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A MODEL WORLD

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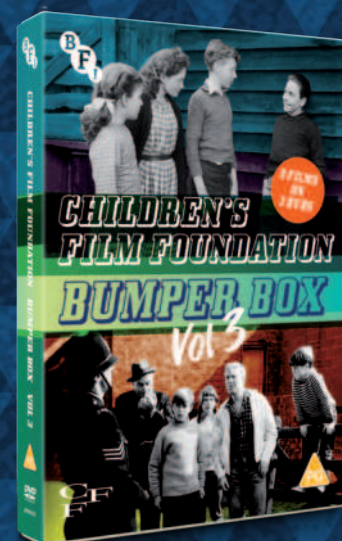
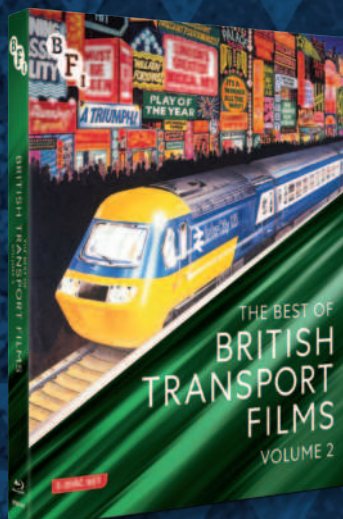
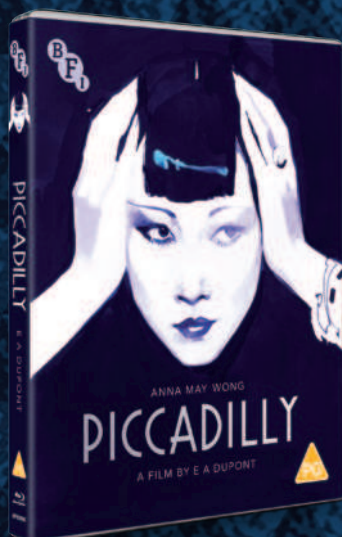
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BACK ON TRACK

They say that Christmas comes earlier each year and don't I know it. I'm not just talking about working on this issue, which began in early October, but being presented with the first draft of my children's Christmas lists at the start of the summer.

Their lists are perhaps no more demanding than generations of children over the years, just reflecting the current fads and technological advances. Their requests for computer games and other things that go bleep are no different to my youthful desire for a BMX bike, a personal stereo, and Action Man and Star Wars toys.

In fact, it's amazing how many classic toys from the 1970s and 80s have featured on their lists as well as in Christmas catalogues; with the Rubik's cube, Girl's World, and even the 8-bit Commodore 64 computer all making



comebacks in recent years.

The various lockdowns over the last couple of years have also seen an increase in traditional hobbies; in 2020, book sales passed the 200 million mark for the first time in eight years, sales of plants and

gardening products boomed (or should that be bloomed?), while model railway manufacturer Hornby saw sales increase by 28%, returning the company to profit.

Not only have those with fond memories of Hornby's 1970s advertisements starring the great Bernard Cribbins returned to railway modelling, their children are now building layouts of their own, giving great hope for the future of the hobby.

Had I the space, I too would be dusting off my (limited) model making skills. But for the time being, whenever my wife asks what I'd like for Christmas, I give a reply I could never have imagined saying 40 years ago: "Socks would be nice."

Merry Christmas everybody.

Simon Stabler

THE EN SUITE LIFE

Ian McCann is spending, er, Twixtmas at home

An Englishman's home is his castle, they say. Doubly so, perhaps, for a Welshman or a Scot whose countries are peppered with beautiful ancient fortifications, some built to keep the English out.

I won't claim any knowledge of Northern Ireland's castles; it's bad enough me pretending I know about them in the rest of Britain. And it's not relevant, because this column is not about castles: I believe an Englishman's home is not his castle, not nowadays. It is his hotel.

For a long time now, us Brits have been influenced by the tourism industry. We flew to Spain and drank fortified wine. From a porron, those weird jug thingies with a spout that a waiter poured down our throats. Or laps, if he considered us insufficiently polite.

We ate paella and couldn't decide whether we liked it. We wondered where the airline had sent our bags.

We got sunburnt and bought jolly Euro party records that sounded dreadful on the radiogram back home. Some of us thought about this and concluded: "This sounds rubbish in Redditch because it is raining and I am not full of Sangria. I'm moving to Tossa de Mar." But others tried to bring that holiday spirit to Blighty by turning their homes into hotels.

Many of us Brits happily lived in damp and cramped two-up two-downs, but we started to aspire to the deluxe life we'd experienced abroad. A "continental quilt" was the first move. Then came a fitted bathroom with water that didn't run cold when you topped up. Some of us craved the convenience of the en suite, so we didn't have to leave the bedroom nest to enjoy a nocturnal comfort break. Failing that, we'd drape a silken runner across the bottom of the bed for a touch of glamorous hotel chic. (Alas, the hotels only deployed runners because they were cheaper to replace than the entire

bedding when sozzled guests flopped on the divan with their boots on.) Some of us fashioned courtyard gardens of the kind admired on Greek islands. We wanted a year-round holiday experience without the unfamiliar food and lost luggage. Ah, bliss.

Across the endless days that holiday companies have branded Twixtmas, remember that many of us already live in a house resembling a hotel. Staying at home is cheaper and cosier than forking out for a winter break.

Have a great Christmas and a wonderful new year. 





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© Courtesy of Hornby



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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 Wee Break Up North

Dear Simon,

With not being able to travel abroad this year, I decided to holiday in the UK. After a complete washout staying in Fort William five years ago with four days of continuous rain, Scotland was forever consigned to be a no-go area.

However, friends persuaded me to try Edinburgh. I took a chance and booked a last minute four-day break. I could not have asked for better weather for the whole time. I stayed in a Best Western hotel within walking distance of Portobello beach, which is comparable to any beach in Cornwall. Two regular bus services went into the city from outside my hotel.

I discovered that the Queen was staying at Holyrood for three days, so I thought I would pay her a surprise visit. When I arrived at the gates, I was informed I had missed her by a mere 15 minutes. Instead, I visited the Queen's Gallery to view an exhibition of Queen Victoria's watercolour collection and it was utterly amazing to see the minute details in every picture. I learnt that Queen Victoria was herself an artist and some of her work was on display in a glass cabinet. Next door to the gallery was a gift shop and for one moment I thought I saw HM serving a customer but it was just a trick of the light. Of course, I bought a few souvenirs there of the edible variety.

I went to a coffee shop, where a large slice of Victoria sponge and a coffee was brought to my table. I had barely picked up my fork when a giant seagull swooped down, snatched the whole cake and flew away with it. Now I know how Tippi Hedren felt.

I, of course, visited the castle but due to covid restrictions, only limited numbers could enter and it was fully booked. I have to say though that prices for everything were considerably high, on a par with London.

Being a whisky drinker, I tried several different brands but under strange circumstances. Each bar handed me an A4 sheet listing all the various brands on offer,



Bob Cooper found he had just missed the Queen but vowed to return to Scotland.

but no prices. "How do I know how much I'll be paying?" I asked. I was then told to choose one. "I'll get you a price from the bar." Monkey Shoulder was my choice and she came back with £5.45.

I didn't fancy chopping and changing comparing costs, as it would have taken all day at that rate, so I had that despite it being overly expensive. A meal at a Szechuan restaurant of chicken and sweetcorn soup and sweet and sour chicken plus rice cost me £22.

It was the same with meals in other places, all higher than what I would normally pay. I just had to accept that fact in order to enjoy my holiday and not quibble over prices.

All in all, I can say honestly that my

embargo on Scottish holidays has been lifted and possibly my next visit will include Glasgow. Friends of mine have recently gone to live on the Isle of Skye and I have been invited, so I will have to hope it coincides with good weather.

Speaking of which, five minutes after leaving Edinburgh Waverley to return home, the heavens opened and torrential rain battered the train. When I turned on the news on arrival at home, I discovered that many railway stations had been flooded over that weekend, so I could not have timed my Scottish break any better.

Bob Cooper
Macclesfield, Cheshire

Common Ground

Dear Simon,

The October issue has two letters which drew my attention, firstly *Secrets & Flies* from David Dearle who mentions he was stationed at RAF Wittering.

My father, Ronald "Bob" McLaughlin, was also stationed there. I wonder if they knew each other? Sadly my father passed away in 2001.

The second letter, from Graham Belsham (*Second Helpings*), mentions the notice above his art room door at his secondary school, "Manners Maketh Man". At my secondary school, Emanuel in Wandsworth, if we were given lines to do, that was exactly what we had to write. I wonder whether he also went to that school, I left in 1964. Keep up the good work.

Malcolm McLaughlin
Cobham, Surrey

A Home Named Hibernia

Dear Simon,

Referring to Lilian Vine's letter (Back to the Bungalows, September), I was born in a similar bungalow in New Century Road, Laindon in 1943.

The home was built by my grandfather who lived in Clapton, east London in the early 1930s and my parents lived there when they married. We lived there until I was eight when we moved to a council house in Billericay as my brother had been born and we needed a larger home. I enclose a photo of "Hibernia" with my mother, Connie Smith (née Austin) sitting outside just before I was born.

Yours sincerely

Colin Smith

Bognor Regis, West Sussex



Colin's mother, Connie Smith, relaxes outside Hibernia, her bungalow in Laindon.

Historic Horsepower

Dear Simon,

Thank you for Colin Mayo's interesting article on the London to Brighton Veteran Car Run (November).

He is right that cars taking part must have been constructed prior to 1905, but these are classed as "veterans" and not "vintage". The National Motor Museum Trust categorises vehicles as follows: Prior to 1904, Veteran; 1905 to 1918, Edwardian; 1919 to 1930, Vintage; 1931 to World War Two, Post vintage thoroughbred.

Post-World War Two vehicles may be classified by other terms such as "classic" but this is not defined by any specific period.

I run a 1937 Morris 8 tourer (seen below) which is hardly a thoroughbred but certainly is a historic vehicle according to the DVLC and some would say a classic.

Being a historic vehicle, it requires no road tax and is exempt from MOT testing, although it must carry insurance if driven on public roads. The reasoning is that such vehicles are used infrequently but even so, must be roadworthy and compliant with all road regulations.

It is fun to drive and secures open-mouthed admiration as it passes along.

Yours sincerely,

Joe Hayward

By email



The Shirt on Sir Matt

Dear Simon,

The article about shirtmaking in Jermyn Street (Putting the Shirt on Your Back, October) was wonderful and brought back memories of my late father. He was a shirtmaker for a Manchester company called Ohm and Webster – later Watson

Prickard – in a posh shop for 30 years in John Dalton Street, next to the town hall.

Regular customers included Manchester United's Sir Matt Busby and Manchester City's George Poyser.

When my father retired, a picture appeared in Country Life under the heading "A relic of a Bygone Age".

Yours sincerely

Ian Revolta

Akeley, Buckingham



Runner in the Family

Dear Simon,

I wonder how many readers remember Sydney Wooderson, well-known as a runner in the 1930s and 40s.

Imagine our family's excitement therefore when a wedding invitation arrived at our newly-built home. Our cousin Pam was getting married to the great man himself.

My mother immediately said that we would all have new clothes (we hadn't bought anything new since the end of the war) and the following week she took me to Sutton. Of course, all the things I liked she said weren't practical. I ended up with a maroon corduroy coat and hat. I can't remember my dress. We went to the wedding in Kingston and, after the church, to a sit-down meal.

As I was only 13, I remember thinking he wasn't very handsome for a bridegroom. I learnt later that it was for that reason that he wasn't picked to carry the torch at the 1948 Olympic Games. He was honoured with an MBE in 2000 and died in 2006.

Maisie Dance, Purley, Surrey



Sydney Wooderson MBE was described as small and shy with horn rim glasses but he was also called "the mighty atom" and held the mile world record for five years.

Onward and Upwards

Dear Simon,

In my first job after I left school, I worked for an accountancy firm.

The wife of the senior partner was a flamboyant lady. She would have made a good model for Keeping Up Appearances' Hyacinth Bucket. If one of my work colleagues failed an accountancy exam, she would turn up with some words of comfort. "Never mind", she would say, "my hubby failed his exams four times but he got there in the end."

If I'd been her husband, I'm not sure I'd have wanted my wife to be portraying me as someone with plenty of stickability but maybe not too bright. Because I was good at cramming for exams, I never got the failed exam pep talk.

While Hyacinth Bucket's speciality was the candlelit supper, the partner's wife was well known for inviting people for tea in "the pleasance" (garden) to be followed by croquet. Because I was staff, not an important local personage, I never got an invite to the pleasance. Still, perhaps one day someone with a pleasance and a croquet lawn will ask me to join them.

We had a number of clients who nowadays would be described as characters. One of them you may have heard of, although I never met him personally, was Blaster Bates. He'd been a demolition expert in World War Two and was now helping farmers get rid of unwanted tree stumps using explosives.

He had a motorcycle and I remember reading a piece in the local paper where he had entered a hill climb event. He'd attached rockets to his bike for added speed but, instead of going faster, he shot into the air and did a somersault and had to go into hospital to recover.

Interesting people, different times, I look back on those days with affection.

Don Alcott
Shirley, Solihull



Keeping Up With Mrs Jones

Dear Simon,

While reading Tony Harte's Yesterday Remembered article, First Day at School, in the September issue, my memory went back to attending my first school The Church of England School in Suffield Road, right next to the Wycombe Wanderers ground (noted for its sloping pitch).

My twin sister and I always walked to school accompanied by one of the teachers, Mrs Jones, who lived two doors up from us. When we were older and in the juniors, we walked on our own and sometimes made a detour up through the beech woods on top of the hill and descended to the back of the school.

The headmaster was Mr Trendell who was also the organist at St John's Church in Desborough Road where Mum had two shops (Vera's), one each side of Manley's Garage. Does anybody remember those school days?

John Harris
By email





Holy Tow Hooks, Batman

Dear Simon,

I was interested to read David Brown's piece regarding the sale of the Corgi Batmobile by Lacy Scott & Knight (Round the Auction Houses, October).

In this, he describes the model as just lacking the tow hook but on the initial model issued in October 1966, there was no tow hook, because this was only introduced later in June 1967 when the model was issued as part of a gift set which included a trailer and Bat boat, making a tow hook a necessity.

The Batmobile was the must have Christmas present for any young boy in December 1966 and my mum had to put her name down at a town centre toy shop to reserve a Batmobile to ensure its guaranteed arrival before Christmas day.

Interestingly enough, David quite rightly talks about the red missiles, which were recorded as the standard issue for the model in *The Great Book of Corgi*, by Marcel R Van Cleemput, but from the attached picture, you will see that the missiles with my model, again with many still on the sprue, were in fact yellow. I wonder whether this makes my model rarer and possibly commanding an even higher price?

Your magazine never fails to amaze me with its range of topics and very informative articles.

Regards
Peter J Gaskin
 Ipswich, Suffolk

The opening line in the auction catalogue incorrectly mentioned the lack of tow hook. In the same auction, a Batman Gift Set (below) sold for £460.



Can you help?

Requests for information on any subject, as well as friends and family searches and reunion announcements can be included here free of charge

Would like to hear from Joanna Francis who lived – completely in 1940s style – in Burton-upon-Stather, Lincolnshire.

Robert J Addyman, Church View, Copgrove, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG3 3TA
Tel: 01423 340254

I'm trying to trace Jackie Granger who lived in Joiners Lane, Chalfont St Peter in the 1970s. She appeared as a passenger in a cine film I made of a train journey from St Pancras to Leicester in 1976. Subsequently she emigrated to America. I'd also like to contact Roger Hedley, who acted as the ticket office clerk (unseen in the film) at St Pancras station and also one of the passengers. The film demonstrates the operation of some of the mechanical signal boxes on the Midland Main Line, and I hope it will be released to the general public in the next few months (Better late than never).

Mike Hanscomb, 11 Wheatstones, Bishops Lydeard, Somerset TA4 3NS
Tel: 01823 433631,
Email: mikethesigs@btinternet.com

Information requested from anyone who served/trained in Scotland during World War Two. Any branch of the services or civilians, or evacuees. Locations such as Arran, Ayrshire, Dundonald, Wig Bay, Helensburgh,

Stornoway, Benbecula, Tiree, Islay, other islands, Oban, Argyll, the Clyde, Loch Ewe, Atlantic ferry, convoys etc. Any assistance greatly appreciated.

Mike Hughes, 20 Lynnburn Ave, Bellshill, Lanarkshire ML4 3EL
Tel: 01698 843557,
Email: mikehughes222@btinternet.com

The National Cycle Museum, which features a display of more than 2,000 cycling club badges from the 1880s onwards, is appealing for information about cycle clubs that no longer exist.

Freda Davies, National Cycle Museum, The Automobile Palace, Temple Street, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 5DL
Tel: 01597 825531, Email: curator@cyclmuseum.org.uk

Can anyone tell me anything about the Foort/Fort Family of Elmley Castle, Worcestershire? Also, does anyone have any knowledge on the ancestry of Alice Moore née Smith who married Edward Moore of Middle Littleton near Evesham in the 17th century? Can anyone send me a printed or written family tree, of the famous Luttrell family of England?

Mr LJ Gibson, 124 Cantley Manor Avenue, Doncaster DN4 6TN
Email: englishtourist1981@gmail.com

Requests for information, friends and family searches and reunion announcements can be included here free of charge. Send any requests, written as concisely as possible, to Can You Help? Best Of British, 7th Floor, Vantage London, Great West Road, London TW8 9AG or by email to info@bestofbritishmag.co.uk

Regent's Treat

Dear Simon,

Valerie Crossley's memories of "very noisy boys" at Saturday morning film matinees in the November 2021 edition (Yesterday Remembered: And Shout Aloud With Glee) was very interesting to read.

During the 1950s, in my home town of Great Yarmouth there were two ABC cinemas, The Regal and the Regent, that were both situated in Regent Road. The Regent Theatre that had opened on Boxing Day 1914 was where ABC chose to hold the Saturday morning children's matinees.

These had been introduced in 1932 by the manager at the time, Will Browning. The Yarmouth Independent praised Mr Browning's enterprise and the first programme was screened on 9 April 1932 and consisted of The Silent Enemy, Bath-time at the Zoo, Charlie Chaplin in Easy Street, and the Pathe Super Sound Gazette.

When I first started going to these matinees in 1958, they had become the ABC Minors. After a bit of a lecture about good behaviour from the cinema manager, in his suit and bow tie, those with birthdays that week were invited on stage to be given a birthday card that was also a free ticket for the following week. The birthday boys and girls then left the stage and were allowed to thank the Minors over the sound system "thank you very much Minors" but, very sadly, the noisy boys cheered the boys and booed the girls.

The film programme then started with a cartoon or a Three Stooges short, followed by a weekly serial, I remember Five Clues to Fortune, which was filmed at Woburn

Abbey, and The Green Archer. The goodies would also be cheered as they came on screen and the baddies were vociferously given a good booing.

