bevan was not far away (3)

What is it?

Want to feel chipper?
This is spuddy marvellous.

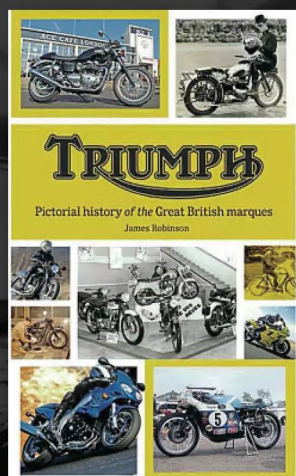


The solutions to this month's puzzles are on page 80

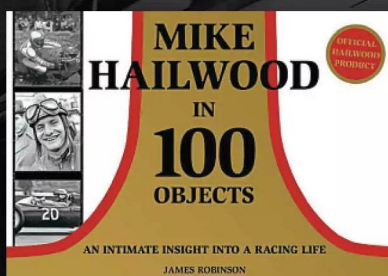
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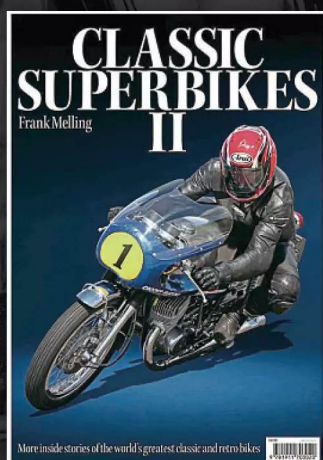
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James Robinson
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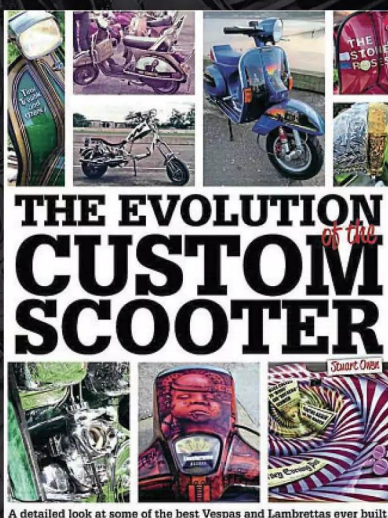
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James Robinson
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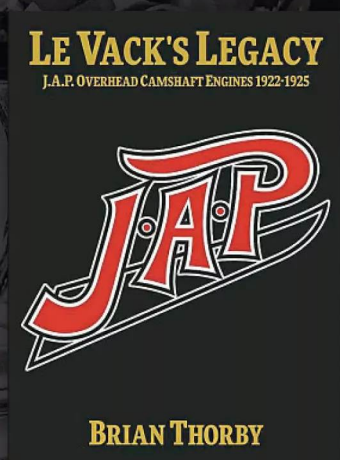
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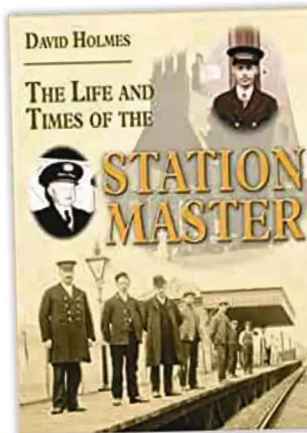
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MR C KENNETT, DUNSTABLE



The range of topics covered in the magazine never ceases to amaze me. Keep it up.
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BEST OF BRITISH

PAST AND PRESENT



SIMON STABLER,
EDITOR

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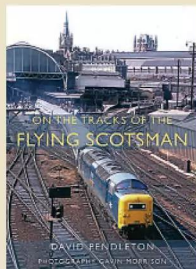
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Bookshelf

David Brown checks out the latest releases

BOOK OF THE MONTH



On The Tracks of the Flying Scotsman

By David Pendleton,
Great Northern
Books, hardback,
£22.50

The East Coast
Main Line (ECML)

runs just a few miles from my home and was where I first went trainspotting in the 1960s, when steam locomotives were being replaced by diesel-electric locomotives.

I'm glad that I caught that transitional period, but what a great history the line has had. Author David Pendleton guides us through the glorious development and progress of the line from London King's Cross to Edinburgh Waverley, and the famous named trains that were hauled by equally impressive locomotives.

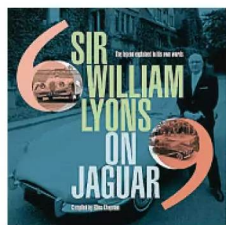
This 144-page volume features a great selection of photographs by Gavin Morrison, one of the few railway photographers who did not stop photographing the route when steam first gave way to diesels and electrics.