There would then be an interval that would be introduced by Burl Ives singing Lollipop Tree, and those with the extra pocket money would get out of their seats to buy a Kia-Ora orange squash in waxed paper box or an ice cream. If the house was full, they could return to their seat to find another person sitting there.

The main feature then started, that was often the Cisco Kid or the Lone Ranger. Breaks in the film would cause mayhem among the audience, the house lights would go up followed by pleas from the manager to calm down. Once order was restored, the film would restart. At one stage, older children/teenagers were employed by the cinema to keep order and were known as "The Monitors". They would also sell the special ABC Minors badges and give out cigarette style cards that I recall were of different breeds of horse and were prized among those that collected them.

The Regent Theatre still has a magnificent plaster work interior, but the sheer beauty of this was lost on a 10-year-old at the time.

Sadly, The Regent is no longer a cinema, Mecca bingo arrived but then left town. The building, now Grade II, listed awaits an entrepreneur with vision and a new use.

Thank you for producing a truly excellent monthly read.

Paul Godfrey
Lowestoft, Suffolk



Tally Ho!

Dear Simon,

My parents and I read with interest the article on the Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway (On the Rails, June), this being one of our favourite local attractions.

It was with even more interest that the mention of Count Zborowski caught my eye, particularly due to his links with our family and the city of Canterbury.

The Chitty-Bang-Bangs were built by a very successful carriage manufacturer in Canterbury by the name of Bligh Bros, established in 1812. My great-great-great-grandfather John Moat ordered the first of the "Tally Ho" horse buses from Bligh Bros in the 1850s. There were three successive buses over the years.

John Moat set up a carriage business and went on to establish the first horse bus service between Canterbury and Herne Bay. Eventually, John Moat's son Josiah took over the business. Presumably because of his contacts with Bligh Bros, Josiah sent his seventh son, Reginald, to work there as an office boy. He worked at Bligh's all his life, becoming chairman and managing director.

Bligh Bros converted from carriage manufacture to motor vehicle work and it was during those years that Count Zborowski bought an interest in the company in order to build some of his racing cars.

Enclosed is a photograph of the third Tally Ho horse bus built by Bligh Bros with my great-great grandfather Josiah at the reins.

Yours sincerely

John Moat
Canterbury, Kent



The Regent Theatre where Paul enjoyed Saturday morning pictures.

Flying Rissoles

Dear Simon,

I enjoyed reading the article called Feeding the Classes in September's issue.

The article brought back many memories of my years in junior and secondary school. My late mother worked in the kitchen at my junior school, so there was no excuse for my brother and me not to eat our school dinners. They were nice dinners.

Fast forward to secondary school. I remember two dinners I loathed, they were spicy rissoles, and lumpy custard and spotted dick. To this day I cannot eat custard, or would I even think about eating spicy rissoles.

There was always one of our teachers on dinner duty, mainly it was our history teacher. She was a great teacher but, when it came to her day of dinner duties, she would come round and if she saw any uneaten food, she would take our forks and prod what was left on our plates, expecting us to eat it.

I always made sure that I had a seat by the window. It was a day when those disgusting spicy rissoles and lumpy custard were on the menu. I couldn't eat either of them and following her prodding, and expecting me to eat them, when her back was turned, I threw them out the window as I did that awful custard. When she came back for a check, she saw that my plate was empty. I wasn't aware that a teacher was walking past the window, and my dinner landed on him.

The teacher knew who the culprit was, and I was sent to the head teacher's office for a good telling off and I had to write a hundred lines stating: "I must not throw my school dinners out the window."

Of course, the headteacher sent a letter to my parents and, yet again, I was in big trouble. From that day until the day I left that school, I had to take packed lunches, which did upset me a bit as I couldn't have a roast dinner on Wednesdays, and fish and chips on Fridays, my two favourite school dinner meals.

Throwing school meals I didn't like out the window has taught me a very valuable lesson in how not to waste food.

Yours sincerely

Suzette Mizen

By email



The Collector



Like David Luck (The Collector, December 2020), I collect 1:76 and 1:43 scale model buses.

My collection was inspired by my dad who was a London bus driver and conductor from 1949-62, driving the famed AEC Routemaster. He also held a trolleybus licence, which I think was quite rare by the time he died in 2016, but of which he was very proud. He often said that it was the largest passenger carrying road vehicle of its time.

We originated from Leyton, London and moved to Northampton in 1962. Dad was based at Walthamstow and Mare Street, Hackney depots. However, I recall Dad mentioning another depot close by he was based at, perhaps David would know its name?

The bulk of my collection of buses are London Transport, London Country and Green Line, although I have examples of Bristol Lodekka, Leyland etc. I also have 1960s Vanguard cars, and transport through the ages including Stephenson's Rocket, charabancs, stagecoaches and trolleybuses, made by the likes of Corgi, Original Omnibus and Exclusive First Editions.

They are a happy reminder of my formative years growing up in the 1960s.

Michael Leonard
Northampton

The Retro TV Times

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Talking Pictures TV
talkingpicturestv.co.uk

SKY 328 | FREEVIEW 81
Freesat 306 | VIRGIN 445

The Spy Who Came in from the Cold (1965)

(Thursday 2 December, 9pm)

Drama. Director: Martin Ritt. Starring: Richard Burton, Claire Bloom and Oskar Werner. During the cold war, a British spy is caught in a sinister labyrinth of plots and counter-plots.

The Blood on Satan's Claw

(Friday 3 December, 9.05pm)

Horror. Director: Piers Haggard. Starring: Patrick Wymark, Michele Dotrice and Linda Hayden.

A village in 17th Century England becomes plagued by children who are converting into Devil worshippers.

Snowball (1960)

(Tuesday 7 December 6.30pm)

Crime. Director: Pat Jackson. Starring: Gordon Jackson, Kenneth Griffith, Zena Walker and Dennis Waterman.

After forgetting his bus ticket, a devious young boy causes trouble for the conductor.

Trottie True (1949)

(Thursday 9 December, 10.05am)

Comedy Musical. Director: Brian Desmond Hurst. Starring: Jean Kent, James Donald, Hugh Sinclair and Bill Owen.

After making her name in the music halls, Trottie True joins the Gaiety Theatre in London.

Serena (1962)

(Tuesday 14 December, 6.30pm)

Peter Maxwell. Starring: Patrick Holt, Emrys Jones and Honor Blackman. An inspector strives to solve the mystery of an artist's dead wife with the artist becoming the main suspect.



Step toe and Son (1972)

(Wednesday 15 December, 9.05pm)

Comedy. Director: Cliff Owen. Starring: Wilfrid Brambell, Harry H Corbett and Carolyn Seymour.

After trying to avoid his father's influences, trouble awaits when Harold decides to get married.

Doctor in Distress (1963)

(Friday 17 December, 2.55pm)

Comedy. Director: Ralph Thomas. Starring: Dirk Bogarde, James Robertson Justice and Samantha Eggar.

Dr Simon Sparrow's love life improves when the lovely Delia Mallory is brought into casualty.

The October Man (1947)

(Sunday 19 December, 7pm)

Crime. Director: Roy Ward Baker. Starring: John Mills, Edward Chapman and Joan Greenwood.

A man is suspected of murder and due to a previous brain injury he begins to doubt his own innocence.

horrorchannel

FREEVIEW 68, SKY CHANNEL
317, VIRGIN MEDIA 149, FREESAT
138 horrorchannel.co.uk

The Wolfman (2010)

(Saturday 18 December, 9pm)

Benicio Del Toro plays a haunted nobleman lured back to his family estate after his brother vanishes. Reunited with his estranged father (Anthony Hopkins), he sets out to find his brother, and discovers a horrifying destiny for himself. Emily Blunt and Hugo Weaving also star in a riveting tale inspired by the classic Universal film that launched a legacy of horror.

Tales From the Lodge (2019)

(Sunday 19 December, 9pm)

A group of friends gather at a remote lodge to honour a recently-deceased friend. Everyone makes the most of a gloomy situation by celebrating the best way they know how: swapping silly, scary stories that would have earned a giggle from their dearly departed pal. Urban legends about a masked slasher, a paranormal ghost hunt and a post-apocalyptic wasteland soon lose their fun shock value as the sextet become stuck in a true terror tale that exposes dark secrets no one could have possibly foreseen. Abigail Blackmore's gruesome and comically dark debut, stars Mackenzie Crook, Sophie Thompson and Johnny Vegas.



Great Expectations (1946)

Jean Simmons and Alec Guinness star in this gothic and Oscar-winning Dickens adaptation. When young orphan Pip finds himself suddenly wealthy. He can only guess at who is behind his good fortune. A tale of poverty, riches and elusive love.

That's Carry On (1977)

Kenneth Williams and Barbara Windsor star as their hilarious selves in this reflective comedy. Locked in the projectionist room at Pinewood Studios, they rifle through old Carry On films uncovering the best clips and gags from over the years.

The Beatles: Eight Days a Week

Intimate feature-length documentary about the Fab Four's touring years. Witness their dizzying ascent from Liverpool's Cavern Club to their last public gig in San Francisco in 1966. It's the band as you've never seen them before.



The Royle Family

Caroline Aherne's multi-award-winning comedy set in Manchester. Be a fly on the wall in the working-class Royle house as they go about their day. Sitting on the sofa with a cuppa and the telly on – that's life with the Royles.

The Vicar of Dibley

Dawn French stars as everyone's favourite vicar in this divine Bafta-winning comedy. Geraldine Granger has got her work cut out dealing with her crusty parishioners, but she'll always sing the good Lord's praises.

Love Actually (2003)

The ultimate Christmas rom-com treat. A starry cast tell the story of eight different couples and their interlinked love lives in the run up to Christmas. From the prime minister to a porn actor, everyone deserves a chance at love.

BritBox is a digital video subscription service created by the BBC and ITV. The service brings the very best in past, present and future British programming and award-winning content to viewers all in one place for £5.99 per month in HD. British TV boxsets from All 4 and British films from Film 4 are also available. Visit britbox.co.uk for further details.



FREEVIEW/YOUVIEW/BT/TALKTALK 26, SKY 155, VIRGIN 129, FREESAT 159

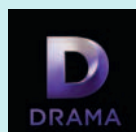
Hornby: A Model World, Episode 9

(Monday 6 December, 9pm)
The team try to steal a march on their competitors by launching the first model of the P2 – a new steam locomotive – and a layout builder completes a magical replica of a Staffordshire brewery.



Hornby: A Model World, Episode 10

(Monday 13 December, 9pm)
Hornby's designers race to create Scalextric models of a legendary 1980s supercar, the Lamborghini Countach, and a brand new eco-friendly Formula E.



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

An Inspector Calls (Thursday 2 December, 8pm)
David Thewlis stars in the 2015 adaptation of JB

Priestley's classic play. A mysterious inspector interrupts a wealthy family's party with shocking news.

The Bill: The Fat Lady Sings

(Monday 6 December, 12pm)
(Things get quite highbrow at Sun Hill as Quinnan and Holmes come to the aid of a local opera singer, helped by a mysterious new DC, Duncan Lennox.



SKY 110, VIRGIN 124, BT/TALKTALK 310, NOW TV

The Good Life: Silly, But It's Fun

(Saturday 4 December, 8.20pm)
The Leadbetters spend a self-made Christmas with the Goods – complete with Tom's lethal peapod burgundy which they all get truly smashed on.

Dad's Army Christmas: For the Love of Oranges

(Thursday 9 December, 2.15pm)
A seasonal special from 1976. Three oranges are to be auctioned and Captain Mainwaring is determined to get one for his wife – the mysterious Elizabeth.



Watch Dave, Really, Yesterday and Drama shows on demand with UKTV Play (uktvplay.uktv.co.uk) and catch up on your favourite programmes.



Channels may be unavailable in certain regions. If you are having trouble viewing channels, go to freeview.co.uk/freeview-channel-checker or call the Freeview Advice Line on 03456 50 50 50 (Mondays to Fridays, 9am-5pm).

BRITAIN NOW

TOPICAL SNIPPETS FROM AROUND OUR NATION

Kent's Best

An organisation that champions locally produced items has opened a store at Bluewater Shopping Centre at Greenhithe, Kent. The Produced in Kent store (07706 320750, producedinkent.co.uk), which can be found on the Lower Thames Walk, features some of the county's best independent brands from food and drink producers such as brewer Shepherd Neame to the luxury clothing company Romney Marsh Wools. "It's more important now so than ever to help support local and invest in your community and local businesses," says Produced in Kent's Floortje Hoette. "We want the people of Kent to get involved with our Buy Five Christmas campaign and promise to Buy Five locally produced gifts for friends and family this year."



Produced in Kent's new store at Bluewater Shopping Centre is well-stocked with a selection of Kentish products.

Next Stop, Retirement

A train driver who spent 50 years on the railway was joined by his family for his final shift. Steve Wilson, who joined British Rail in 1971, had worked on the footplate since 1974. The Avanti West Coast employee made his last journey as a train driver by driving Pendolino 390157 from London Euston to Manchester Piccadilly – where he has been based for the last 15 years. To celebrate the end of his long career, Steve's wife and two daughters joined him for his last working day, giving him a send-off at Euston station before travelling as passengers on board the train to Manchester. Steve was greeted by applause after stepping out of the driver's cab for the last time at Manchester Piccadilly before being presented with his 50 years' service award by manager Dave Wright.



Train driver Steve Wilson, at the controls of an Avanti West Coast Pendolino, who has retired after 50 years on the railway.

Water Way to Celebrate

A line-up of events is being developed to celebrate the Union Canal's bicentenary next year. The City of Edinburgh Council, Scottish Canals and partners will join to mark the 200th anniversary of the 16km waterway, which links Edinburgh with The Falkirk Wheel in Tamfourhill and onwards to the Forth and Clyde Canal. Events to commemorate the canal's heritage will include a special edition of the Edinburgh Canal Festival in June 2022 and work to secure a new future for the Lockhart Bridge Boat House. Other potential projects include a citizen science programme with nearby schools to promote biodiversity and the completion of the WaveGarden at Ratho – a surf facility capable of creating up to 1000 ocean-like waves per hour.



The Union Canal was originally opened in 1822 as a means of transporting goods. It was closed in 1965, however it was reopened in 2001 as part of the Millennium Link project.



Alan Hawkshaw

The composer Alan Hawkshaw, best known for the Grange Hill and Countdown themes, has died. He was 84.

Born in Meanwood, Leeds and educated locally, he was apprenticed to the Leeds printing firm Knight & Forster. Following National Service with the RAF, he returned to printing and played the piano with several local dance bands.

A member of Emile Ford and the Checkmates, he toured with the Rolling Stones and socialised with the Beatles while they were in Hamburg. As a session musician, he played piano and Hammond organ for a variety of musicians including the Hollies, David Bowie and Serge Gainsbourg.

While writing and recording library music for KPM Music, Hawkshaw worked with Shadows' drummer Brian Bennett. Through this association, he joined the Shadows in 1969 for their Japanese tour, playing on their 1970 album *Shades of Rock*. At the same time, he was Olivia Newton-John's Musical director, and earned the award for Best Arrangement from the American Academy of Arts & Sciences for I Honestly Love You, Newton-John's first US No 1 single.

Among his library compositions that were licensed as television theme tunes are Studio 69, the theme to The Dave Allen Show and Dave Allen at Large; and Chicken Man, a composition best known as the theme tune for Grange Hill but also used on the early series of gameshow Give Us a Clue.

It wouldn't be the only time that Hawkshaw's compositions were used for contrasting productions, with his Best Endeavours being used as the theme for Channel 4 News as well as the trailer for Clint Eastwood's fantasy western *Pale Rider*.

Donating 10% of his income to charitable causes, he established The Alan Hawkshaw Foundation in 2004, a scholarship programme in association with the Performing Rights Society, to provide financial support to gifted undergraduates at Leeds Conservatoire.

A resident of Radlett in Hertfordshire, Hawkshaw paid for the sound system at the local arts centre and underwrote the Radlett Junior Tennis Tournament for many years.

A fellow of the Leeds Conservatoire, he was awarded a doctorate from Hull University in 2016 and was awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2021 "for services to music and composing."

Side Streets

Steve Windsor wanders through the side streets and back-alleys of this issue of BoB

When it comes to each edition of BoB, space is the final frontier. This is my opportunity to share some of the discoveries, insights and leads that I come across while preparing the pages. We hope that readers can follow them up at their leisure.

Turkey may be on our minds and plates, and one of my favourite quotations offers an historical perspective on their arrival in Britain.

"Hops, Turkeys, Carp and Beer Came into England all in one year."

Interestingly one dictionary of quotations has *"Turkey, Heresy, Hops and Beer"* in its Proverbs section; another replaces *heresy* with *reformation*. Izaak Walton quoted the proverb in its "carp" version in the *Compleat Angler* in 1653.

No-one seems too certain which year it refers to. Angeline Wilcox (page 24) suggests the 1520s for turkey, and I've seen 1521 suggested. Henry VIII split from Rome in 1533, if "reformation" is involved. Turkeys couldn't have come much sooner, Columbus having "discovered" America in 1492, but carps and beer?

Unhopped ale was always drunk in Britain, but legislation distinguishing the production of unhopped and sweeter ale, and hopped beer, was enacted in the late 15th century, when hops filtered into England. So maybe some truth in that. Carp on the other hand may well have been yet another thing that the Romans did for us. Whatever the truth it was a very long and complicated year.

The Bachelors (page 40) were among my mother's favourites. I wondered where and how they are now? Well like many other musical combos, they endured a split (in 1984) but the Cluskey brothers Dec and Con still perform, as does the third member John Stokes (after a break). Each has a website, Con and Dec's being thebachelors.co.uk while the-bachelors.com is John's.

We had a high street parade of shops (page 41) in Wembley Park. I think I can remember a car showroom, grocers, greengrocer, bakers, butchers, an off licence and a newsagent/toyshop. Tucked incongruously in, there may have been an undertaker. Across a busy road was a pub, The Torch. Everything you could require for life (and death) in a similar space to a modern hypermarket.

Billy Bunter, Greyfriars (page 54) and school stories still have their fans and there is an interesting website at greyfriarsindex.co.uk/index.htm which bursts with information on Bunter and other school stories.

I fear there may be a revisionist attitude to the Carry Ons (page 54) in future. In the meantime there are fan sites that revel in every aspect not least the very basically designed but rather wonderful carryon.org.uk which offers a fantastic amount of detail on everything from occasional appearances (the great Sheila Hancock) to often fascinating trivia from each film. Carry On fans could spend hours there.



Grand Parade, Wembley Park continues to offer everything you could require for life.

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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 78.

1 Santa special

Made from briques, this delicately detailed Father Christmas was designed as a table decoration to celebrate the 1950s. After World War Two, Britain became the second nation to have a dedicated Christmas television channel. This beautifully painted piece would grace the top of any Christmas cake.

2 Coffee classic

This lovely British-made Pirelli coffee pot with a black handle is made from Magnalium, an aluminium alloy, and has a distinctive mid-century look. Prepared for use in a factory that had previously made parts for aircraft. This was originally part of a four-piece set.

3 In the wash

Still used with full contents this Robin Search 2000 was made from the 1950s. Robin Search was made by British & Sons Ltd of Hull and London. Two hinged sub-pumps were required for a standard double-cylinder job. These pumps were sold for £2.

4 Compact style

Although Wedgwood's reputation is not as high as it once was, this product is still in demand. The pattern was developed by Josiah Wedgwood in the 1770s, with Wedgwood blue becoming the most popular design.

5 Crystal clear

This crystal crystal vase is a masterpiece of the late 19th century. The vase was made by the famous glassmaker, James Powell & Coys, and is a fine example of the 'crystal' style that was popular in the 1870s.

6 Numbers game

Manufactured by F. W. Taylor, this simple board game would have kept kids quiet for hours. Long before the age of computers, Taylor's Numbers game was based in Farnborough, Farnham in 1912. It was later seen on the shelves of Toys 'R Us.

7 At the double

Millions of these double-decker buses were made by Dennis & Sons who were based in north London. The brand became known as Dennis and later came under the banner of Leyland. Even today, Leyland is still a major player in the bus industry.

8 Cornish yellow

This lovely yellow paint is the same as the Cornish yellow used by the famous painter, J. M. W. Turner. The paint was made by the famous Cornish yellow paint company, which was founded in 1825.

9 What a cracker

With a little bit of luck, this cracker could be brought for a price. This cracker was made by the famous cracker maker, who was based in the famous cracker factory in the famous cracker factory.

10 On call

This lovely telephone is a fine example of the famous telephone company, which was founded in 1875. The telephone is a fine example of the famous telephone company, which was founded in 1875.

11 Farmyard fun

This lovely farmyard scene is a fine example of the famous farmyard scene, which was founded in 1875. The farmyard scene is a fine example of the famous farmyard scene, which was founded in 1875.

12 Hot stuff

This lovely hot water bottle is a fine example of the famous hot water bottle, which was founded in 1875. The hot water bottle is a fine example of the famous hot water bottle, which was founded in 1875.

A CULTURAL INSTITUTION

Bryan Knight charts the development of the Notting Hill Carnival

For events have received the international prominence that the Notting Hill Carnival enjoys. From its inception in the mid-1960s to today, the three-day annual event has been a cultural institution with a firm grip on our nation's story. The history of the carnival tells both a story of multiculturalism and the power of community resistance.

Notting Hill Carnival began in 1966 when a group of young people from the streets of west London began to celebrate the summer. For more than 50 years, the carnival has grown to become one of the largest and most vibrant festivals in the world. It is a celebration of the diversity of the Notting Hill community, and a testament to the power of community resistance.

The carnival is a celebration of the diversity of the Notting Hill community, and a testament to the power of community resistance. It is a celebration of the diversity of the Notting Hill community, and a testament to the power of community resistance.

POSTCARD FROM DORSET

Bob Barton pays a visit to Thomas Hardy country, where he dunks his knobs, spies a giant and sees a site for sore eyes

When I was seven, my parents bought me a postcard from Dorset. It was a postcard from Dorset, and it was a postcard from Dorset. It was a postcard from Dorset, and it was a postcard from Dorset.

The postcard was a postcard from Dorset, and it was a postcard from Dorset. It was a postcard from Dorset, and it was a postcard from Dorset. It was a postcard from Dorset, and it was a postcard from Dorset.

The Great Fire of Blandford

Another volunteer told me Blandford used to have 72 public houses. Only a few remain, he said. He used to go mushroom picking in the surrounding fields. Beer and mushrooms: now there's a handy combination.

The Great Fire of Blandford was a major disaster that destroyed the town of Blandford in Dorset. The fire was caused by a lightning strike on a windmill, and it spread rapidly through the town. The fire destroyed the town of Blandford, and it was a major disaster.

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Hornby's development director Simon Kohler with a rebuilt streamlined LNER W1 Class locomotive, a model he has wanted to produce for many years.



MODELS IN THE MAKING

Simon Stabler goes behind the scenes at Hornby

The UK's biggest and best-known model railway manufacturer, Hornby has been delighting enthusiasts since 1920, when Meccano founder Frank Hornby launched his first clockwork train. Over the years, the company has witnessed many changes including the introduction of OO gauge – the UK's most popular model railway standard – through its Hornby Dublo range, and a move from Liverpool to Margate, Kent following its acquisition by Lines Bros, owners of rivals Tri-ang Railways, in the 1960s.

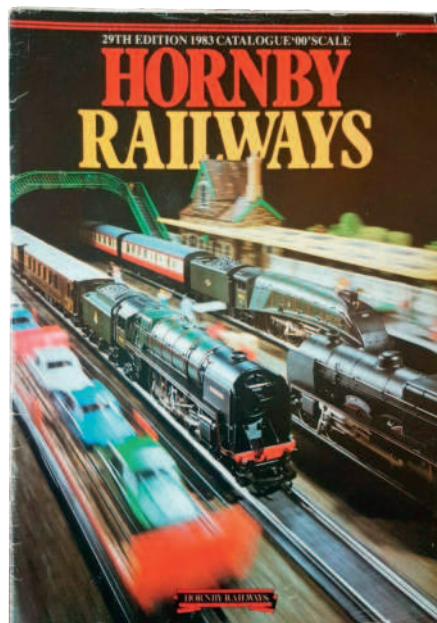
In addition to model railways, Hornby is now home to many much-loved toy and model brands including Airfix, Corgi and Scalextric. Overseeing the ranges' development is marketing and product development director Simon Kohler, a man who has been in the toy and model industry most of his working life.

In 1971, Simon joined his best friend Nick Evans at The Model Shop in Northampton, a business that had been founded by Nick's late father, model aeroplane supremo Ted Evans.

"I learnt so much at The Model Shop," recalls Simon. "I learnt about people, the

product, and the brands. The shop still has an amazing cross-section of product."

After seven years at The Model Shop, Simon joined Hammant and Morgan, the Hornby subsidiary famed for its Clipper power controllers, in a role "...we used to lavishly call an area sales manager. But basically, it was a rep.



"I was able to get along to various exhibitions and so on, show the goods off, and I'd come back and write a report and send it off, and it sort of got noticed and I got asked to write Hammant and Morgan's first colour catalogue, which was all totally new to me. I hadn't done anything like this before, so I did that and then went back on the road, then along came the HM5000 and I was asked to not only write the instructions but also write the catalogue."

Planning on going into business with his brother, to the point that he'd had business cards printed, Simon handed in his resignation but was instead offered the role of brand manager of Hornby Railways.

"I thought: 'Oh, this is something I really would like to do.' My brother was incredibly understanding, so I went down to Margate and was well looked after.

"I was totally blind at marketing and things like that but you tend to learn, it's not like it is these days, I'm not going to

Originally a sales rep for Hornby subsidiary Hammant and Morgan, Simon Kohler moved into a marketing role, writing product information including the 1983 Hornby Railways catalogue.

say you made it up as you went along, it wasn't like that, but things were different, you didn't have computers, everything was handwritten, it was a bit of a slog, learning the trade. The company started to sell toys and things, it went into that sort of period and you learnt to adapt.

"For a time when it was really sticky here, I was handling all the boys' toys and some of the girls' toys as well. I found that really interesting. One of the things that I enjoyed doing was writing the Hornby catalogue. Having completed that, because you had to be quite precise with that detail wise, I'd then move on to Scalextric, and Scalextric was a lot more flamboyant and a lot more exciting and it was almost a relaxation. All of it has been good because it's led to so many other opportunities."

“ I’m very keen that we have something that offers everything from the cradle to the grave. ”

Although marketing, sales, customer service, product development and engineering are all done in-house, most of Hornby's products have been manufactured in China since the late 1990s. It's a move, says Simon, that saved the company.

"A lot of people reckon we moved to China because it was cheap labour. But we went over there because the market was demanding finer scale detail, better running, smoother running, but that just wasn't happening here. I could see what would happen, eventually, we'd become an old-fashioned company and it would close.

"We had a new chief executive who joined us, and several of us had discussions with him, and we had association out in China and, basically, they had everything that we needed.

"And it's a matter of course and a matter of fact, that the minute we started producing models out in China, Hornby's course was turned dramatically. It's a can-do attitude out in China, you don't pay any less. They have very strict employment laws and minimum wages and all the rest of it, it's not cheap but the work you get, the finesse you get is brilliant."

If you've been watching the recent documentary series Hornby: A Model World on the Yesterday channel, you'll know the lengths Hornby goes to to design the most realistic models possible. Across the series, there are trips out of find an exact colour match for the



Top: Airfix designer Paramjit Sembhi paid a visit to the Shuttleworth Collection to capture every rivet and join of its Spitfire for a new model kit. Above: Designer Sam Watkins takes measurements from Sir Winston Churchill's funeral hearse, currently part of The One:One Collection, a railway museum in the making in Hornby's former warehouse in Margate.

Advance Passenger Train, to capture every rivet and join of a Spitfire for a new Airfix kit, and to take measurements from Sir Winston Churchill's funeral hearse. Once a Southern Railway luggage van, it is currently housed at The One:One Collection, a railway museum in the making in Hornby's former warehouses.

"They've laid its track, and gradually the locos, rolling stock and other bits and pieces will come along and it will open up as a visitor centre-cum-museum. It's owed by Jeremy Hosking who's passionate about railways, passionate about Hornby.

"He's really invested in it because he's got a massive collection, every old loco I look at these days, he owns it. It'll take two years to get it all together, and open it to the public, but it will be amazing, it'll be great for the area, fantastic for the area."

Having real-life locomotives on site is perfect for Hornby's designers, but I

wondered what happens when Hornby wants to recreate a class of locomotive that hasn't survived into preservation.

"There's a lot of research, we get the drawings if we can. There's not a lot else you can do to be honest. Sometimes it's a bit of a nightmare, but it's just research, intense intense research."

A case in point is the LNER Class W1, also known as the Hush Hush, the long-scrapped experimental steam locomotive. Now available as a Hornby model in a variety of liveries, including the streamlined rebuilt example, it's been a long time coming.

"I always loved the Hush Hush but there was only one of them and I would never have been able to persuade the company here in the old days to do it, because they wouldn't see the advantage, and the market was probably different as well. But we've launched that and it's gone

down incredibly well. That was one I always wanted to do and I was proved right.”

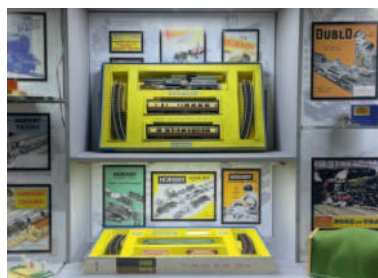
Over the years, Hornby has experienced many highs and lows, but in 2020, after several years of heavy losses, the company was back in the black. This change in fortune was a combination of a new management team, which brought Simon back to the company after a four-year break, a new range of products and, of course, people looking for something to do during lockdown.

“We’d already invested a lot of money into new tooling,” explains Simon, “so even without lockdown it was going to happen, and that’s exactly what did happen. With this new tooling, and stuff that we’ve got coming through, I think that the interest will continue. We’re not just interested in top-end models, we have Playtrains, which are young kiddie remote control trains, we have Railroad, which is for someone on a budget, and we have more expensive items for what we’d call mature enthusiasts, I suppose.

“Because unless you’ve got people coming up, eventually it’ll disappear, so I’m very keen that we have something that offers everything from the cradle to the grave.” 

Take a trip through the history of Britain’s best-loved toys at the Hornby Visitor Centre. Located at the company’s Margate headquarters, it’s open daily from 10am-4pm, and features rare products from the Hornby, Scalextric, Airfix and Corgi archives. Enjoy model railway and Scalextric layouts, track the history of Hornby’s iconic model trains from Frank Hornby’s early home-made toys in sheet metal, through the development of Hornby O gauge and Hornby-Dublo, and grab the latest products in the shop.

Hornby Visitor Centre, Westwood Industrial Estate, Margate, Kent CT9 4JX (01843 233524, uk.hornby.com/hornby-hobbies-visitor-centre)



The Hornby Visitor Centre at Margate features rare products from the archives including Hornby-Dublo.

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

On the eve of its 65th anniversary, **Caroline Roope** celebrates the history of Scalextric



Whether you spent your youth gazing longingly at the catalogue, or you were lucky enough to have your very own set, most of us have heard of Scalextric. From watching your scarlet Maserati and its featureless driver go hurtling off the track, to recreating the famous race-track battles of all the motoring greats, our childhood memories are punctuated by carpet-burnt knees and retrieving errant cars from the far-side of the room.

Your set may now be collecting dust in the attic, but Scalextric is a long way from making its final pit-stop. In fact, almost 65 years later, it remains one of the most enduring motor racing sets of all time, thanks to the ingenuity of inventor Bertram “Fred” Francis.

The miniature racing sets began life as Scalex, which Francis produced through the company he founded in 1947, Minimodels Ltd. Francis, a toolmaker by trade, began by selling a range of accurate tinplate models – the first being a “Minitype” Typewriter, which according to Francis, “just about covered costs and made a small profit.” He then turned his attention to transport models, producing a range of lorries and traffic

cars with working forward and reverse gears. A touch of speed and glamour was introduced in 1950 with the release of two racing cars: John Cobb’s silver land speed record Railton-Mobil-Special and Goldie Gardner’s MG EX-135, available in red and the legendary British Racing Green. The MG model didn’t just look the part though – it introduced the patented fifth-wheel self-winding mechanism, which became the key component of Scalex’s early success.

The first Scalex sets boasted a “no key clockwork motor fitting with micro-steering – press down...pull back, and off she goes!” The base plate had a fifth wheel which wound up the clockwork motor. On release, the car ran ten metres on its own – fun if you had lots of space but not so if the car was in imminent danger of being lost under the furniture. The first Scalex model was the Jaguar XK120, released in 1952, and it was soon joined by an Aston Martin DB2.

By 1954, business was booming, and Francis began to look for larger premises. He finally settled on a site in Havant, Hampshire, telling the Portsmouth Evening News that the firm’s entire production would be transferred from Mill Hill, providing 80 new jobs locally. “We do every stage in the production of



Creator Fred Francis with an early Scalextric set. Launched in 1952, the Jaguar XK120 was the first model produced under the Scalex name.

the model cars ourselves...,” Francis told the newspaper, “...and ten key men will be brought down to train local people in the press work, making the motors, painting and assembly.”

In 1955, the Startex range was introduced. Instead of a fifth wheel, it used a cord winding system, disguised as either the exhaust pipe or steering wheel. An advert for the two ranges from 1956 announced the “Scalex and Startex no-key clockwork scale model cars enjoy an amazing popularity!”

Their popularity was not to last. Sales of clockwork cars began to decline in the mid-1950s, and by early 1956, the future of Minimodels was threatened. Francis needed a new idea to revitalise the fortunes of the company, and the inspiration came to him at the London Toy Fair.

According to his wife, Diana: “Fred saw a display featuring battery-powered cars running around a track, but without user control. He saw at once that this lacked any real play value – which his Scalex cars could add.”

Francis decided to electrically insulate the fifth wheel so it could pick up a positive current from one side, and a negative current from the other. Next, he made it thin enough to run in a metal slot mounted in a rubber track. The cars were then fitted with a small electric motor to drive the back wheels, and the fifth ‘gimbal’ wheel picked up the electric current in the slot and steered it around the circuit. Power was supplied via batteries cunningly hidden in a cardboard hut.

Each player had control of their own car – although control at this stage only meant an on-off switch. Finally, Francis combined the “Scalex” of the car range, with their new “electric” power, and Scalextric was born.

The result was unveiled at the Harrogate Toy Fair in January 1957. By December of the same year, the success of Scalextric was indisputable and it became the ‘must have’ toy that Christmas. “Outstanding amongst the scores of toys is ‘Scalextric’, the fabulous model motor racing game,” wrote one newspaper in 1957. “Motoring enthusiasts...this is it!” wrote another in November 1958.

“ Launched in January 1957, by the December, Scalextric had become a ‘must have’ toy. ”

With its combination of speed, excitement and competition, it appealed to children and adults alike, boasting “vivid acceleration” and cars that “with skill can be drifted to an amazing degree,” according to one advertisement.

Early players would need skill in abundance to cope with Scalextric’s all or nothing pace around the track – and just in case it wasn’t quite tricky enough, early sets contained a bottle of “Pure silicone skid patch fluid”, to make the track especially hazardous. A small bottle of Shell oil was also included to lubricate the axles and motor bearings, for that authentic pit-stop.

Scalextric’s sudden popularity was to spell trouble for Minimodels, however. Demand soon outstripped supply and the Havant factory struggled to keep up with orders. In 1958, Fred Francis sold Minimodels to Lines Bros, who traded under the name Tri-ang. The tinplate cars sold in the three sets that were available

– the Ferrari 375 F1, the Maserati 250F F1 and the Austin-Healey 100-6 – were replaced in 1960 by plastic cars, which were lighter around the track, and cheaper to produce. Lines Bros introduced a variable speed, thumb-operated controller and trackside racing accessories such as fences, oil drums and hay bales.

By 1964, Scalextric was advertised as “the best model motor racing system in the world... You can’t beat Scalextric – it’s both a sport and a hobby – bringing all the thrills and excitement of real motor racing right into your own home.”

The 1960s also brought the glitz of box office blockbuster Goldfinger to Scalextric, and James Bond got his own set with his iconic Aston Martin DB5 – complete with working ejector seat and concealed bullet-proof shield.

New electronic features were introduced in the 1980s which told racers how much fuel they were using, their speed and lap times, and by the beginning of the 21st century, digital sets allowed up to six fully controllable cars on a two-lane track at the same time.

Although Scalextric has been refined over the years and seen several slightly bizarre incarnations involving horse-racing and motorbikes that wobbled on every corner, it is testament to Fred Francis’s original innovation that the basic premise of Scalextric remains the same.

Some 65 years after it was introduced the detail of the sets may be more intricate and contain more high-tech wizardry than you can shake a chequered flag at but the fact that today’s models can still run on the original track, and vice versa, surely puts Scalextric at the top of the toy podium – and that’s definitely something worth cheering for. 🇬🇧



Question time

Send us your questions and we'll track down the answers

The Lady Killer

Q Has there ever been a book written about Mrs Louisa Merrifield, the Blackpool poisoner?

Mr D Leonard, Macclesfield, Cheshire

Best of British says: Born in Wigan in 1906, Merrifield was known throughout the town as a drunkard who had been sacked from several jobs due to poor performance and allegations of theft. In 1946, she was imprisoned for 84 days for ration book fraud and in February 1950, just four months after the death of her first husband, Joseph Ellison, she married 78-year-old Richard Weston.

Just 10 weeks later, Weston died of a heart attack, and that September, Louisa married Alfred Merrifield. The pair moved to Blackpool, where from March 1953 they were employed as a house keeper and handyman, living with their employer, 79-year-old Sarah Ricketts, in her bungalow at 339 Devonshire Road.

Returning to her old ways, Louisa could regularly be found around the pubs of Blackpool, drinking her employer's money and, within a month of starting work, had talked Mrs Ricketts into writing a new will in which she would inherit the bungalow.