Of course, we all have our favourites and will recall, for example, when the mighty

Deltic diesels gave way to HST units, which have subsequently been replaced by a new generation of electric multiple units.

Occasionally, special steam and heritage diesel-hauled trains can still be seen along the ECML, bringing back an air of nostalgia for the glorious days of the past, but mostly it is business as usual.

I recall when the LNER-liveried A3 Pacific No 4472 Flying Scotsman headed north one evening, passing a now long-gone signal box. The signaller shouted to the crowds gathered to witness this splendid sight that a few years back they could have seen it every day.



Sir William Lyons on Jaguar

Compiled by
Giles Chapman,
Evro Publishing,
hardback, £50

Sir William Lyons is well known as the founder of the Jaguar car company, commencing with him co-founding the Swallow Sidecar Company back in 1922. He was an old school businessman who concentrated on the business in hand and was not known for talking about his achievements.

However, in April 1969, Sir William gave an address to the Institute of the Motor Industry at Church House, Westminster, entitled "The History of the Jaguar and the future of the specialised car in the British Motor Industry." It was a seminal speech, strategically made just after the launch of the XJ6 saloon.

A transcript of the speech forms the foundation of this book, subtitled "The legend explained in his own words," which has been examined and expanded by Giles Chapman to underline the importance of Lyons and his company in the development of motoring history.

The foreword is aptly provided by

Michael Quinn, grandson of Sir William, who considers that producing the XK engine was perceived as taking a risk that observers thought would fail, but fortunately paid off very well indeed.

Success stories such as the C-Type and XK 120, were offset by a disastrous fire in 1957 in which the company lost half of its main factory, another factor that would have finished any less-committed concerns, but which actually inspired a rebirth.

The splendid design of this quality production, with excellent photographs and ephemera throughout, will make this a worthwhile investment or gift for Jaguar enthusiasts.

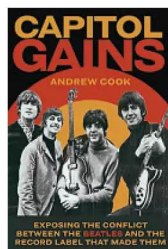
Capitol Gains

By Andrew Cook, The
History Press, hardback, £20

Just when you think you've learnt all there is to know about the Beatles, someone discovers a different angle to revive your interest.

This is one such book, showing that it was not exactly an instant rags to riches success story for the Fab Four.

Subtitled "Exposing the conflict between the Beatles and the record label that made



them," this account considers the difference between the UK and US record industries and how they promoted the rising stars while taking into account the involvement of their manager, Brian Epstein, and the increasing demands of the band members themselves.

In the UK, EMI had signed up the Beatles in June 1962 with a contract that paid the group one old penny per record sold. To really make money, the band needed to break the US market and signing with the US label Capitol in late 1963 was a great move for them.

When the Beatles touched down at New York's JFK airport on 7 February 1964, they were met by an estimated 10,000 screaming fans as Beatlemania kicked off coast to coast. Then their single I Want to Hold Your Hand hit the No 1 spot on the Cashbox Chart, and their fame was confirmed.

Capitol took the decision to remix many of the master tapes they received from EMI in London and create different albums with a change of song content, sleeve design and often titles. These have been much sought after by dedicated fans and in more recent times, become more readily available.

Who Me! How Doctor Who Changed My Life

By David J Howe, Bedford Square Publishers,
hardback, £22

When Doctor Who was first screened by the BBC on 23 November 1963, few can have imagined that all these years later it would still be appearing on our screens, being closely discussed by dedicated fans across the world and sustain an industry to fulfil a huge demand for associated products, additional stories and concepts.

Born in August 1961, David J Howe, was too young to be there for the first programmes, but from an early age he did enjoy watching children's TV, including *The Flower Pot Men* that featured an actor, Peter Hawkins, who would later voice the most-evil creatures in the universe – the Daleks. It is incredible how many connections you can find with Doctor Who once you start looking.

Our author believes the first time he saw Doctor Who on the TV was on 1 July 1967, the final part of *The Evil of the Daleks*. Soon, he would start collecting Dalek toys and become increasingly intrigued by numerous



elements of the time-travelling Doctor, his companions, the monsters they met and their amazing adventures.

From watching from the outside, David would increasingly become involved in creating fanzines, organising the first fan convention and writing numerous books and articles on various aspects of the worlds of Doctor Who. He owns one of the largest collections of Doctor Who merchandise and has found time to become an accomplished horror fiction writer. Who'd have thought it?

Bedside Companion to Folklore and Magic

By Jane McMorland
Hunter, Batsford,
hardback, £25

There's definitely magic in the air at the moment with myth and folklore playing a major role in contemporary fiction and film plots, and even a witchcraft cookbook.

This 447-page book will definitely find a place in many households among those who



enjoy a daily read of folklore fact and fiction, offering a page or more for every day of the year, ranging from short poems to more substantial extracts from books, both well-known and more obscure.