Mrs Ricketts died on 14 April 1953, and remembering a conversation from two days before, where Louisa mentioned: "She's not dead yet, but she soon will be," her friend Jessie Brewer took her suspicions to the police. A post-mortem found that Mrs Ricketts had died of phosphorus poisoning, a substance found in Rodine Rat Poison.

With the evidence stacking up against the Merrifields, Louisa and Alfred – who the police discovered had recently bought some Rodine from a local chemist – were arrested and charged with Mrs Ricketts' murder.

Louisa was found guilty and

was hanged by Albert Pierrepoint at Strangeways Prison on 18 September 1953, the third to last woman to be executed in the UK.

Having been presented during the trial "as a kindly and simple old man", the jury was unable to agree on Alfred's guilt. Despite calls for a new trial, the case against him was dropped.

Alfred continued to live in Mrs Ricketts' bungalow until 1956, when her daughters paid him off. He continued to profit from the case until his death in 1962, aged 80, selling Louisa's clothes to Blackpool's Chamber of Horrors, where waxworks of the couple were created, and giving talks entitled The Murderess's Husband at a beachfront sideshow on the Golden Mile.

The case has featured in several books including *Murderess: A Study of the Women Executed in Britain Since 1843* by Patrick Wilson (Michael Joseph, 1971), *Couples Who Kill* by Carol Anne Davis (Allison & Busby, 2006) and *Quickly to Her Fate* by Phillip Jones (PJ Publishing, 2010). The case was also covered in the television documentary series *Murder By the Sea* (Season 6, Episode 8).



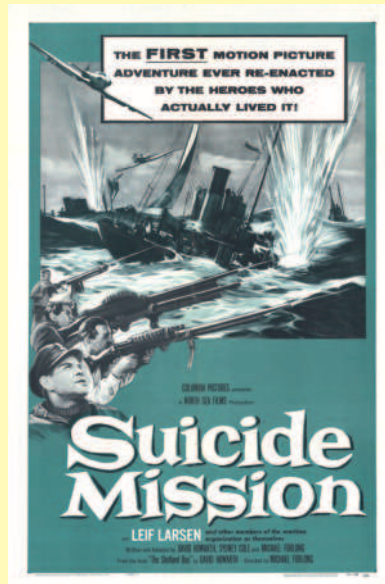
Murderer Louisa Merrifield was one of the last women hanged in the UK.

Searching Shetland

Q My head is hurting trying to recall the name of a film that I want to lay my hands on. I know that Michael Aldridge was in it. It concerns the "Shetland Bus", the World War Two lifeline between Lerwick and the Norwegian resistance movement.

Bob Nolan, Liverpool

Best of British says: An Anglo-Norwegian production, based on David Howarth's book *The Shetland Bus, Suicide Mission* was released in 1956. Known as *Shetlandsgjengen* (The Shetland Gang) in Norway, it stars Norwegian sailor and war hero Leif Larsen (aka Shetlands Larsen) and several of his colleagues as themselves. Although not available on DVD, you can buy or rent it online at YouTube and Amazon Video.



Suicide Mission starred Leif Larsen, a genuine Norwegian war hero, in a tale of the many escapes from Norway to Shetland.

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

ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY AND BRITISH MEMORIAL AT VER-SUR-MER



Join us as we honour the bravery and sacrifice of Allied forces on the anniversary of D-Day and visit the newly opened British Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer.

D-Day, 6 June 1944, has gone down in the archives of history as the greatest of all air and seaborne invasions. After four years of Nazi occupation, Operation Overlord launched the Allies' offensive to liberate France on the fiercely defended beaches of Normandy – Sword, Gold, Juno, Omaha and Utah. This extraordinary event, which was undoubtedly pivotal as a turning point in the Second World War, is the focus of this special Anniversary Remembrance Tour. Visits to the beaches and museums give greater understanding of the Battle of Normandy, and memorials and cemeteries are heart breaking testament to the scale of the losses.

Highlights

- Accompanied by experienced battlefield guide, John Hamill
- Honour the fallen in a special Anniversary of D-Day Act of Remembrance at Bayeux Cemetery
- Visit to the newly opened British Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer
- Learn the story of Stan Hollis – recipient of the only Victoria Cross awarded for bravery on D-Day
- Visits to the landing beaches, Pegasus Bridge and Commonwealth War Grave Cemeteries

2 – 7 June 2022

6 days

Led by John Hamill

Tour Prices

Twin/double share: £1,595pp

Single occupancy: £1,970pp

Deposit: £175pp

What's Included

- Return rail travel between London St Pancras and Bayeux
- Five nights' half board in the four-star Mercure Omaha Beach Hotel
- Private Act of Remembrance at Bayeux War Cemeteries
- Opportunity to pay respects at cemeteries and memorials
- Sightseeing and entrance fees as per the itinerary
- Executive coach travel in France including driver gratuities
- Experienced battlefield guide and Tour Manager

To find out more or to request a brochure call us on **01473 917308**
quoting BOB0122 or visit **arenatravel.com**



FOOD & DRINK

TASTES GONE BY AND THE FLAVOURS OF TODAY

Festive Firsts

Angeline Wilcox looks at how, and when, turkey and all the trimmings, followed by Christmas pudding, became our festive favourites



Turkey was introduced to Britain from the Americas in the 1520s by Yorkshireman William Strickland. Henry VIII was supposedly the first monarch to eat the new “exotic” meat for Christmas dinner and bring it to public attention. Turkey farming in Britain began in Norfolk and the meat became popular among the wealthy classes throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. To satisfy the Christmas demand, farmers used to walk the birds from Norfolk to London’s Leadenhall Market. With stops on the way, the seasonal journey would have taken three months, so the turkeys were fitted with leather boots, or had their feet dipped in tar and sand to protect them.

By the Victorian era, the expanding railway network meant that turkey was easily transported and readily available. However, it was still regarded as a luxury food and well beyond the means of the majority. A favourite of author Charles Dickens, turkey features in *A Christmas Carol* (1843) as a gift from a remorseful Scrooge to Bob Cratchit’s family. Roast turkey, alongside beef and the more traditional goose, was also served at Queen Victoria’s Christmas dinner table in 1851.

A decade later, Mrs Beeton, in her renowned *Book of Household Management*, gave instructions for correctly carving turkey, which she apparently considered ideal festive fare for the middle classes.

Introduced to Britain in the 1520s, turkey became popular among the upper classes throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.

At the start of the 20th century, turkey gained further royal approval from Edward VII but it wasn’t until the 1950s that it was on the Christmas menu for most families. As wages improved and cost-efficient methods of farming and transport were introduced, the meat became more affordable. In addition, storage became easier as more households bought fridges.

Even though we have a plentiful choice of seasonal foods, and dietary preferences have changed, it is estimated that 10 million turkeys are eaten at Christmas.

The Art of Cider

One of the most exciting new cideries to emerge in the UK in the last decade is inviting consumers to experience “the Art of Cider” from tree to glass. Kentish Pip ciders are produced by the Mount Family who have been growing apples for more than 100 years and producing high-quality cider since 2012. In 2014, Mark Mount planted four new orchards with a selection of nine heritage apple varieties. Using cutting-edge production techniques in its cidery just a stone’s throw from the orchards at Woolton Farm, near Canterbury in Kent, Kentish Pip currently has a core range of four award-winning ciders, plus limited-edition varieties, which are available in both cans and bottles from independent retailers in the south-east, Shepherd Neame pubs, and direct from Kentish Pip (01227 250151, kentishpip.co.uk) both online and from its bar, shop and cafe, The Barn.



All Kentish Pip ciders are vegan and gluten free and are only fermented with natural sugars.

Box Smart

An ethical festive treat is guaranteed to keep you off Santa’s naughty list this Christmas. Not only are OGGS® Mince Pies vegan friendly but the packaging itself is sustainably sourced. Packaged in an FSC sustainably sourced box with a plant-based compostable window, the inner plastic tray is made from 100% recycled materials and is in turn fully recyclable but will completely biodegrade if it ends up in landfill. Crumbly, deep and sweet, the melt in the mouth mince pies are available in packs of four from Ocado and The Vegankind Supermarket (thevegankind.com).



OGGS’ vegan mince pies are boxed in sustainably sourced packaging.

Regarded as “the King of Puddings”, the fruity, alcohol-infused Christmas pudding creates a real spectacle at the table when it’s flamed before serving.

It originated in the 14th century as a pottage, rather like a stew or thick broth, containing beef, mutton, currants, raisins, prunes, spices and wine. Over the centuries, the consistency changed and it began to resemble a typical pudding, with the addition of breadcrumbs, eggs, beer and spirits. Gradually, the meat was replaced by sweeter ingredients.

Cookery books from the 18th century feature recipes for plum puddings, which derive their name from the inclusion of prunes and additional dried fruits. Initially though, these weren’t served solely at Christmas, but at other celebrations

particularly harvest festivals.

As with the roast turkey, royalty played its part in associating the plum pudding with Christmas, after Hanoverian monarch George I, nicknamed “the Pudding King”, reputedly requested that one should be served at his first Christmas feast in England in 1714.

Later, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert keenly embraced the festive spirit with decorations and food, and their loyal subjects followed their example. Plum puddings were depicted in seasonal illustrations and an enthusiastic Charles Dickens – who gives us a marvellous description of a Victorian festive feast in *A Christmas Carol* – likened one to “a speckled cannon-ball”.

The first recipe for a specific Christmas pudding appeared in 1845 in Eliza Acton’s *Modern Cookery for Private Families*. As you’d expect, Mrs Beeton served up her own Christmas plum pudding recipe in 1861.

Although most people buy their puddings today, some still make their own following a favourite family, or chef’s, recipe. Traditionally they were made on Stir-up Sunday, the final Sunday before Advent.

Everyone in the family was supposed

to stir the mixture – east to west to follow the direction of the Three Wise Men – and make a wish.

Other customs linked to making Christmas puddings include using 13 ingredients to represent Jesus and his 12 disciples. The most popular, of course, was adding a silver sixpence to the mixture and whoever found it in their portion on Christmas Day was assured good luck for the following year.

Sharing Christmas dinner with loved ones is at the heart of the celebrations. It is a meal to be savoured, on a day when memories are made and rekindled for us all. 🇬🇧



In *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens likened a Christmas pudding to “a speckled cannon-ball”.

Mince pies are the oldest of our festive treats with origins dating back to the 13th century. Through the centuries they were known as mutton, Christmas and shrid (referring to the “shredded” meat) pies. A variety of chopped or minced meats originally formed the main ingredient along with fruit and spices. The earliest pies were larger than those we have today and were oblong in shape to represent the manger. By the 18th century, the filling had changed from meat to fruity mincemeat, and the pies were much smaller and rounder. According to an old custom, if you’re hoping for happiness in the year ahead, you should eat a mince pie on each of the 12 days of Christmas.

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.



EXPECTATIONS FULFILLED

On the 75th anniversary of its theatrical release, **Katie Ashmore** takes a look at David Lean's adaptation of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*

On Boxing Day 1946, David Lean's iconic film *Great Expectations* was released in UK cinemas. It proved to be a classic interpretation of one of Dickens' best-known novels.

Right from the start it was well received and now it is considered one of the best British films ever made. It appears in many lists of top 100 movies and also in the "1,001 movies you must see before you die."

Its enduring success lies in a combination of great writing, superior acting, and fantastic design and cinematography. The creative team of Lean, Ronald Neame and Anthony Havelock-Allan, who had produced *Brief Encounter* in 1945, were responsible for this masterpiece, the first of two Dickens adaptations directed by Lean (*Oliver Twist* was released two years later).

Lean only made the film due to his wife's intervention. He had never

read the book and had little interest in Dickens. She persuaded him to go with her to a theatre production, starring Alec Guinness. Lean decided it would make a fantastic film and cast Guinness as Mr Pocket. This kick-started a glittering career for the talented actor.

Lean's then wife, Kay Walsh, shaped the film's ending, which is different from either of the two that Dickens wrote.

The film tells the story of young Pip (Tony Wager), an orphan, growing up under the care of his violent sister and her kindly husband, Joe Gargery (Bernard Miles), a blacksmith. His life is dramatically altered by two individuals.

First, in a scene which remains terrifying even today, he is accosted by the escaped convict Magwitch (Finlay Currie) in the graveyard where he goes to visit his parent's tombs: "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!"

Terrified, and in fear of his life, he is induced to steal food and a file from home to help Magwitch.

Later, he is summoned by the wealthy Miss Havisham to her creepy home, Satis House. There he is to amuse her and to play with her adopted daughter, Estella (Jean Simmons).

The jilted and embittered Miss Havisham is one of literature's greatest characters and was brilliantly portrayed in the film by Martita Hunt. Broken-hearted, she has lived the rest of her life among the decaying remains of her wedding feast: "Look at me. You're not afraid of a woman who has never seen the sun since you were born?"

She has brought up her daughter to break men's hearts, as revenge, but poor Pip falls in love with Estella, despite her cold, heartless character.

A number of years later, the adult Pip (John Mills) is told that he has a benefactor, who has provided money for him to be educated and live as a gentleman with "great expectations". He believes this must be Miss Havisham, who is preparing him for marriage with



Opposite: Jean Simmons played the younger Estella, Martita Hunt shone as Miss Havisham and Anthony Wager played the young Pip. Above: Alec Guinness, Finlay Currie and John Mills were part of a star-studded cast. Right: David Lean had already directed *Brief Encounter* and went on to direct other great films such as *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Doctor Zhivago*.

Estella. Pip goes to London and shares lodgings with Mr Pocket but becomes an arrogant snob. When Joe visits him in town, Pip even feels ashamed of the blacksmith's country manners.

Eventually, Pip discovers that Estella (Valerie Hobson) is engaged to another man and that Magwitch, the convict, is his benefactor. He visits Miss Havisham again who, in another acclaimed scene, dies in a fire.

He then tries to help Magwitch, who has returned to England but Magwitch dies and Pip loses everything. Injured and ill, he returns to his childhood home and is received with love and compassion by Joe and his new wife. All is forgiven and Pip recovers.

Rather differently, in Kay Walsh's film ending, he then heads back to Satis House and finds Estella there. Her engagement has been broken off because her true parentage has been revealed – she is Magwitch's daughter.

Pip saves her from staying there and becoming like Miss Havisham by ripping the curtains from the windows and leading her outside into the light.

The film has a haunting, gothic feel for many of these scenes, helped by the fact that it is black and white. The opening scene, where Pip is crossing the Kent marshes, is incredibly atmospheric.

He passes gibbets and enters the spooky cemetery, with the wind howling and trees creaking. Frightened, he then runs straight into the terrifying escaped convict Magwitch.

This is a memorable and cleverly produced scene. Shots were taken from an angle that gave the child's eye view, looking up at the church, which appears

“ The film was nominated for five Oscars, winning two for Best Cinematography and Best Art Direction. ”

much bigger than it really is and at the convict, so much larger than the boy.

This approach is used during the film, along with long focus lenses, making the actors' faces sharp but the background less clearly defined. The film was nominated for five Oscars, and won two; Best Cinematography (Black-and-White) won by Guy Green, and Best Art Direction (Black-and-White), won by John Bryan and Wilfred Shingleton.

The scenes with Miss Havisham are also iconic. The musty, decaying room where she sits is complete with mouldering cake and cobwebs everywhere. She is still dressed in her ancient wedding clothes.

Martita Hunt plays her to perfection, though only 46 years old at the time. Ironically, she was rewarded by being typecast through much of her future career, playing a succession of strong women in other dramatisations.

The scene where Pip tries to save her when her clothes catch fire is celebrated more for what it doesn't show, than what it does, as it pans away from Miss Havisham along the table.

It's not just the cinematography that makes this a wonderful film, but also

the script. Originally, Lean had been concerned to get a professional scholar to write it, but this didn't work out. He was unhappy with the version proffered by Clemence Dane (Winifred Ashton), which he felt dealt briefly with all the characters and scenes, but with nothing in depth.

In the end, he adapted the book himself, happy to leave out any parts that he considered boring, or characters that he thought unnecessary.

Cleverly, he still included much original dialogue and some of the wonderful, eccentric minor characters, such as the Aged Parent (OB Clarence). The film included not only the tragic, gothic scenes but also the comedic. The contrast between these is part of the film's magic.

The acting is universally praised. Some have criticised the casting of Valerie Hobson as the adult Estella (at the time she was married to Havelock-Allan). John Mills, at 38, was rather old for the part of Pip, a challenge that as a brilliant actor, he overcame.

Jean Simmons, though only 17 at the time shone as the young Estella. Young Pip was played by Tony Wager and many other actors received plaudits for their performances, including Alec Guinness as Mr Pocket and Francis L Sullivan as the lawyer Mr Jaggers.

Through a combination of brilliant cinematography, outstanding acting and excellent writing, this British film has been described by some as “one of the greatest films ever made.”

It is one to see, especially on a cold Sunday afternoon when the wind whistles by outside. 🇬🇧

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 78.**



1 Time traveller

The origins of the story of Dick Whittington and his cat date back to medieval times and the many tales have fascinated children for hundreds of years. This tin book was made in Liverpool by Gee & Sons for J Lyons & Co who filled it with creamy toffees. Ideal for Christmas stockings.



3 Fixture pile up

John Player & Sons of Nottingham provided thousands of these fixture cards to supporters of all First Division football clubs during the 1950s. No opportunity was missed by the large tobacco firms to advertise their cigarettes. In those days, it was perfectly acceptable for players to smoke cigarettes in public. How times have changed.

4 Powerful Cat

This Lesney Major Pack Caterpillar Scraper dates to when these powerful machines were used extensively on postwar development and infrastructure projects throughout Britain. Lesney had a special arrangement with Caterpillar to make models of its mighty machines.



5 High Flyers

Both sturdy and affordable, the Lone Star High Flyers range was hugely popular back in the 1960s, being sold predominantly in Woolworth's stores. These pin badges were issued with some of the Flyers models and are now quite hard to find. Lone Star was a trading name adopted by Diecast Machine Tools Ltd (DCMT) which was based in north London.



2 Organ recital

This extended play record features the magnificent organ in the Granada Cinema, Tooting, being played by resident organist William Davis. The picture highlights the beautiful architecture of the cinema which was showing *Strangers When We Meet*, a 1960 film starring Kim Novak and Kirk Douglas.



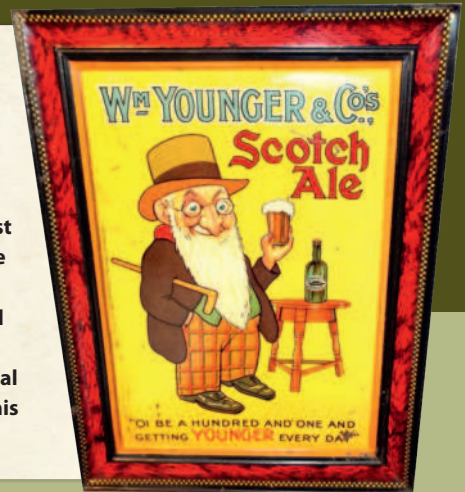


6 Clubbing together

The Cadbury Cococubs were one of rafts of clubs children were once encouraged to join. It was all great fun, and in those distant days before television came along, children made their own entertainment. These old copies of The Cococub News were recently discovered in an attic.

9 Younger Generation

Founded by William Younger in Edinburgh around 1749, Younger's Brewery grew to become one of Britain's largest brewers. The firm adopted the Father William character as a trademark and there followed a huge range of advertising signs and promotional material showing the bearded gent. This tin sign dates from 1935.



7 Along the cut

This lovely oil painted on board dates from the 1940s and shows a timeless, tranquil scene along a canal possibly in the East Midlands. It was picked up at a jumble sale a few years ago for a few pounds but sadly there is no signature by the artist which might have revealed more of its history.

8 Getting your sums right

Not being good at maths, I welcomed these handy little gadgets when they first appeared on the market. This Rockwell 24 RD-II pocket calculator dates from 1976 and is as good as the day it was purchased. Complete with original case, box, instructions and receipt, it's a real collector's item.



10 It's crazy, man

Bill Haley and his Comets caused a real stir when they landed in Britain. Their hit record Rock Around the Clock stirred the youth of the day into a rock'n'roll frenzy, much to the disdain of the authorities. Here is an original issue of the 78rpm record that took Haley to the top of the charts.



11 What a waddle

This quirky little duck is a great little walker, waddling along by means of a very clever compact clockwork motor. He was made in Germany and is marked DRMG indicating Germany's American Zone. This is one of millions of German-made tin toys imported into Britain after World War Two and sold on market stalls.



12 On a Roll

These Aveling-Barford diesel road rollers were once a common sight on the highways of Britain. This diecast model was produced in the Matchbox Series in the late 1950s and sadly has become detached from its original box. These toys made great little Christmas stocking fillers for those of us who remember.



FORTIES POST

A Salute to the '40s

FIGHTING FOR A NEW LIFE

Almost 3,000 British children were evacuated overseas during World War Two. **John Wright** talked to John Hare who was evacuated to Australia

Why would you give your children away to strangers

unless it was to save their lives? As the parents of the 3,500 children, aged 5 to 15, passed their children over to be taken abroad in 1940, they must have clung to this logic. Essex boy John Hare, then seven, was one of 180 children heading for host families in Melbourne, little knowing that he would, literally, have to fight for his survival.

The captain of the Batory waited until it was dark in Liverpool before giving the order to embark. The ship was designed to carry 300, but 477 children were on board plus 700 troops bound for Singapore and 100 first class passengers.

After being caught in an air raid the night before, and after saying goodbye to their families, the children walked up the gangway with identifying labels pinned to them. "Dad, if bombs come right into our town," one child was heard to say, "can you send my mice up to Granny?"

The atmosphere on board was tense, and the children were quiet, as the ship plunged through the Irish Sea, guarded by a large convoy. The instruction to the children on that first night was: "Go to bed as you are, but take your shoes off."

Australian deputy-chief escort Bill



John Hare, pictured in 2010, with newspaper clippings showing his ship, the Batory, and the fate of other child evacuees.

Oats discovered that all the signs on this bomb-battered Polish passenger ship were in Polish. He ran around rewriting them with bits of cardboard.

They named it the "Singing Ship" when the escorts stumbled on to the idea that singing would be a good way to help the children settle. The soldiers didn't need much encouragement when they were asked to lead the singing. They were all missing their families too, not to mention the Polish crew whose country had been invaded and were soon all bellowing away with rousing songs like Roll Out the Barrel, We'll Meet Again and The White Cliffs of Dover. "If that Scotch sentry out in the

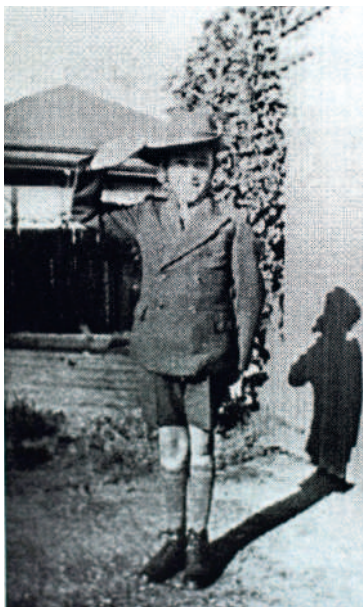
alleyway sings, I Belong to Glasgow anymore, I'll report him to the adjutant," said escort Miss Osborne.

One morning, everyone woke up to see that the convoy had gone. Approaching South Africa, they hoped they were finally away from the danger of U-boats that constantly patrolled the Atlantic. Here they had a few days shore-leave in Cape Town where children were taken out for picnics, swimming, and trips to the zoo. Africans packing oranges in a shed next to the ship threw oranges up to them. As well as their

lunchboxes, the children went through 8,000 oranges, 3,000 buns, 2,000 ice creams and 300 pounds of sweets.

When the 10-week voyage was nearly over, the children knew they'd have to say goodbye all over again, this time to one another. One night, one of the female escorts found two young girls squeezed into the one bunk and started to wake one of them up. "I thought you were Mummy," the girl whispered, as she stirred. After the children had all left the ship on 16 October, the Polish captain had tears in his eyes.

John Hare came from Hornchurch, near Romford and was on the Batory with his three older sisters, Peggy, Betty



Left: John Hare, aged nine, in Melbourne, 1942. Right: Aged 13, with his sisters Betty, 17, Peggy, 19, and Joan, 15, at a postwar reception in Melbourne. Below: John, in the middle with white hat and glasses, being taken with other evacuees from Port Melbourne to the city.

and Joan. John was 69 in 2002 and living in Melbourne when I interviewed him.

He still remembered saying goodbye to his parents. "My mother was devastated," he told me. "We were all crying. When my dad took me to the station, she was still standing outside the house holding my four-year-old brother, when I turned the corner at the end of the street."

His family had only found out about the evacuation scheme two days before, and had no way of telling that they were saying goodbye to him for five years. The moment he boarded the ship he felt frightened, but also excited. "My sisters were at the other end of the ship and it was sometimes difficult to see them."

On arrival in Melbourne, John remembered going in a taxi with his sisters and being dropped off on his own outside a hostel with his suitcase and gas mask. As the car drove away, he ran after it and could see that his sisters were waving helplessly to him from its rear window.

"The first night I wet the bed," John said. "The next day, the couple rang Welfare and got me taken somewhere else." They all lived in different people's homes, and, a few weeks later, John found out where his sisters were living and that they could visit occasionally.

During the war, John went to nine different families and eight different schools. From primary school he would invariably come home after fights with other children. John told me that many of the evacuees were teased for

having run away from the war.

He said the families he went to were "all fairly good" and it was only the second one that he "got pushed out of". The husband in the fifth host family he went to was a foreman in a diamond mine. One day he saw that John had arrived back from school with a cut lip and, after finding out what happened said: "We can't have you going back to England looking like that."

He stood him on a chair and started teaching him to box. Not long afterwards, the bullying stopped.

Back home in Essex, after the war, John started going to secondary school where his boxing took off. He also boxed at a local youth club and the Romford Amateur Boxing Club. There his coach, Harry Crawley, had been one of England's finest boxers.

At 14, John went to London to work as an office boy. He came home from work one day at 16, in the gloom of 1949, with Britain still weighed down by

the misery of food rationing, and told his parents that Australia was the place for him.

"My mum was horrified," John said. But they let him go. "What the hell have I done?" he wondered.

Arriving back in Melbourne, he worked for the State Bank of Victoria and started boxing in all the country towns he was transferred to. He was living in boarding houses.

One day, he got a lift from Bendigo to Melbourne and met a woman in the back seat called Adrienne. He proposed to her in bed, "a sick bed at home," he added quickly.

Adrienne became John's wife and the boxing stopped. Instead, he started coaching at a local youth club, and by 1967, the man who was once a weedy schoolboy had become Victoria's state boxing coach.

Three years later, John found himself in Edinburgh as the manager/coach of the Australian boxing team at the Commonwealth Games.

"We had five teams," John told me, "and although none of them really had any international experience, we got two bronze medals."

John, who died in June 2020, aged 87, went on in the boxing world, becoming budget committee chairman of the World Boxing Council and worked behind the scenes at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. And all because of the mine foreman who put him on a chair that day and taught him how to defend himself. 



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 8006 Vectis – The Graham Hamilton Ultimate Matchbox Picture Box Collection Part 2, 29-30 September (vectis.co.uk) September was a busy month for Vectis with, in addition to its regular and specialist sales, the second half of The Graham Hamilton Ultimate Matchbox Picture Box Collection which offered a large quantity of quality models over two days. A total of £199,000 was achieved in the second part of this sale, adding to May's total of £281,000. One of the many gems was a boxed Matchbox Regular Wheels G-2 Car Transporter Gift Set including four cars, estimated at £400-500.

SOLD FOR £2,040 including buyer's premium

LOT 782 Hartleys – Toy & Collectors Auction, 9 October (hartleysauctions.co.uk)

Among the broad range of items offered in the Ilkley-based auction house's latest collector's sale was a well-engineered ½ins scale model of a double horizontal Tangye Mill Engine with two centrifuge regulators mounted on a display board. It surpassed its £800-1,000 pre-sale estimates. Tangye Brothers and later Tangye Limited are well-known names as manufacturers of horizontal steam engines, lifting equipment, machine tools and pumps.

SOLD FOR £1,250 hammer price



LOT 1021 Lacy Scott & Knight – Toys & Models, 22 October (lsk.co.uk) Models from another major collection were on offer as part of this busy sale featuring Dinky Toys from well-known collector David Cooke (1943-2021). In addition to individual models, numerous trade boxes and some sought after accessories

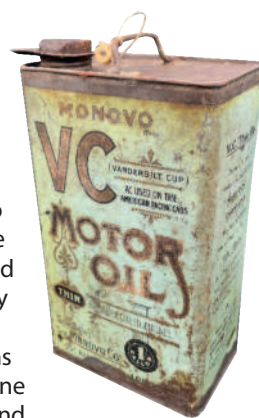


passed to collectors keen to own fine examples from the Dinky Toys range. Included was a pre-war Meccano Dinky Toys No 24 gift set with original base and lid with reproduction packing plus the all-important eight cars.

SOLD FOR £1,000 hammer price

LOT 1452/LOT 740 Cheffins – October Vintage Auction, 23 October (cheffins.co.uk)

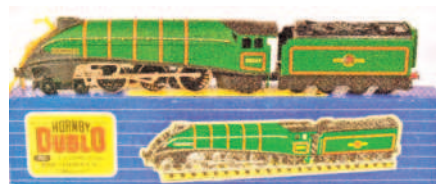
The fourth and final Vintage Sale of the year from Cheffins had the usual array of items from classic farm machinery to more modest collectables with some notable prices paid for items little and large. Series I Land Rovers are already a popular buy and if you add to the mix that the 1950 example with 80ins wheelbase and original 1,600cc engine in this sale had appeared in the second series of the long-running ITV series Heartbeat, then you can see why it left its £14-16,000 estimates behind. The fresh to market Pooley Collection of petroliana produced some great buys including a Monovo VC Motor Oil one-gallon can estimated at £300-400.



SOLD FOR Land Rover - £23,120, Monovo VC oil can - £930

COMING UP: Special Auction Services – Trains Galore, 14 December (specialauctionservices.com)

A popular event on the model railway collector's calendar is the SAS Trains Galore auction held each December featuring models in all the popular scales plus a few special items. Visit the website to see what's lined up for this year.



When you are placing your bid(s) please be sure about what you are bidding for. For the time being, the majority of auctions are held online but a return to live saleroom action should be possible soon.

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.



Yesterday Remembered

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

Dolly Mixture

Sharon Haston of Falkirk remembers:

On a recent visit to a toy museum, I was a bit shocked to find some of my favourite childhood dolls displayed. Surely, it's not that long ago already?



My dismay gave way to delight as I remembered how much I enjoyed playing with my dolls when I was a wee girl. When I was around five years old, I received a Tiny Tears doll for Christmas. As her name suggests, she was able to cry like a real baby. Her eyes could also close if she was sleeping. She was realistic looking, apart from her thick blonde hair.

Another favourite was Tressy. You could make her hair grow longer if you pressed a button on her stomach. I would comb it into different styles, including bunches and plaits, with varying degrees of success. It's fair to say I was never going to become a hairdresser.

My absolute favourite though, was a doll I called Tricia. She looked like a toddler version of Tiny Tears. She was quite tall and wore a white frilly blouse and a brown floral pinafore. Well, it was the 1970s.

One year, I was a flower girl at my auntie's wedding. When she came back from her honeymoon, she brought me a small Spanish doll.

I was entranced, as the doll was a Spanish lady, dressed in a red and black flamenco outfit with a head-dress and a black veil. She also held a fan in one of her tiny hands. She was too beautiful to play with, so I just admired her on my bedside table.

There was a time in the 1970s when these dolls dressed in national costumes

from around the world were very popular. Later, I received one as a gift from my dad's work at Christmas. She was dressed much closer to home, in a Scottish costume with a kilt and a white bearskin hat.

One of my favourite games was to arrange my dolls around the rug in front of our coal fire. I'd then look out the doll's tea set I'd received from Santa and pretend to pour them cups of tea. I am still a big fan of afternoon tea.

The dolls probably preferred that game to my other one of sitting them in rows and then sitting at my "teacher's desk". There was a blackboard on the inside of the desk lid, so I'd give them lessons and tests. Poor dolls.

I progressed to play with Sindy, dressing her up in her different outfits and shoes. There were quite a few fashion dolls on the market then. Barbie was iconic but I was a little envious when my friend got Daisy who was designed by Mary Quant. I also remember Pippa who was smaller than the other dolls.

Of course, boys played with Action Man and GI Joe, but I wasn't interested in them.

I do, however, sometimes still say: "You'll need to be Stretch Armstrong to reach that," referring to the action figure whose limbs could be stretched out. I can't remember why they thought that was a good thing.

These days many of the dolls available have film and TV tie-ins such as Elsa from Frozen. That began back in the 70s.

I remember particularly the Six Million Dollar Man, The Bionic Woman and Charlie's Angels dolls. I stared at them on the shelves in Woolworth's in bewilderment.

Other than their clothes, they didn't look anything like the characters I loved to



It's Christmas and Sharon is pictured with Tricia, her favourite doll.

watch, fighting all the baddies in those TV programmes.

Of course, little girls like to mimic their mum putting on her make-up and the doll Girl's World appeared. This doll allowed you to put the make up on her instead of yourself. Definitely less messy.

I say doll, but she was only a life-sized head and shoulders. I think she also came with rollers, so you could style her hair. I didn't have her but sometimes played with my cousin's one. I once used the blue eye shadow to colour her blonde hair. An early punk rock look perhaps.

I loved playing with all my dolls but there's a special place in my heart for the ballerina doll who constantly twirled round in my first jewellery box. I wound her up using the key at the back and she danced to Lara's Theme from Dr Zhivago. Whenever I hear that tune, I remember her fondly.

A Passion for Panto

Luke Ithurralde of Darlington, County Durham remembers:

During my childhood, December was always my favourite month.

There was Christmas, of course, and the excitement surrounding what presents I might unwrap, but it was also the start of the pantomime season.

I watched my very first panto, Cinderella, aged five years old in my hometown of Darlington at the Civic Theatre, now known as the Darlington Hippodrome. It starred Irish comedian Jimmy Cricket, On the Buses actress Anna Karen, and the Chuckle Brothers.

Woolworth's pick'n'mix in hand, excitedly we took our designated seats. My mam would bring my siblings and me to see the show with her work colleagues from BHS and their families. My anticipation grew as the ringing of

the warning bell signaled the curtain was about to go up.

I vividly remember being terrified during this performance and subsequent pantomimes by the explosive bang and puff of smoke as the villain or even the Fairy Godmother made an appearance. In fact, I'd close my eyes and place my hands

“ Who didn't enjoy booing and hissing the panto baddie? ”

firmly over my ears whenever I knew the explosion was coming.

I always looked forward to when the performers on stage would hurl sweets into the audience; real favourites like Mars Bars and Curly Wurlys. A Crunchie bar once came hurtling towards me and smacked me on the forehead, bouncing conveniently into my sister's lap.

Marshmallows are about the only thing that's likely to be thrown in today's pantos, with many theatre companies

worried about the cost of compensation if anyone is injured.

Sharing my memories of the pantomime with friends recently, they scoffed at my recollection that Shetland ponies, real live animals, would accompany the cast on stage. It usually happened in the second act and I was always enchanted by their presence. My friends, who never got to experience the joy of a pantomime as children, tried to reason it must have been actors in a convincing costume.

One year's pantomime stands out for me and that was in 1994 when I had just turned ten. I had waited until February, on one of the very last dates of the run, so that my dad could take me as a special birthday treat.

My favourite television programme around that time was ITV's Gladiators. I had posters, sticker albums, action figures, you name it. Imagine my delight when I discovered two of its leading stars from the series, Jet and Cobra, were appearing in the panto.

When it came to the part of the show where children are picked from the audience to go on stage and participate in a funny sketch, my dad encouraged me to stand up and wave my hands. I'm sure I would have been selected to go up and meet my idols, especially as I was decked out in my full Gladiator's attire of t-shirt with matching tracksuit and also wore a huge birthday badge, but I was too scared to put myself forward.

I enjoyed numerous pantomimes as a child, including Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Mother Goose and Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

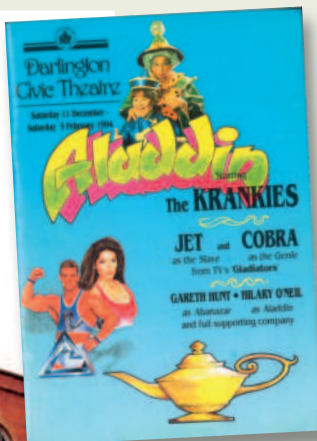
I loved it when the audience would be split into two groups and we'd each have to sing along to a song to determine who was the loudest. Who didn't enjoy booing and hissing the panto baddie?

There was always some sort of monster or ghost character on stage, lurking behind the protagonist and we, the audience, would have to scream from the top of our lungs, "He/It's behind you."

The panto will never be behind me. I'll always cherish my fantastic memories of this British cultural institution. In recent years, I've even returned to the panto, but I'm now experiencing the joy and excitement through the eyes of my nephews.



Above: Darlington Civic Theatre where Luke enjoyed many pantomimes. Right: In 1994 Luke enjoyed two of his heroes from Gladiators in pantomime. The poster from the first panto Luke ever saw, and if you look closely, proof that there were live ponies on stage.





Naval National Service

Bob Carson of Whitby, North Yorkshire remembers:

In December 1956, having turned 18 in November, I received my call up papers for National Service and completed my medical. At the same time as filling a small jar for a sample, I filled one for the lad standing next to me as he was too nervous to perform.

My orders came to travel to Portsmouth railway station the following February. I was sent a railway warrant for the journey, and was to be met and taken to HMS Victory barracks. Looking out of the back of the RN lorry that we were transported in, I was amazed to see that almost everyone we passed was in uniform, including several riding bikes.