The content covers a time span of almost 2,000 years and the author notes that fairy tales that were originally told orally, eventually got written down and a lot of poetic licence crept in.

Sources from around the globe include Madhur Jaffrey's *Seasons of Splendour: Tales from India*, KP Koj's *Tales from Africa* and Margaret Orbell's *Maori Folktales*. Contributions from classic authors include Hans Christian Andersen, WH Auden, JM Barrie and CS Lewis, with more recent pieces by Terry Pratchett, Philip Pullman and JK Rowling.

I was pleased to find a personal favourite, *A Small Dragon* from Liverpool poet Brian Patten's anthology *Love Poems*, but I won't be waiting until 22 May to read it.

The author works in a bookshop when not writing her own books and her other *Bedside Companions* include volumes for *Book Lovers*, *Food Lovers* and *Gardeners*. Elen Winata's illustrations add extra charm. Magic.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT



The Partisan

High Fliers Films
(Theatrical release 30 September, digital and DVD from 27 October)

Based on the intriguing true-life story of a female secret agent sent by the

British to wartime Europe to confuse the enemy and encourage the resistance at any cost, this is a very watchable drama.

Krystyna Skarbeck is acknowledged as Britain's first World War Two spy, long-serving in dangerous, often chaotic circumstances and surprisingly successful. It is believed that she found the inspiration for Vesper Lynd in Ian Fleming's first James Bond novel, *Casino Royale*.

Such a role requires a special portrayal, found in Morgane Polanski's highly believable characterisation as someone who is not afraid to put herself in danger to achieve the objectives she has been entrusted to carry out, even if she does at times see through the associated deceptions.

With a strong international supporting cast, her orders come from a shadowy British

agent, known as Trenchcoat, played by Malcolm McDowell. She readily agrees to go into Nazi-occupied Poland, not just to gather information, but also to reach her mother, who is in mortal danger.

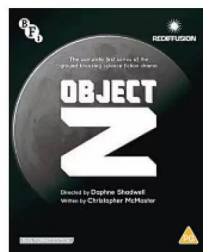
Spurred on by the unfolding elements, Krystyna's most dangerous mission is to be parachuted into southern France to find the French resistance, assess their strength and encourage them towards an important weapon drop.

Small victories build confidence, but are they walking into a trap? Director James Marquand is to be congratulated for the tense action sequences and overall atmosphere achieved by this British/Polish joint production.

Object Z

Dual format Blu-ray/
DVD, BFI

To mark the 70th anniversary of commercial television in the UK and the groundbreaking Associated-Rediffusion franchise, the BFI has released this science



fiction series which has not been seen since its first screening in 1965. The series of six episodes, designed to fill 30-minute slots, was very much of its time, a black and white presentation, shot on videotape mostly in the studio with stock film inserts.

Astronomers notice something in the sky that shouldn't be there – it's big and it's heading towards Earth. The meteor is believed to be the work of an alien intelligence, but are there other elements at work and, in time-honoured fashion, the powers-that-be want to blast the incoming threat with a rocket armed with a powerful atomic warhead in a British, American and Russian coordinated effort. As the meteor gets closer to earth, the planet starts to freeze with ice and snow rapidly spreading.

Starring Trevor Bannister and Celia Bannerman, look out for appearances by Terence Donovan (father of Australian singer and actor Jason) and science fiction regular Milton Johns.

The series was originally conceived by former Coronation Street director Christopher McMaster as an adult storyline, but he was persuaded by director Daphne Shadwell to adapt it for a younger audience for a Tuesday teatime slot.

OUT & ABOUT

Places to go, people to see

Cecil Beaton's Fashionable World

The first exhibition dedicated solely to Cecil Beaton's groundbreaking contributions to fashion and portrait photography opens at the National Portrait Gallery, London this month. Running from 9 October-11 January, Cecil Beaton's Fashionable World will showcase Beaton at his most triumphant – from the jazz age and the Bright Young Things, to the high fashion brilliance of the 1950s and the glittering, Oscar-winning success of *My Fair Lady*. With more than 200 items displayed, including photographs, letters, portrait sketches, fashion illustration and costume, the exhibition will feature portraits of some of the 20th century's most iconic figures, including Marilyn Monroe, Audrey Hepburn, Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Margaret, as well as Lucian Freud, Francis Bacon and Salvador Dalí.

020 7306 0055, npg.org.uk



The Second Age of Beauty by Cecil Beaton, British Vogue, February 1946.