I arrived at HMS Victory, a shore base, and began my National Service. I think that I had been lucky to be accepted in to the Royal Navy but I had helped my chances by previously attending the navy recruitment office in Derby and showing an interest in joining as a regular and making a career of it.

At HMS Victory, we began with a week of square bashing and heavy exercise. I was so



stiff after these sessions that for a while I had a job getting up the stairs in the old Victorian barrack building.

We were from all walks of life, bank clerks, farm labourers, mechanics, long haired teddy boys and nicely groomed boys like me. Within hours, we were in uniform with our heads well-shaved and it was impossible to tell what we had been in civvy street.

Next, we were moved to HMS Raleigh in Torpoint, Cornwall for basic training. Marching, short courses in navigation, marching, wheelhouse skills, marching, splicing and knots with a bit of boxing thrown in. It was hard to begin with, but I was OK as I had attended a very harsh boarding school.

After six weeks' basic training, there was sea training on board HMS Ocean, a converted aircraft carrier. The hangar decks had been converted into mess decks and, for the duration of my time on Ocean, I was to sleep in a hammock.

It was when HMS Ocean docked in Invergordon that the Queen came to inspect the home fleet and drove by us in a Land Rover as we lined up on the flight deck.

A bunch of us then had to travel from Waverley station in Edinburgh to Plymouth to stay at Devonport barracks until assigned our ships.

On the train journey from Edinburgh to

Plymouth, I was involved in a game of three-card brag the whole way and at the end had lost more than a week's wages.

I was then assigned to HMS Upton, an inshore wooden hulled 300 ton minesweeper with such a shallow draft that it was said it would rock in a puddle. Sea sickness lay ahead. There was a ship's company of only 30.

This posting lasted the duration of my time in the Royal Navy. On HMS Upton we sailed around the UK and over to France several times. For one month before Christmas 1957, we swept the Wash off East Anglia searching for parts of an aircraft that had come down in the sea.

Mostly though, we were busy on exercises with the other four mine sweepers in our squadron. One of these ships, HMS Bonington, was later commanded by Prince Charles.

My pay was that of a National Serviceman, being only £1 10s a week, and I was the only National Serviceman on board. I was often treated by the other crew who were all regulars on the beer when we went ashore.

I was given the job of "tanky" which meant that I was to assist the coxswain. There was a bike with a basket on the front tied to the funnel, and I would ride it ashore to buy supplies such as bread, milk and potatoes when we were in port.

For my final six months, I was promoted from ordinary seaman to able seaman and was able to take a large measure of rum each noon while at sea.

The last six months of my service was spent around Gibraltar, Malta and Cyprus. In Cyprus our task was to patrol around the island and search out any vessel that was suspected of carrying arms to the Eoka terrorists.

On this operation a small fishing boat led us into a trap, and the ship ran aground, causing severe damage. HMS Upton spent the next two months in dry dock in Malta.

The ship returned to UK after an awful voyage through the Bay of Biscay. We had to tie ourselves to our bunks and on the wheel, continually being sick into a strapped-down bucket.

Back in the UK, I left HMS Upton and was sent back to Devonport barracks to await my discharge in February 1959.

If any reader was a crewman on HMS Upton during this time, I would be delighted to hear from them.



Clockwise from: Bob on board HMS Upton. HMS Upton was a shallow-drafted minesweeper and consequently was very prone to rolling in heavy seas. Bob, standing centre, with crewmates in Gibraltar in 1958.

Great British Bakers

Ali Lawrence of Poole, Dorset remembers:

As a child of the late 80s and 90s, I grew up in a time when it was a treat to pop into the local family-run bakery and gaze longingly at the choice of sticky cakes and buns, before choosing one to take away and eat. For me, this was especially sweet, as the bakeries I used to visit were owned by my dad.

Like his father before him, my dad inherited a passion for baking from an early age and grew up in a baking household. My grandfather, who I never had the chance to meet, was highly successful and well respected in the baking trade, owning 11 bakeries in Somerset during his career.

Inspired by his father's ambition to perfect his craft, my dad moved to Cardiff after he finished school to study baking



at college before continuing the name of Curtis the Bakers by opening his own bakeries in Dorset.

I grew up in Weymouth where Curtis the Bakers was a well-known and much-loved family business. With six bakeries and coffee shops across Weymouth and Dorchester, it seemed I was never far from somewhere to pop in and grab a cake or two when I was out with friends.

One of my favourite places to visit was the industrial bakehouse on the Granby Industrial Estate. Far from its bleak and grey surroundings, the inside felt a bit like Willy Wonka's factory.

I would marvel at the huge pieces of machinery mixing dough, and the rows upon rows of pastries all sat waiting to enter the enormous ovens, where they would emit the delicious smell of warm butter and become crisp and flaky.

It was a completely different experience to baking at home, where everything was on a much smaller scale (although with freshly baked bread and cakes brought home each

day, we didn't need to bake too much).

I remember going up the big metal stairs, overlooking the busy bakehouse below, to the corridor of rooms where all sorts of items were kept but, most importantly, the cake decorations. I remember rows of shelves with white tubs on, filled with plastic characters, decorative ribbons and an assortment of other toppers that I wanted to play with.

It wasn't just the bakehouse and the bakery shops I used to enjoy; having excelled in numerous baking competitions over 25 years, my dad then became a judge at the National Baking Exhibitions held in the UK. In fact, he even rose to become the president of the National Association of Master Bakers in 1990.

I remember one occasion when my mum and I joined him at a Cardiff exhibition. After the judging had taken place, we were able to go and view the impressive display of bread and cakes. I was delighted to be allowed to take home a celebration cake and I remember choosing a large cake with little fondant bananas around the outside and a grinning monkey in the middle.

Being so highly esteemed in the world of baking, my dad would often feature in the British Baker magazine which would drop through our letterbox each month. It was always exciting to see pictures of him in print; wearing his white coat and looking intently at a loaf of bread as he held it, examining its merit.

Unfortunately, during the 1990s, the emergence of supermarket instore bakeries took its toll on the business and in my late teens our bakeries turned off their ovens for the final time.

My dad went on to become part of the baking team at Safeway before retiring. Over his career, he won well over 2,000 awards and today some of his trophies still sit proudly on display in my parents' lounge.

The success of the Great British Bake Off over the last decade and the renewed passion for home baking during lockdown hints at a revival for baking across the UK. My dad remains hopeful that there may still be a future for independent family-run bakeries.

Nearing 80, my dad is now in the process of writing down his recipes into a notebook. Along with his story, I'm hoping to publish these into a book one day, so that the bread and cakes of Curtis the Bakers can be devoured once again. For now, I enjoy making his recipes with my children, and do occasionally call him up for some baking advice, much to his delight.



Clockwise: Ali's dad holding a magnificent loaf was a common sight in trade magazines. Ali's grandfather acquired a huge range of baking trophies during his career. Ali's grandfather's bakery in Wells, Somerset with her father on the far left.

Domino Theory

**Geoffrey Brown
of Barkston
Lincolnshire
remembers:**



How many of you enjoy playing dominoes? I still own a cribbage-board and a couple of sets of dominoes, although they're not the ones my brother and I used when we were young. I occasionally enjoy a game or two when my son's godchildren come round but they often find building castles with the dominoes easier than concentrating on the game.

Unlike so many of today's games, Dominoes doesn't require batteries, just a flat surface with enough room to lay them out and shuffle them after each game. When we were young, our grandparents thought my brother and I might improve our maths by playing dominoes and games of fives and threes (using the dominoes) with them.

They had a board, filled with holes, that they used for keeping score when playing the card game cribbage. We used it to hold our matchstick markers. We got very excited when we scored the magic eight points when playing fives and threes. Fives into 15 equals three points plus threes into 15 equals five points. Occasionally we were reprimanded for not taking the games seriously enough but, as we progressed, we became more competitive and I'm sure playing dominoes enhanced our abilities at maths.

When I became old enough to drink in our local, the Crown & Anchor, I was surprised to see how seriously the retired gentlemen took their games of dominoes.

Sometimes, the tension in the taproom was almost unbearable as they waited for one of their fellow players to decide which domino to play next. Paying a penny forfeit every time the previous player forced them to knock (when they didn't have a domino to follow on with) was all part of the game.

“Playing dominoes from an early age helped me with my maths.”

As I mentioned earlier, playing dominoes from an early age helped me with my maths. When at secondary school, I was top of the class in the subject. After one term's mathematics exam, I found I'd answered all the questions correctly but had only been awarded 96% of the exam marks.

When I queried the results, I was told some of my marks had been deducted because I hadn't shown how I'd worked out the answers.

After I'd told Mrs Wilson, our maths teacher, that I felt I'd been cheated out of them, she decided to take me and my exam papers to Mr Whittle, our headmaster, and let him decide whether to restore my marks. We

went to his study, where she explained why we had come.

He asked me where the workings-out were. To his surprise I pulled one of the sheets of paper on his desk towards me and rested my head upon it. "The answers are in there, sir," I said.

He chuckled but agreed with Mrs Wilson that I should have put down a few of the workings out and refused me full marks.

Towards the end of my school days, figures became more important to me than numbers, especially a shapely one with red hair and because of my newly found interest, my exam results declined sharply.

One of my nicknames used to be "the calculator" as I was good at estimating the quantities required for jobs around the farm. When insurance men called on me trying to sell me some life assurance policies, I could work out the figures quicker than they could.

My maths skills also came in handy when playing darts. My mate Dave and I became a hard pair to beat when playing doubles. His favourite was double top while I favoured double 19 to finish. I think our success was partly due to us being able to calculate what we required with the next dart before the one we'd just thrown had reached the board.

I'm sure stopping to work out the numbers they required with their next dart broke many of our opponents' concentration and resulted in them losing the game. Playing dominoes is environmentally friendly and has little impact on climate change. There are no batteries required.

Name: <u>Geoffrey Brown</u> Form: <u>5B</u>			
Term Ending: <u>14th Nov 1963</u>			
DETAILS OF THE REPORT			
SUBJECT	Term	Year	OBSERVATIONS
Religious Instruction	C+	5B	A very good exam result. Cf.
Mathematics	A+	5B	A very good result. Cf.
English	B	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
Geography	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
History	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
General Science	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
Biology	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
Art	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
Light Crafts	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
Music	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
Domestic Science	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
Woodwork	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
Technical Drawing	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
Physical Education	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
Typewriting	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
Commerce	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
Bookbinding	C+	5B	Good exam result. Cf.
TOTALS			

FURTHER DETAILS	
No. in Form: <u>25</u>	Position in Form: <u>1st</u>
Age of Scholar: <u>15 yrs. 9 mths.</u>	Average age of Class: <u>15 yrs. 6 mths.</u>
Conduct: <u>Very good</u>	
Attendance: <u>N/A - class absent, Personality: <u>good</u></u>	
General Remarks: <u>A very good all round result. His ability to apply himself and work diligently has brought noticeable results. Geoffrey certainly deserves success.</u>	
Next Term Begins: <u>14th January 1964</u>	
(Signed) <u>G. W. Brown</u>	Form Teacher
(Signed) <u>G. W. Brown</u>	Head Master
Declaration to be signed by Parent or Guardian of Scholar	
I have duly considered the accompanying report of	
<u>Geoffrey Brown</u>	
(Signed) <u>G. W. Brown</u>	(Parent or Guardian)



Geoffrey's report card from school, highlighting his maths result. Geoffrey didn't require coloured dots, as dominoes taught him and brought his maths skills to the fore. Keeping score on a cribbage board showed Geoffrey mathematical patterns.

When Ros Still Rocked

Alan Pearson of Sittingbourne, Kent remembered:

I have just finished reading *The Collector* in the June issue of BoB and noticed the special mention of Edmundo Ros and his music.

This brought back many happy memories of Edmundo and his band. I went to my sock drawer (where I keep a miscellany of items) and rescued an old-fashioned tape recording of what I believe was one of Edmundo's last concerts. This illicit recording was of an old BBC Radio 2 Saturday night concert from the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London in January 1994.

Edmundo appeared with Stanley Black, the BBC Big Band With Strings and the Mike Sammes Singers. It was described in the *Radio Times* as *The Latin Reunion*.

I played the tape and listened to what compere David Jacobs said was one of the finest concerts that he had ever introduced. I was transported back 25 years when, with my oldest friend (long since dead), I enjoyed a boys' night out. (Boys' nights out were different in those days).

For Christmas, my wife gave me two tickets for a BBC Big Band concert in London. She suggested I take my best friend John (also a big band lover) and have an evening out.



John was a wonderful person who I had known for years, but he had one slight fault. Whenever we did anything, dinner or going to a concert, he would always say: "That was brilliant" after each event and then "but..." There was always a but.

The day arrived, and we drove from Kent (you could park your car along the Embankment for free) and I decided to take John to the International Pizza House on the Embankment. He had never been to such an establishment. John enjoyed his first pizza complete with an egg in the middle. To we country boys, pizza was quite exotic.

After our meal, we walked along the Embankment and realised that we had no idea what the concert was. We just knew it was the BBC Big Band.

On arriving, we noticed the billboards. *The Latin Reunion* with Stanley Black and Edmundo Ros.

John was in his element. Edmundo was one of his all-time favourites. The show was to be recorded by the BBC.

David Jacobs introduced the stars to a standing ovation. On to the stage walked two old men. One was on two sticks and had great difficulty in walking. The other was a very small, shriveled person.

Their combined ages were over 160 but that made no difference to the audience. Suddenly, one sat the piano and it completely changed him.

His hands were electric, like lightning,

and all the old black magic came out. All his skills were still there, as were the tunes we knew and loved. Stanley Black was in his 80s, but he could still play his music.

After a medley, it was Edmundo's turn. He literally tottered across the stage on his sticks until he climbed onto the rostrum, He then changed in front of our eyes, looking about 40.

This was a concert to remember. The two old boys played hit after hit and a full house sat there in raptures

All too soon the evening was over, even though the audience called for encore after encore. As the two elderly gentlemen were taking their final bow, on walked Michael Aspel with his famous red book.

"Wow", we said, "we are going to get to see *This is Your Life*". A surprised Edmundo Ros was called out to be both embarrassed and delighted.

We were going to be disappointed. Aspel said: "We are now all going to the Teddington TV Studios." The concertgoers were left to walk slowly out and everyone was so downhearted.

As we came home, John said in his usual way: "That was the best concert that I have ever been to, the two band leaders were superb, I shall never forget this evening. BUT it was a shame we couldn't see *This is Your Life* wasn't it?" We watched the programme when it was broadcast.

I often listen to the concert that I recorded and it brings back so many happy memories.



Left: Edmundo Ros in 1957. Right: Alan got to see Edmundo Ros and Stanley Black perform at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in 1994.

Chilling With the Bachelors

Michael Satherley of Bristol remembers:

Boxing Day 1962 was, until late evening, much the same as other Boxing days. About 9pm, my grandmother was driven to her home after another enjoyable but tiring day. It had just started snowing.

In those days, Boxing Day was generally the end of the holiday because 1 January was a normal working day, and not yet a bank holiday.

I awoke early the next morning to find a complete blanket of snow had fallen on Bristol and from my bedroom window, I had a very good view of the main city. As with many youngsters, I was very excited about the prospect of a day in the snow. I had no idea how much snow had fallen until we had to dig out of the front door through the snow, as it had drifted well above the door.

The snow then became packed ice (it stayed until March 1963) and we made an igloo in the back garden. Unfortunately, the local cats used this as a meeting place, and we had to dismantle it because the odour became very unpleasant.

Two brothers lodged with us for few years and one of them, Ernie, worked for BBC Television Centre in Bristol. He often invited me to the studios, which I must admit I always found fascinating.

He was known to most people as Ernie and His Scene Shifters. It was amazing to

“At the studios, I went to the canteen for a welcome cup of tea, before watching the rehearsals.”

see the sets they created for the various productions that came out of Bristol, all still in black and white.

Ernie invited me down to the studios for a brand-new television show which the BBC were trying out called The 625 Show, which was to be hosted by Jimmy Young on New Year's Day at 6.25pm.

I walked to the studios in the bitter weather. It must have taken me a while. The studios were over a mile away and the route was hilly.



At the studios, I went to the canteen for a welcome cup of tea, before watching the rehearsals. I sat at the table with other cold-looking people and apart from Jimmy Young, I didn't recognise anyone and especially not the three new faces to English television.

Ernie introduced them as the Bachelors – John Stokes and Con and Dec Cluskey. In those days, there were many television talent spotters and Albert Stephenson, a BBC producer, with the cooperation of Philip Solomon and Billy Livingstone, was responsible for bringing the new fresh and always smiling faces of the Bachelors, into our homes, theatres, and concert halls.

During their rehearsal, the Bachelors sang Charmaine and I have always felt that it could only ever be sung with an Irish accent. It wouldn't sound right otherwise. There is a certain ring to it that no one else has ever equalled. After the rehearsal, I returned home to watch the show live, as visitors were not usually allowed in the studios during live transmissions.

In April 1963 (I think), the show moved to London and the line-up included the Beatles who were making their first national TV appearance. I remember at

the time being disappointed that I couldn't get their autographs. Ernie used to keep an autograph book for me in his locker at the studios so he could get various people to sign it for me.

Bob Monkhouse was the first and the Bachelors were added to it of course. Unfortunately, when Ernie moved away a few years later, he must have taken the book with him, as we could never find it. Two years ago, I went to Ernie's funeral (having seen his obituary in the local paper).

If it wasn't for Ernie, I would never have met the Bachelors. I was fortunate enough to meet them again in recent years and reminisced about that cold winter's day. I will always treasure that first meeting with the Bachelors.



Top: The logo for The 625 Show, the live music programme that gave the Beatles their first national TV appearance. Above: Michael is flanked by Con and Dec Cluskey of the Bachelors, a band he first met at BBC Bristol on New Year's Day 1963.

High Street History

Rob Bennett of Saltash, Cornwall remembers:

It's sad to think the vast number of retail businesses that have disappeared from our High Streets over the years. Here in Saltash we're still fortunate enough to have a family butcher and a bakery among the various charity shops, also an independent jewellers and bookshop.

My nearest branch of my bank is now situated across the border in Plymouth, a bit of a trek, not to mention an inconvenience, for anyone who doesn't immerse themselves in the faceless world of online banking.

As someone who prefers doing business over the counter, rather than with a click of a button, I was intrigued to read the many shop advertisements in an old parish magazine recently.

It dated from the early 1960s: the Cranford Magazine. My sister Susan and I were still at primary school in Hayes, west London back then but I can distinctly remember Cranford Parade, the eclectic mix



of 16 little shops in North Hyde Road where you could buy practically anything from a tin of baked beans to a secondhand car.

No multiple fast-food chains in a cluster together, just one traditional fish and chip shop, Angela's Fish Bar, which always did a roaring trade on a Saturday night, catching hungry locals coming home from the cinema.

Another business that did a roaring trade was Norris the newsagent and confectioner; a magnet for kids at the weekend with pocket money to spend on a bottle of Tizer and a comic. Queuing to be served often proved chaotic, especially when the place was besieged by hordes of sweet-toothed youngsters all pushing and shoving their way to the front of the chocolate counter.