Christopher P Wood: Red Riding and the Brothers Grimm

An enchanting exhibition of works by acclaimed British artist Christopher P Wood, inspired by the haunting beauty and darkness of the Grimm fairy tales, has opened at Scarborough Art Gallery. Running until 7 February, Christopher P Wood: Red Riding and the Brothers Grimm uses paintings, collages and etchings to reimagine classic stories through Wood's inventive works of dreamlike landscapes, expressive figures, and a touch of the surreal. Visitors can also explore a selection of objects from the Clarke Charm Collection, a fascinating display of charms and amulets collected by William Clarke, reflecting folk beliefs in protection, healing, and magic.

01723 374753, scarboroughmuseumsandgalleries.org.uk



The exhibition reimagines the haunting beauty and darkness of the Grimm fairy tales.

Leighton House: A Journey Through 100 Years

An exhibition charting a Kensington museum's transformation over the course of the last century opens at the property on 11 October 2025. Leighton House: A Journey Through 100 Years uses never-before-seen archival material, original photographs and public contributions to tell the story of the property which was acquired by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in 1926. Based in the former home and studio of Victorian artist Frederic, Lord Leighton,

the public museum has served a variety of additional purposes throughout the 20th century, from a children's library to a theatre museum, before careful restoration of its famed interiors began in the 1980s. The exhibition, which is complemented by Ghost Objects: Summoning Leighton's Lost Collection – artist Annemarieke Kloosterhof's life-size paper replicas of four missing objects from Leighton's original collection – runs until 1 March.

020 7361 3783, rbkc.gov.uk/museums/leighton-house



Dame Margot Fontaine, pictured with artist and film-maker Naz Ikramoullah, views an art exhibition by members of the London Corps Diplomatique at Leighton House, 12 February 1958.

NOT TO BE MISSED

Festival of Community Cinema

(October-December)

A nationwide festival highlighting the creativity and diversity of community cinema programming over the last century. A curated collection of 25 films, ranging from 1924 to 2025, will be available for booking by film societies, spanning genres, eras and countries. Tickets will be capped at £3 for these screenings.

mycommunitycinema.org.uk

Out on the Town: Entertainment in Swindon

(Until 18 October)

Have you been out on the town in Swindon? Going out to the theatre, to listen or dance to

music, or to see a film has always been part of the life of the town. This exhibition explores Swindon's theatres, dance halls, music venues and cinemas over the past 170 years.

Museum & Art Swindon, Swindon, Wiltshire
01793 466556,
swindonmuseumandartgallery.org.uk

Voiced: The Festival for Endangered Languages

(1-31 October)

Through poetry, music, visual art, performance, talks and live events including workshops and free spaces, the festival will bring together global and local languages that are close to desolation and reveal how they are being saved.

Barbican, City of London
020 7870 2500, barbican.org.uk

Oxford International Song Festival

(10-25 October)

Titled Stories of Song, evening recitals, lunchtime, rush-hour and late-night concerts will explore stories that have influenced the development of song across the centuries.

Oxford, Oxfordshire
01865 591276, oxfordsong.org

Adventures in Time & Space: An Unofficial Doctor Who Exhibition

(Until 2 November)

From Daleks to Weeping Angels, explore a world of monsters, props, and memorabilia in one

of the most extensive displays of Doctor Who artefacts for more than a decade.

Peterborough Museum & Art Gallery, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire
01733 864663,
peterboroughmuseum.org.uk

Magna Carta and the North

(Until 2 November)

Celebrating the 800th anniversary of the 1225 issue of Magna Carta with the only surviving 1216 Magna Carta, along with issues from 1225 and 1300, three Forest Charters, and immersive art installations.

Durham Cathedral, Durham, County Durham
0191 374 4069,
durhamcathedral.co.uk

ATTRACTION OF THE MONTH

Mary Shelley's HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN

An immersive experience, spread over four floors, telling the story of Frankenstein from how a teenage girl came to write her novel while living in Bath, to the monster's 200-year journey across continents, theatre, film and television. Bursting with unusual artefacts and vintage items, highlights include an 8ft animatronic monster, created for the museum by the award-winning Millenium FX, based on the description given in the book.

What to eat: Located around the corner on Old King Street, Hall & Woodhouse Bath (01225 469259, hall-woodhousebath.co.uk) is a luxurious pub, restaurant and cafe operated by the eponymous Dorset brewery. Bar snacks, full meals and Sunday lunches, along with coffee, cocktails and the

Badger range of cask beers are available.

Disabled access: Movement between floors is via multiple low-rise stairwells, short steps and wide landings. Due to the historic nature and layout of the Grade II-listed property, the attraction is currently unable to accommodate wheelchairs. However, those with specific access needs should get in touch prior to their visit to see if assistance can be given.