It wasn't much calmer on a Saturday evening either, as every football fan in the area would congregate outside, awaiting the arrival of the newspaper van carrying the papers with the latest classified results hot off the Fleet Street presses.

By total contrast, Marion's drapery was altogether far more sedate. Run mainly single-handedly by the ever-efficient Mrs Lippiett, Marion's held the agency for Emu and Robin wools, and the children's clothing manufacture Ladybird.

Mrs Lippiett ran a tight little ship and always looked elegant with her hair pinned back in a decorative clasp. Like Mann's and Astill's, the two adjacent grocers, she never allowed customers to smoke in her shop as the entire length of wall behind the counter was given over to housing knitting yarns of every varying ply and colour. Many a school jumper and balaclava started life among those well-stocked shelves as any Cranford mother will testify.

Bang next door to Marion's was Crane Electrics, named after the nearby River Crane. The shop was owned by the genial Mr and Mrs Nutkin, a nicer couple you couldn't wish to meet. Naturally with a name like Nutkin they affectionately became known as the Squirrel Nutkins.

One half of the shop was devoted to all things electrical from torch bulbs and television valves to much larger items like hairdryers, vacuum cleaners and even twin-tub washing machines.

The other side, the side which interested me more, was tastefully stocked with quality toys including diecast model cars from Corgi and the very latest Spot-On range from Tri-ang. Setting foot inside that shop as a boy was paradise found. What's more, if you happened to be a teenybopper it was also possible to order the latest records from the Top 20 in there too.

Then there was the oily-smelling premises of Reliance Cycles, where they not only catered for push bikes and motorcycle spares, but often had the odd bike or two in for repair. Not that Nortons or BSAs particularly interested me back then; thanks to my godfather Fred, who always drove a big Humber Sceptre, I'd been a car convert from a very early age and had already fallen in love with a two-tone blue Humber Hawk saloon at North Hyde Motors. This was a secondhand car dealer at the very end of the shopping parade.

Every time I passed, I would make a habit of stopping to gawp at this handsome gleaming beast through the showroom window, longing to wallow in its sumptuous leather and walnut interior. Alas, even at the tender age of 11 I knew this romance was doomed from the beginning. On 2/6d pocket money per week it was a fantasy I could ill afford.

Ironically, raising the £475 asking price on the windscreen wouldn't present too much of a challenge today. The trouble is both the car and the showroom have long since disappeared.



Above: Cranford Parade on North Hyde Road, Hayes 20 years ago. A selection of adverts for shops around Hayes, found in the pages of the Cranford Magazine.

RAIL TO REEL



Steven Foxon has worked for more than 20 years to preserve the legacy of the British Transport Films collection

British Transport Films have always been revered as premier films of technical excellence. Steeped in the history of the documentary medium itself, the unit's staffing consisted of a core of technical craftsmen whose very names ensured a quality product; they also knew the secret to keeping productions fresh and competitive by encouraging the use of freelancers to work with the unit as guest directors. The unit's chief officer, Edgar Anstey, had been a key practitioner in British documentary film before World War Two and from the initial concept of the documentary idea itself. Although he had been trained initially as a scientist, Anstey had long believed that the artist, the scientist and the engineer shared a similar mind, and his desire to exploit this came to the forefront at British Transport Films.

The 1950s was a time of taking hold of the railways and lifting them out of their wartime austerity. The Big Four railway companies had been held to their trading income of 1938-39 and, while passenger travel reduced during the war, military traffic and freight demand increased phenomenally just as maintenance became harder and enemy action caused significant damage. The message for BTF was very much a case of justifying nationalised transport and showing that the railways were back in

business and getting back on top.

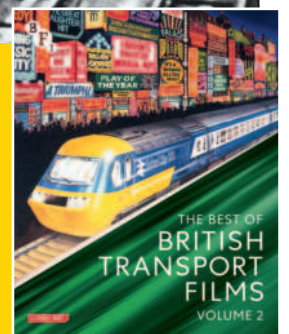
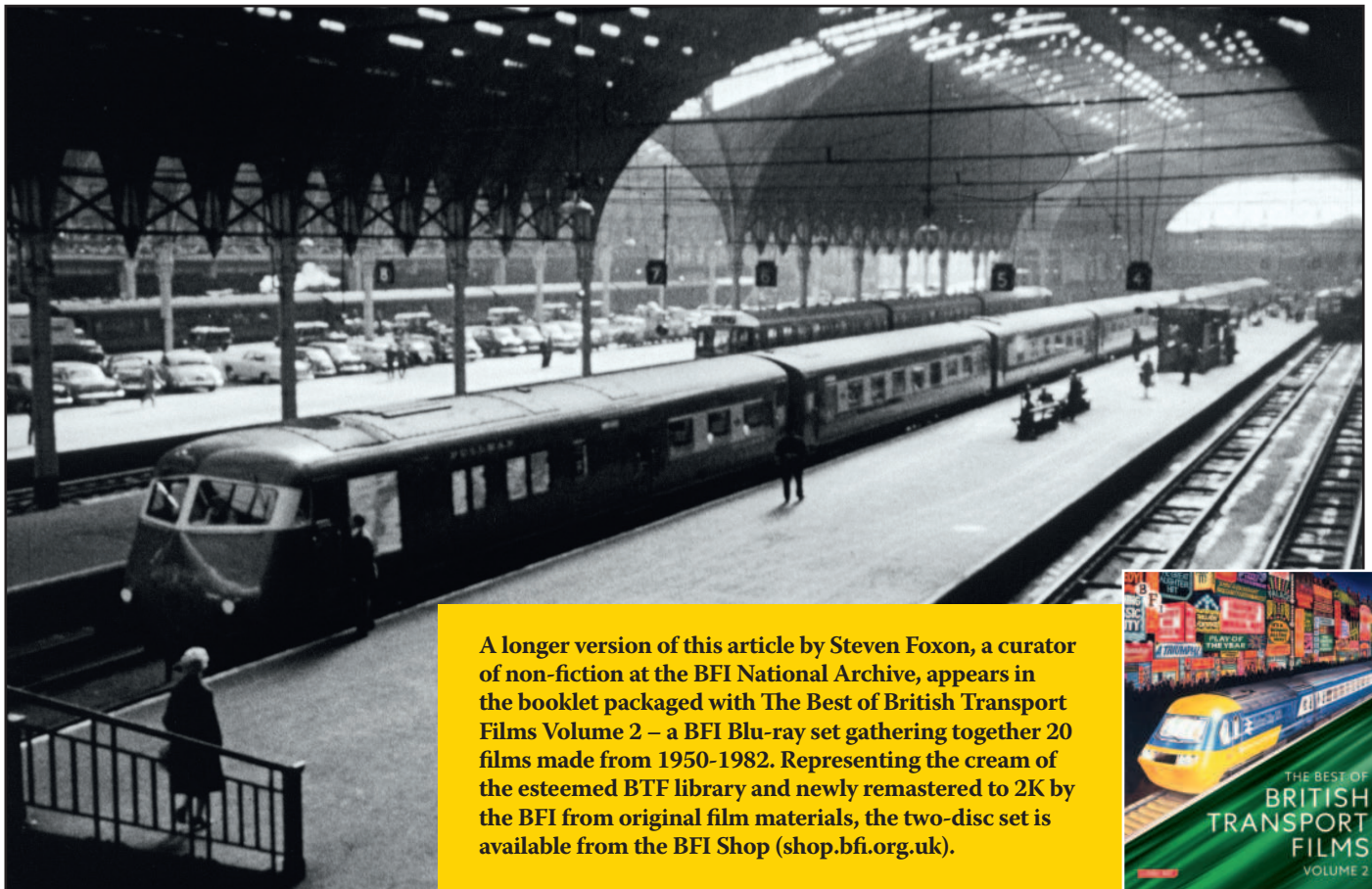
The 1950s are the black and white era of BTF: high production values, gorgeous night photography and cinematic theatrical ambition. The subject in this era is everything British Railways was working hard to improve and the technology, for the most part, is powered by steam.

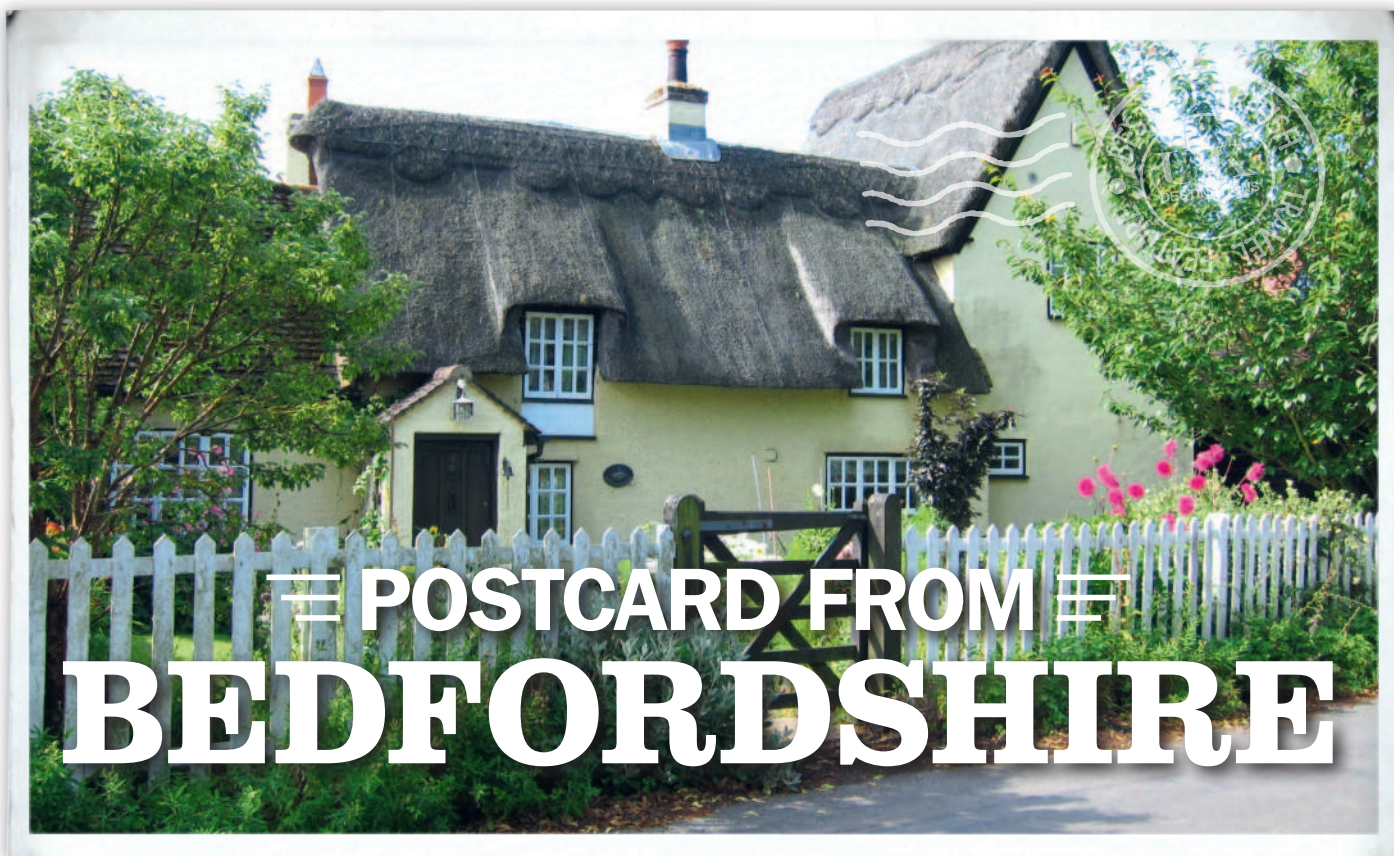
I would single out *Under the River* (1959) as the culmination of Anstey's vision that artist, scientist and engineer could share a platform. It is a historical documentary, a rare moment of reflection for BTF and a tribute to the six Cornish Beam Engines that can be seen and heard working in the film just as they had done since the 19th century. But there is reference to progress too, and a cold acknowledgement that these goliaths of the Victorian era will be shut down for the last time and modern diesel pumps will take over soon.

The 1960s were a time of great change. For documentary, colour film stock became increasingly affordable, experimental styles were explored and the most celebrated of guest directors at BTF, Geoffrey Jones, produced his Oscar-nominated *Snow* (1963). The early part of the 1960s saw the biggest change in decades on the railways. Dr Richard Beeching's *Reshaping British Railways* (1963) is far from the greatest documentary of all time but its subject and this film, as the bearer of the message

for most employed railwaymen at the time, mean that it cannot go without re-examination. It's interesting to reflect that Beeching was actually only in charge as chairman for a very short period but his report was to have far-reaching and long-lasting effects, and its content would be the subject of many a BTF film for the following 10 years and more. Modernisation, dieselisation and electrification become common themes taking us into the 1970s, and to a time of regular 100mph passenger travel. Travel promotion is the name of the game, as faster trains compete to keep passengers away from cars and air travel. Even faster trains are on the horizon with E for Experimental (1975) and throughout the 1970s the development of the Advanced Passenger Train is set on 150mph.

Anstey retired from BTF in the mid-1970s, having served 25 years at the helm. The ensuing period saw technological changes in documentary, and theatrical budgets were cut as the non-theatrical market became the release target through clubs, societies and schools. Internal training films were the order for the 1980s but the same problems remain relevant – the need to keep trains to time and avoid delays in *Promises Promises...* (1982) are as relevant to the 1950s when BTF first began as they are to the operating companies of today. 





Bob Barton defies the snow to cycle past airship and garden sheds, taking in industrial relics, memorial gardens and plenty of ice cream

It was a bleak winter's morning and snow covered the ground when I cycled to Cardington. The chill that ran down my spine wasn't only due to the weather.

A carpet of snow covering a tomb in the graveyard of St Mary's made it look as if it were new. It commemorates 48 people buried there in October 1930. They were victims of the crash of airship R101, killed on its maiden international flight from Bedford to Karachi.

Its crash landing on a stormy night in France wasn't only a disaster for the passengers, crew and their families. The pain was felt by the whole country; there was even a laying-in-state in Westminster Hall. It was the end of Britain's Imperial Airship Scheme. The vessels seemed to be the future of air travel but this one, unlike her sister, the R100, had serious flaws. I crossed to the church, where the tattered ensign from R101 is displayed, along with a memorial tablet.

Pedalling on, I watched as two giant beasts loomed out of the December mist. They seemed to grow bigger as I got closer.

These behemoths, known as the Short Brothers airship works and can be seen from miles

away. The people of Bedford, and airship enthusiasts (of which I'm one), keep a special place in their hearts for them. While the craft themselves have gone forever, these hangars give an idea as to their immense size and the equally huge determination of the people involved in building and flying them.

I recently attended an exhibition inspired by the town's role at the heart of this industry. Airship Dreams: Escaping Gravity is at The Higgins Bedford (01234 718618, thehigginsbedford.org.uk) until 20 March



Top: Bedfordshire has several lovely villages like Willington. **Above:** What would cycle pioneer Frederick Thomas Bidlake made of Bob and his fold-up bike, seen at Bidlake Memorial Garden?

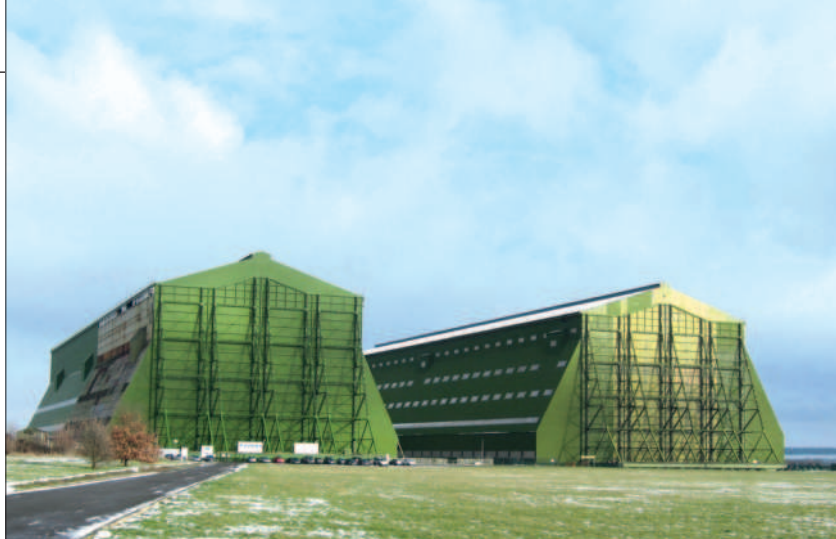
2022. It's a community exhibition based around another shed, the garden variety, belonging to Dennis Burchmore.

Burchmore was curator of the Airship Heritage Trust (AHT) and worked at Cardington Sheds. On his retirement, he liked nothing better than to show off his personal collection of airship ephemera in his shack, which has been lovingly recreated as the centrepiece.

Around the main room are memories and tragic artefacts. These include R101 crew member Arthur Burton's rusty pocket watch, and a coffee cup and saucer from Germany's Graf Zeppelin (it visited Cardington in 1929).

It is good to see The Higgins and the AHT keeping the history alive. I think the subject deserves a national museum of its own. In one of the permanent galleries is a model of the ill-fated R101 at its 200ft-high mooring mast. Passengers certainly needed a head for heights.

The museum is situated near the river Great Ouse: wide, swiftly-flowing and busy with swans. Both riverbanks have neatly clipped lawns and long, shady walks. The town bridge and Swan Hotel (01234 346565, bedfordswanhotel.co.uk), once a



Above: The Grade II listed entrance gateway to the former Britannia Iron Works. Right: The airship sheds at Cardington Airfield.

busy coaching inn, are much photographed features, though I found a device further along the river more intriguing.

It's an Archimedes screw generator, beside Boatslide Weir Bridge (named for the slide where pleasure boats were slid down to the lower river). I peered over the parapet to see this a giant corkscrew being turned by the water. The river generates power, as it once did for the many local mills.

Further along the river, I found a seemingly ordinary park fringed by a modern housing estate. A woman walking a dog told me the site was "once a huge factory

but there's nothing left of it." After a pause she added "...apart from the entrance, that's worth a look."

That was an understatement. Facing the main road, I found a magnificent brick gateway with an ornate clock tower and the words Britannia Iron Works carved into a stone arch. The vanished Victorian-era factory was so remarkable that it attracted VIP visitors from around the world.

It turned out agricultural machinery on a huge scale, notably the first iron-wheel plough, the Champion. First produced in 1839, it was manufactured for the next 80

years and, with other equipment by the company, went on to transform farming around the world.

About 15 years ago, when I first visited the Wellington Arms pub – "the Welly" – I knew I'd be going back. I returned recently and am pleased to report that it hasn't changed a bit.