How to get there: Situated between Queen Square and The Circus, Mary Shelley's House of Frankenstein is an eight-minute walk from the city centre, and approximately 15 minutes from Bath Spa railway station (0345 700 0125, gwr.com). Bath Hop On Hop Off bus tour passengers should get off at Stop 8 – Queen Square. The nearest car park is at Charlotte Street (BA1 2NE, bathnes.gov.uk/parking-and-travel), which is a five-minute walk to the museum.

Opening times and admission:

Open daily, 11am-5.30pm (Saturdays, 10am-5.30pm). Admission is £16.75

(adult), £14 (senior/student), £56 (Family, two adults, two children) and £40 (Family, two adults, one child or one adult, two children). Essential carers admitted free with at least one full paying ticket (supporting documentation will be required). Other tickets including free admission with the purchase of the Mary Shelley's Frankenstein/The Life of Mary Shelley, A Concise Biography eBook, Bath Discovery Tour bundle, escape room/escape game, and After Dark Horror Nights are available from the museum's website.



Mary Shelley's House of Frankenstein, 37 Gay Street, Bath BA1 2NT (01225 551542, houseoffrankenstein.com). For more information on attractions, accommodation and food and drink in Bath, go to visitbath.co.uk

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

07 HISTORICAL WALK: FLOATING HARBOUR (10.30AM-1PM)

Join guides for a tour of Bristol harbour, exploring its industrial and maritime heritage and modern regeneration. Walk-ins welcome on the day if space available.

M-Shed, Bristol

0117 352 6600, bristolmuseums.org.uk/m-shed

11 MODEL SHOW 2025

Annual military and transport themed model show guaranteed to appeal to enthusiasts and anyone with a passing interest alike.

REME Museum, Chippenham, Wiltshire

01249 894869, rememuseum.org.uk

17-18 AUTUMN STEAM WEEKEND

Celebrating 200 years of railway history with an intensive timetable operated by a number of visiting engines from both heritage railways and mainline operators.

West Somerset Railway, Minehead, Somerset

01643 704996, west-somerset-railway.co.uk

29 STORE TOUR (2-3PM)

Join the collections team for an opportunity to explore behind the scenes in the museum's state-of-the-art collections discovery centre. Booking essential.

Dorset Museum & Art Gallery, Dorchester, Dorset

01305 262735, dorsetmuseum.org

SOUTH EAST OF ENGLAND AND LONDON

05 AUTUMN HISTORIC GATHERING (10AM-4.30PM)

View more than 150 pre-1972 vehicles and engines. Chat, learn and reminisce with volunteers and vehicle owners. Ride on a vintage bus and a steam train. Booking requested.

Amberley Museum, Near Arundel, West Sussex
01798 831370, amberleymuseum.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

18 DIWALI AT MARBLE HILL (NOON-8PM)

Celebrate the Festival of Lights. Expect illuminations, dancers, giant puppets, hands-on workshops and more. Free to attend.

Marble Hill House, Richmond Road, Twickenham, Middlesex

020 8892 5115, english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/marble-hill

25-26 WORKING WEEKEND

Experience all sorts, from seed fiddles, tractors and a flour mill, through to spinning and weaving, woodturning, vintage fire engines and buses, bicycles and more.

Rural Life Living Museum, Tilford, Farnham, Surrey

01252 795571, rural-life.org.uk

WEST OF ENGLAND

05 AUTUMN RUNNING DAY

Go back to the halcyon days when the councils of Birmingham, Walsall, West Bromwich and Wolverhampton all ran their own bus fleets.

The Transport Museum, Wythall, Worcestershire

01564 826471, wythall.org.uk

14 LUNCHTIME LECTURE: OF GOLF BALLS AND PYRAMIDS (NOON)

Dr Thomas Withington will explain the decision to activate RAF Fylingdales and the role it was to perform. In-person attendance free but registration required.

RAF Museum Midlands, Cosford, Shropshire
01902 376200, rafmuseum.org.uk/midlands

18-19 O GAUGE GET TOGETHER (10.45AM-4PM)

A celebration of railway modelling in 1:43.5 scale. See some of the UK's award-winning O Gauge layouts and dioramas, and shop until you drop with a selection of the best suppliers.

Severn Valley Railway, Kidderminster, Worcestershire

01562 757900, svr.co.uk

25-26 AUTUMN SHOWCASE

An autumn celebration featuring the railway's magnificent home fleet heritage diesel and steam locomotives bringing the curtain down on 200 years of passenger railway celebrations.

Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

01242 621405, gwsr.com

29 CAMERA AND PHOTOGRAPHY FAMILY DROP-IN (1-3PM)

Get close up to cameras and photography from the museum's collection including Lewis Carroll's camera and the early colour prints of Oxford photographer Sarah Acland. Free entry.

History of Science Museum, Oxford, Oxfordshire

01865 277293, hsm.ox.ac.uk

EAST OF ENGLAND

02-04 BURGHLEY BY TWILIGHT (6-8PM)

Experience Burghley in a whole new light and enjoy enchanting musical performances at this exclusive after-hours experience. Booking essential.

Burghley House, Stamford, Lincolnshire
01780 752451, burghley.co.uk

05 STEAM DAY (10AM-5PM)

Visit the museum and enjoy a ride in vintage wagons or carriages pulled by one of the restored steam engines as unlimited rides are operated during the day.

East Anglian Railway Museum, Wakes Colne, Colchester, Essex

01206 242524, earm.co.uk

14 THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS IN 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY NORFOLK (2-3PM)

Join Dr Richard Maguire for an examination of the under-researched subject of English people of African heritage who lived in Norfolk during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Ancient House, Thetford, Norfolk

01842 752599, museums.norfolk.gov.uk/ancient-house

18-19 DOG FRIENDLY DAYS (10AM-5PM)

Your dog can join you on a journey back through history exploring the Medieval Wall Walk, Victorian Prison and Magna Carta. Castle grounds free to enjoy. All other admissions apply.

Lincoln Castle, Lincoln, Lincolnshire
01522 554559, lincolncastle.com

25 THE OLD CONTEMPTIBLES' ASSOCIATION AND ITS HISTORY (11AM)

Researcher and author Andrew Thornton will deliver a talk on The Old Contemptibles' Association and its history. He has been researching the Old Contemptibles for many years.

Peterborough Museum, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire

01733 864663, peterboroughmuseum.org.uk

MIDLANDS

05 DERBYSHIRE DALES BUS & TRAIN FESTIVAL

View up to 60 vintage buses and coaches with some exhibits static while others complement the heritage railway route. Entry and vintage bus rides free.

Rowsley South Station, Matlock, Derbyshire
01629 818022, peakrail.co.uk

11-12 74TH BRITISH NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS & COUNTRY FESTIVAL

Two busy days packed with competitions for many types of plough and styles of ploughing, plus vintage tractors and craft marquee with a wide variety of stalls.

Allesley, Coventry, West Midlands
01302 852469, ploughmen.co.uk

16-19 MIDLANDS MODEL ENGINEERING EXHIBITION

Featuring more than 30 clubs and societies displaying hundreds of exhibits covering a wide range of modelling skills. Also, nearly 40 leading model engineering specialist trade suppliers.

Warwickshire Event Centre, near Leamington Spa, Warwickshire
01926 614101, meridienneexhibitions.co.uk/events/midlands-model-engineering-exhibition

25 STEAM WITH THE TEAM GUIDED TOUR (11AM-3PM)

Join an exclusive tour of the beam engine in action. A rare chance to descend into the depths of the hidden workings while the massive engine turns above you. Booking recommended.

Abbey Pumping Station, Leicester, Leicestershire
0116 299 5111, leicestermuseums.org/abbey-pumping-station

27-31 GALACTIC MISSION: LIFE BEYOND EARTH

Get ready for an entertaining, family-friendly science show packed with fiery experiments, glowing creatures, creepy creatures, and astonishing discoveries.

Thinktank, Birmingham
0121 348 8000, birminghammuseums.org.uk/thinktank

NORTH OF ENGLAND

03 LIVERPOOL MEMORIES: TOYS AND CHILDHOOD (1-4PM)

Did you have an Etch-a-sketch? A Spirograph? Maybe you're the Gameboy generation? What stories, games, and toys do you remember? Reminisce in this interactive session. Free event.

Museum of Liverpool, Pier Head, Liverpool
0151 478 4545, liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/museum-of-liverpool

11 FUNGUS FORAY (NOON-3PM)

Join a family-friendly guided walk of about three miles to look for fungi, covering a variety of habitats, with an introduction to picking, collecting, identifying and edibility. Booking essential.

Temple Newsam Estate, Leeds, West Yorkshire
0113 336 7460, museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/temple-newsam

19 ISLE OF AXHOLME RUNNING DAY (10.30AM-4.30PM)

Organised by Doncaster Omnibus & Light Railway Society, attractions include displays of vintage cars, buses and lorries; motorbus tours;

trolleybuses rides, and the usual attractions.

Trolleybus Museum at Sandtoft, Doncaster, South Yorkshire
01724 711846, sandtoft.org/wp

25-26 RAILWAY 200 GALA

Part of the nationwide Railway 200 celebrations with the railway's biggest gala yet, featuring five heritage steam and diesel locomotives in action throughout the weekend.

Stephenson Steam Railway, North Shields, Tyne & Wear
0191 277 7135, northeastmuseums.org.uk

31 SUDLEY AFTER DARK (6PM, 7.30PM, 9PM)

In this interactive tour, you will move through the dark period rooms of the house. Characters from the past may appear. Suitable for older audiences only with numbers strictly limited.

Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight Village, Wirral
0151 478 4444, liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/lady-lever-art-gallery

WALES

03-05 APPLE WEEKEND AT LLANERCHAERON (10AM-4.30PM)

Celebrating the apple with a display of Llanerchaeron apples, pressing demonstrations and stalls. Bring your own apples to be identified.

Llanerchaeron, near Aberaeron, Ceredigion
01545 570200, nationaltrust.org.uk/llanerchaeron

11 NEWPORT FOOD FESTIVAL

In addition to the traditional food market on High Street and surrounding areas, there will also be street-food stalls in John Frost Square where you can eat and listen to live music.

City centre, Newport
01633 656656, newport.gov.uk/newportFoodFestival/en

12 TYWI VALLEY VINTAGE CRANK DOWN (10AM-4PM)

Enjoy a display of vintage cars as the members of this community group come together for their traditional annual crank-down event. Miniature models on display in the Great Glasshouse.

National Botanic Garden of Wales, Llanarthne, Carmarthenshire
07554 810974, botanicgarden.wales

18-19 15TH CENTURY LIFE (11AM-4PM)

Join a living history group, let them take you back to the time of Tretower's heyday and find out all sorts of interesting facts about the middle ages. No booking required.

Tretower Court and Castle, Tretower, Powys
0300 025 2239, cadw.gov.wales

26 STARS OF TIME COMIC CON (10AM-5PM)

A fantastic event in Swansea city centre with star guests including The Young Ones' Christopher Ryan, costumed characters, film displays and so much more.

Oystermouth Road, Maritime Quarter, Swansea
starsofetime.co.uk/swanseacomicon

SCOTLAND

02 OUR ABERDEEN (2-3.30PM)

These relaxed dementia-friendly sessions bring people together to share stories and enjoy being part of a community. Chat with staff while they show you artworks and objects.

Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen Archives, Gallery & Museums, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire
03000 200 293, aberdeencity.gov.uk/AAGM

11-12 ANNUAL OPEN WEEKEND (10AM-5PM)

Enjoy the sights and sounds of yesteryear with free vintage bus services to and from the city centre and Riverside Museum. The garage hosts a display of buses, commercials and fire engines.

Bridgeton Bus Garage, Glasgow
0141 554 0544, gvvt.org

14 GUIDED WALK: AUTUMN WONDER (10.30AM-NOON)

Take a guided autumnal walk with a member of the Logan team. See the stunning nerines and other autumn wonders. Members free, non-members £3.

Logan Botanic Garden, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway / 01776 860231, rbge.org.uk

22 COLLECTION CENTRE TOURS (10.30-11.45AM, 1-2.15PM)

Go behind the scenes and discover the secrets of how collections are stored and used in international research. Booking essential.

National Museums Collection Centre, Granton, Edinburgh / 0131 247 4470, nms.ac.uk

29 SCOTLAND'S HERSTORY (10.30AM)

History is full of men: politicians, kings, heroes. But what about the women? Join Ruth Boreham to hear names we should remember. Booking essential.

Lauriston Castle, Edinburgh
0131 336 2060, cultureedinburgh.com/events/scotlands-herstory

NORTHERN IRELAND

03 GEORGE BEST HOUSE PUBLIC TOUR (2PM)

Step inside George Best's family home, as it would have been in the summer of 1961 when the 15-year-old left to follow his dreams in Manchester. Booking recommended.

16 Burren Way, Belfast
028 9045 1900, georgebesthouse.com

04 SHORELIFE CELEBRATION

Events celebrating the stunning nature and wildlife with free entry to explore both locations, fascinating talks, and fun activities for all ages and everyone who loves nature.

Mount Stewart, Newtownards/WWT Castle Espie, Comber, County Down
visitaidsandnorthdown.com

17-18 HERO OF BELFAST: MARY ANN MCCracken WALKING TOUR

Experience Mary Ann McCracken's Belfast, as you walk in the footsteps of this remarkable abolitionist, philanthropist and social reformer. Booking essential.

Clifton House, Belfast
028 9099 7022, cliftonbelfast.com

29 BEHIND THE SCENES: TRANSPORT STORE TOUR (12.30-1.30PM)

See inside this treasure trove of automotive, aeronautical and industrial collections that highlight Northern Ireland's social, industrial, and sporting history. Booking essential.

Ulster Transport Museum, Cultra, Holywood, County Down
028 9042 8428, ulstertransportmuseum.org

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

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PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

Twenty Questions

- Judith Chalmers who was born on 10 October 1935.
- The Battle of Britain, which ended on 31 October 1940.
- Brian Connolly who was born on 5 October 1945.
- Philip Oakey who was born on 2 October 1955.
- HMS Dreadnought.
- Guy Henry who was born on 17 October 1960.
- Horace King.
- Stephen Tompkinson who was born on 15 October 1965.
- Elizabeth II on 17 October 1980.
- Steve Peregrin Took who died on 27 October 1980.
- Gary Holton who died on 25 October 1985.
- Berthold Lubetkin who died on 23 October 1990.
- The Vauxhall Vectra.
- Bryan Johnson who died on 18 October 1995.
- The Mini.
- Donald Dewar who died on 11 October 2000.
- Ronnie Barker who died on 3 October 2005.
- Gerard Kelly who died on 28 October 2010.
- Gloucester.
- Margaret Nolan who died on 5 October 2020.

And I quote...

The BT Tower, which was officially opened, as the Post Office Tower, on 8 October 1965.

What is it?

A Villa potato chipper.

Dialect Detective

1a, 2a, 3c, 4b



Treasures in the Attic

- Shell Tanker £30, 2. Kinema toffee tin £90, 3. Ziggy Stardust LP £30,
- Rowntree's dummy bar £30, 5. HP bottle £5, 6. Austin Army truck £15,
- Observer flag book £8, 8. Pottery vase £20, 9. STAR ITEM Guinness water jug £600, 10. Meccano magazine £5, 11. Space Patrol Walkie-talkie £35, 12. Guy Fawkes badge £10.

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Laura Hillier



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BACK IN TIME WITH COLIN BAKER



BoB's very own Time Lord recalls his links to Blue Peter, and how he is happy to relive his time as the most hated man in Britain

There are a few names in the history of British television that will always be writ large. One of them is Biddy Baxter, who joined Blue Peter as its producer in 1962, becoming its editor from 1965 to 1988. Such was the strength of her association with the show that I believed that she was involved with it for a lot longer. She certainly was when I appeared on the show in 1984, while I was doing Doctor Who. And I earned one of my most prized possessions, a Blue Peter badge, by persuading their reluctant cat Jack to remain on my lap longer than he was otherwise inclined to do. I met Biddy only briefly but was aware that she was certainly in charge and formidable. There are many connections between Blue Peter and Doctor Who, of course. My dear friend Peter Purves was a presenter of the show for more than 10 years from 1967 after having been the First Doctor's (William Hartnell) travelling companion from 1965-66. He also directed me when I played Wishy Wasby in Aladdin at the Beck Theatre in Hillingdon in 1985 with Lorraine Chase, Derek Griffiths and the Green Goddess Diana Moran. He is kind enough to recall that I behaved myself and followed his direction punctiliously. (It doesn't sound like me – but I'll take it!) Peter and I will be reprising our roles as Charles Dickens and Ebenezer Scrooge respectively in a stage version of A Christmas Carol at a theatre near you in mid-November this year and we meet frequently at Doctor Who related events. Sarah Greene appeared in an episode of the series with me in 1984. Bizarrely, she was completely unrecognisable in a Cryon costume in Attack of the Cybermen. She is a very accomplished actress, but surely the whole point of having her in the show was because she was a Blue Peter presenter, but unless you watch the credits speeding by at




Colin with former Doctor Who companion and Blue Peter presenter Peter Purves. The pair are to go on tour in November with a production of A Christmas Carol.

the end, you would never have known.

And if you agree with me about this, please share your opinions with broadcasters as often as possible – why can't they let us read the credits at the end of programmes and wait before shouting about the next programme in case we are tempted to change channels? It is SO annoying. I also toured for a happy year in the play Corpse! with another Blue Peter presenter and former chief scout Peter Duncan, who famously swung on a rope to clean the face of Big Ben.

This month, a run of The Brothers, the BBC's 1970s trucking saga, comes to an end on Talking Pictures TV. Paul Merroney, the boy wonder chairman of Hammond Transport was my first major role on television and earned me the

dubious title of "the most hated man in Britain". I have been watching it myself because the 50 intervening years have dulled my memory and I am eager as the other viewers to know what happens next. It is as if I have been given the Tardis back and am revisiting my own past. It is tinged with sadness, as there are only four of the regular cast, including me, that are still with us, and it is wonderful to see my old colleagues and friends strutting their incomparable stuff again. And insofar as I can be objective about it, I believe that the series really holds up despite the considerable changes in the making of television drama since the 1970s, when the pace was much slower and scenes much longer. Thank you, Talking Pictures TV, for giving us the opportunity. 



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