This back street local is the sort of place George Orwell must have had in mind when, in 1946, he mused on his ideal pub, the fictional Moon Under Water, in the London Evening Standard. To reprise Orwell's article, it's quiet enough for conversation,

Bricks and Water

I never miss a chance to cycle along a former railway line and my OS map showed one for me to bag. The Bedford to Sandy Country Way follows a part of the old Varsity Line from Oxford to Cambridge, closed in 1968. Now forming an eight-mile link in the National Cycle Network, it's also a good walk.

I unfolded my Brompton bike but hadn't pedalled far before a temptation proved too much to resist. Cloverdale Retreat, a cafe on the waterside at Priory Country Park (01234 718012, bedford.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture), was selling Franco's Ices, so I had to stop again for a gelato.

Franco's is a company started in the 1960s (and still owned) by local Italian families. Bedford is sometimes known as "little Italy" thanks to thousands of Italians who settled in the 1950s to work in the brick industry. Companies that needed labour encouraged families to come by setting up recruitment offices in Naples. The brick industry has gone now but a whole host of delis, pizzerias and ice cream parlours remain, run by the younger generation.

A plaque on the cafe announced that the park was opened by former BBC Blue Peter presenter Valerie Singleton. I wonder if she had time for a lolly before rushing back to Television Centre?

Fortified by my treat, I pedalled with renewed vigour past the thickly wooded Grange Estate, once owned by Bryant and May. The company planted poplar trees in the 1960s for matchstick

production. Now, it's an area of woodlands and wetlands, laced with paths.

Next came a canalised section of the Great Ouse and the pretty village of Willington. An ornate Tudor dovecote and stables (0344 8001895, nationaltrust.org.uk/willington-dovecote-and-stables), and St Lawrence's Church stand opposite each other on a common that is frequented by occasional cyclists and horse riders. I passed the old station platform, now almost hidden by brambles, to reach Danish Camp with its cafe and bars.

The name of this waterside beauty spot, populated with wildfowl and chickens, isn't a joke. Bedford was captured by Danish invaders in AD875 (I learned this at the museum). They established a fortified camp to keep out the Anglo-Saxons: it was the border with the Danelaw.



Dating from Tudor times, Willington Dovecote & Stables, contains nesting boxes for over 1,500 pigeons. Right: The Ouse is canalised near Willington.

with the piano used in moderation; it's got a garden, and the landlady, Liz Sutton, knows the locals by name.

It also boasts a variety of real ales, ciders and Belgian beers. A collection of brewery paraphernalia covers the walls, plus pump clips, guides and Camra awards.

I even spotted a vintage Watney's Red Barrel bar light. Dogs are welcome and there's occasional live music.

I was welcomed as if I was a regular, so I'll be back again, hopefully before 15 years are up. Well done, Liz.

Another spot I wanted to seek out is hidden off the A1 at Girtford Bridge. A clipped hedge borders the diminutive but well-kept Bidlake Memorial Garden.

Frederick Thomas Bidlake, who died in 1933, was one of the best-loved figures in British cycling. He developed the idea of time-trialling and won championships on his preferred mode of transport: the tricycle.

When the garden was created by the Bidlake Memorial Trust, a crowd of 4,000 was reported to have attended the opening ceremony. On my visit, there was no one, but a paraglider drifting overhead.

I scoffed an ice cream in Sandy's market square before returning by bus. From the bus, I spotted the distant Cardington sheds as they glowed in the winter sunlight. I couldn't help thinking that the fluffy white clouds above the hangars resembled swirls of vanilla ice cream. 



REFRESHMENTS

Wellington Arms, 40 Wellington Street, Bedford MK40 2JX

(01234 308033, facebook.com/Wellybedford) Camra award winning pub. See main text.

Danish Camp, Chapel Lane, Willington MK44 3QG (01234 838709, danishcamp.co.uk)

Cafe and bars in a delightful rural setting. Festive roasts in December.

Sir William Peel, 39 High Street, Sandy SG19 1AG (01767 680607)

Community pub in a conversion from two Victorian cottages. Real ales and real ciders.

Left: R101 crew member Arthur Burton's pocket watch on display at The Higgins.
Below: The Wellington Arms, Bedford.





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Book of Dreams

Hilary Middleton on a millionaire who left his stamp on the British retail trade

The introduction of Green Shield stamps in 1958 proved so successful that it helped revolutionise British shopping habits. Their innovator, Richard Tompkins, went on to enjoy a remarkable career.

His business was rebranded as Argos in 1973, and it became one of the largest retailers in the UK. For a time, he was the nation's highest paid executive and amassed a huge personal fortune.

During the 1960s and early 70s, Green Shield stamps were collected by half the British public. The company sold them to retailers who gave the stamps to shoppers as a reward for their custom, encouraging loyalty and providing an incentive to buy.

They were saved in books. One stamp was issued for every 6d spent and each book contained 1,280 stamps.

Attracted by the promise of free gifts, shoppers exchanged their books for items from a wide range of goods at Green Shield catalogue stores across the country. Grocers, chemists, drapers, ironmongers and petrol stations all signed up to the

scheme. At its peak, there were more than 36,000 participating stores.

Trading stamps had been used in the United States as far back as 1896 when Sperry & Hutchinson began offering them to retailers. On holiday there in the mid-50s, Tompkins noticed that the queues for service at petrol stations were greater at those offering stamps.

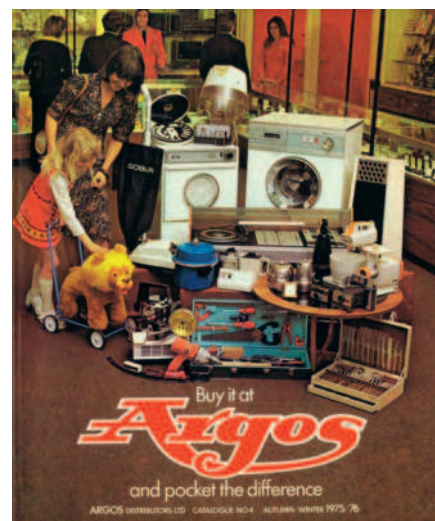
He had made a previous attempt to introduce a similar scheme in the UK but had failed. He resolved to try again and started the Green Shield Stamp Trading Co Ltd. He became the chairman and managing director.

Granville Richard Francis Tompkins was born in London on 15 May 1918. He had various jobs, including laundry

delivery man, filling station attendant and engineering draughtsman (a reserved occupation during World War Two).

In 1945, he bought an old printing machine for £50 and set up as a printer, later branching out into direct mail advertising and pre-addressed envelopes. He saw trading stamps as a logical

Above: Richard Tompkins, pictured in 1963, in a well-stocked Green Shield warehouse. **Right:** The Argos catalogue was the book of dreams for many British households. The company's jewellery range was called Elizabeth Duke after Tompkins' wife, a former model.



Photograph: Tompkins/Carl Bruin/Mirrorpix/Getty Images

[illegible]

the outlets issuing stamps. Lord Sainsbury then sponsored a bill to regulate the stamp companies which passed into law as the Trading Stamps Act 1964.

Opposition from these more upmarket stores meant that trading stamps were increasingly perceived as low-class. But Green Shield remained very popular, their catalogue offering everything from cutlery to tools, toys and camping equipment.

In 1965, the top gifts included a Regentone 19 ins television (88 books), Kenwood Chef (33¼ books) and a Silver Cloud motorboat, minus the outboard motor. For this, you would need 170 books, 217,600 stamps in total, representing a spend of £5,440 on groceries and petrol, which was the price of a large detached house at the time.

Books of stamps were often given as wedding presents or for “bottom drawers”. They could also be used as whole or part payment for a flight with BOAC. People allegedly turned up at catalogue stores with suitcases full of stamps.



With an eye to the future, Tompkins was working on his idea that consumers could use cash as well as stamps to buy goods from his catalogue. He established a new brand, Argos, inspired by a visit to the Greek city (and because it would feature high up in alphabetical listings) and converted several of his Green Shield stores into Argos showrooms.

A year in the planning, Argos officially launched in 1973 to great fanfare. There was a show with dancers, songs were specially written and newspaper advertisements promised a “shopping REVOLUTION!”. The “order and wait” in-store shopping format was unique to the UK. Argos stores were distribution outlets rather than traditional shops with points of sale linked to their warehouses.

49

and increased competition from discount retailers, led by Kwik Save. With high inflation, consumers were feeling the pinch and looking for cash savings.

In June 1977, a week before their contract was due for renewal, Tesco's chairman informed Tompkins that they were discontinuing trading stamps. The millions of pounds saved each year funded price cuts, enabling them to compete more effectively.

Although stamps could still be exchanged, it signaled the end for Green Shield. Following the loss of his biggest client, Tompkins converted the entire business to Argos and cash purchases.

The costliest item in the first catalogue was a "brilliant cut 18ct white gold ring set with a brilliant diamond" at £3,500, 30% cheaper than the recommended retail price.

A new edition of the catalogue appeared every six months. At its peak, it was the most widely printed publication in Europe. Nearly three-quarters of British households owned a copy of what comedian Bill Bailey later referred to as the "book of dreams".

“ Three-quarters of British households owned a copy of the Argos catalogue. ”

In 1979, Argos was sold to BAT Industries for £32 million. Eleven years later it was demerged and floated on the stock market. By then it was one of the most recognised brands on the high street.

In April 1998, it was bought by GUS plc, becoming part of the Home Retail Group in October 2006. It is now owned by Sainsbury's, once so vehemently opposed to Green Shield stamps, which completed the £1.4 billion takeover in 2016.

Tompkins was an extremely rich man, but gave much of his fortune to charity, setting up the Tompkins Foundation in 1980. Dapper, modest and humorously self-deprecating, he was also a gentleman who never sought any public acknowledgement of his generosity.

Encouraged by lower inflation, he made a bid to revive the Green Shield stamp scheme in October 1986, investing £10 million of his personal wealth. Mobil and Total petrol stations signed up, together with 2,500 shops, but the venture was abandoned in 1991 after failing to attract the supermarkets.

Tompkins died in 1992, a few months after being made a CBE. His achievements were far-reaching. Trading stamps paved the way for store loyalty cards while the Argos set up could be seen as an analogue version of the internet, used by so many for their shopping today. 

The frontage of the Royal Welsh Warehouse in Newtown. Below: Pryce Pryce-Jones was knighted in 1887.



The Pryce Was Right

Simon Whaley celebrates the Welsh draper who created the first mail order business

Mail order shopping became a vital outlet during lockdown, and the buying of goods online has never been more popular. Far from being a modern phenomena, British mail order can trace its roots back to a young 19th century Welsh draper who turned the British into a nation of mail order shoppers.

Born in October 1834, Pryce Pryce-Jones was born in the small village of Llanwchaiarn, a mile from the Welsh border town of Newtown. At the age of 12, he left school and began working for a local draper, John Davies.

He was in the right place at the right time. These were boom times for Newtown's woollen industry. Its Cambrian Woollen Mill was the largest wool manufacturer in Wales, and its produce was highly respected all over the world.

Over the next 10 years, Pryce learned his craft, selling high-quality woollen flannel and other textiles to Newtown's townspeople.

In 1856, aged 22, Pryce-Jones took over John Davies' drapery and set up



his own drapery business in another shop just round the corner. This gave him great coverage of the shoppers in his own town, but Pryce-Jones knew there were many other potential customers out there.

The Uniform Penny Post was introduced in 1840, and post boxes were installed across Britain during the 1850s and 1860s. Pryce-Jones realised quickly that he could use this new communication infrastructure. If



Broad Street, Newtown where Pryce-Jones began working for local draper John Davies. He took the business over in 1856, aged 22.

customers knew what they wanted and the price, they could post their orders directly to him, rather than wait until they were next able to travel into town.

He distributed simple price lists to the landed gentry and larger households in the neighbouring villages. This worked well, and orders flooded in.

In October 1859, Pryce-Jones renamed his little drapery shop. It became the Royal Welsh Warehouse, coinciding with the arrival of the Llanidloes to Newtown railway line.

The isolated line didn't connect with any other railway lines at the time, but it gave Pryce-Jones easier access to the villages along the 17-mile mid-Wales route. Pryce-Jones distributed to other customers by stagecoach.

In 1861, the Oswestry to Newtown railway arrived. Pryce-Jones' business took off two years later when it connected Newtown with the rest of the UK's ever-expanding railway network. Pryce-Jones could now send his products anywhere in the UK or the world. In 1861, he printed a catalogue of his Welsh woollen wares, which historians now believe was the world's first mail order catalogue.

Mail order was not just for the masses. In 1866, he received what was referred to as an "extensive order" from Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle. In 1875, the royal household placed another order to be delivered to Osborne House on the Isle of Wight.

Pryce-Jones publicised Queen Victoria's patronage on his catalogues. He was soon supplying royal households in Austria, Naples, Hanover, Russia, Denmark and Germany.

He divided catalogues into sections, called departments, and in the Corset Department of the spring/summer 1891 catalogue, Pryce-Jones offered the New Pelloptops corset. This was available in "white or black, for medium or full figures, with pure Greenland Whalebone," and all for 17s 11d.

His catalogue carried menswear too. It had departments devoted to shirts and jackets for cricket, boating, and tennis.

Another famous customer was Florence Nightingale, who liked Pryce-Jones' flannels so much that he named a special width of flannel after her. It was a small, rectangular piece, often knitted or crocheted, and worn over the shoulders in bed.

Business flourished, and in October 1779, he built a vast red brick warehouse in Newtown, right next to the town's railway station. He expanded this enormous warehouse in 1895 and 1901 and it comprised six floors and more than 80,000 sq ft.

By 1880, Pryce-Jones could boast 100,000 customers, with some living as far afield as America and Australia. Because business was so brisk, the London and North Western Railway line set aside three wagons especially for his parcels, enabling him to offer next day delivery to most of England. A grateful Queen Victoria knighted him in 1887, and by 1890 his customer base had doubled to 200,000.

In 1901, such was the enormous volume of goods he was despatching, his Royal Welsh Warehouse acquired its own post office. One of his biggest orders had also made him a pioneer.

In 1876, the Russian army were looking for suitable material that soldiers could sleep on in battle zones. Pryce-Jones knew the superior Welsh Flannel would be up to the job, so he set about creating what's now recognised as the forerunner to the modern sleeping bag.

He took a sheet of Welsh flannel and folded it over, along its length, and then incorporated a pocket at the top, with an inflatable pillow. If he'd sewn up the bottom end and the side, he would have created what we recognise today as a sleeping bag.

Called it the Euklisia Rug, it was two yards and 11ins long, by one yard and 31ins wide. He priced them at 3s 11d each. The Russian army ordered 60,000 of them, but when the Siege of Plevna ended earlier than expected, the Russian army only needed 43,000, leaving Pryce-Jones with an unsold supply of 17,000.

He soon sold them via his mail order catalogues, and they were surprisingly popular in the warmth of the Australian outback and in the Congo.

Pryce-Jones died on 11 January 1920, aged 85 just before his business began to struggle during the Great Depression. In 1938, the Liverpool chain store, Lewis's, bought it.

Jeff Bezos changed the way the world shops when he created his online retail giant, Amazon. It's a business model that has disrupted traditional retailers, particularly during the recent pandemic, but the real pioneering disrupter was Sir Pryce Pryce-Jones who gave the world access to some of the finest Welsh woollen wares via his trailblazing mail order shopping system. 🇬🇧



Singing Praises

David E Norris cries hallelujah for Huddersfield's ground-breaking choir

A trumpeter stood at the top of the escalator and then floated down to the sound of those distinctive first bars. In the well of Leeds' White Rose Shopping Centre, two, then five, then seven shoppers ghosted towards a woman with the raised arms of a choral conductor. *"And he shall reign for ever and ever,"* they sang. Ten more drifted centre stage. *"Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelu-jah."*

A choral version of what is now known as a flashmob was unfolding in front of the astonished eyes of hundreds of shoppers. Pitch perfect, all in tune and entirely enthusiastic, more than 50 members of The Huddersfield Choral Society were in town, singing the Hallelujah chorus from Handel's Messiah.

Established in 1836, The Huddersfield Choral Society came into being at a time when there was a great wave of enthusiasm for choral music. In their case, 16 local musicians met at The Plough Inn, Westgate,

one evening in June. They set up a committee, drew up some rules and that was that.

It wasn't such a surprise. Glee clubs existed all over Yorkshire and indeed it was generally agreed locally that "a man's education was not complete unless he could join in a madrigal."

“ A loss of £40 on tea and buns was offset by £70 profit from the Messiah. ”

Huddersfield was then a hot-bed of non-conformists, but the rules drawn up for this choral society emphasised social justice, a strong streak of good old fashioned Yorkshire common sense and just a little quirkiness. Membership cost 2s 6d to be paid half yearly and in advance, but funds and profits were all held by members with no individual distinction and each member, in rotation, could choose an oratorio. Those were the carrots, so to speak.

The sticks included a fine of 3d for lateness at the monthly meetings held at Spring Street Primary School; 6d for non-attendance, abusive language or failing to bring back borrowed sheet music. The most draconian rule was that of expulsion if anyone lent music to someone who frequented The Hall of Science in Bath Street. That was where the socialists held their meetings. Members had to live within six miles of the centre of Huddersfield.

None of this proved restrictive, and they managed to attract the cream of musical talent in the town, even though there was no formal procedure for holding auditions. The only recorded strategy was when "...a Mr Lockwood was invited to attend and Mr Hall and Mr Starkey stood next to him to see if he passed muster."

There is some debate about when the Messiah was first performed. Some claim 30 December 1836, others think it was 1839 or even 1844. Nevertheless, over the first 40 years, when the repertoire was always made up of either Handel, Haydn or



Opposite: The Huddersfield Choral Society being conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent in 1959. Other famous conductors have included Sir Edward Elgar, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Sir Simon Rattle. Left: Scenes from the flashmob in Leeds' White Rose Shopping Centre. Right: The magnificent Huddersfield Town Hall opened in 1881. Below: The Huddersfield Choral Society have made several records.

Mendelssohn, it proved to be a winner as far as the treasurer was concerned.

In 1860, a loss of £40 spent on buying tea and buns to eat at rehearsals was offset by a profit of £70 at the Messiah concert. When Verdi was first performed, there was a loss of £37 but again the Messiah came up trumps with a profit of £90. No wonder when, in 1902, someone suggested not doing the Messiah, it was turned down flat.

Club membership started at 62. By 1874 it had grown to over 100 and the list of achievements had grown too. They had sung in St George's Hall, Bradford, successfully launched a festival of music in Huddersfield and sung for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert at Buckingham Palace.

The society earned a reputation for producing fine music by being well-disciplined and confident. The reward was high praise and financial security. Those finances received a massive boost in 1881 when the new Town Hall was opened. It had a capacity of 2,250 seats allowing for larger audiences.

In 1900, the committee voted to include a new work into the society's repertoire every year. This also improved its popularity. No

wonder the treasurer was rubbing his hands. He would no longer baulk at paying the conductor a guinea for a rehearsal and five guineas for a concert.

With a secure bank balance, it is little wonder that over the years they were able to call on the services of such eminent conductors as Sir Edward Elgar, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Sir Henry Wood, Sir Thomas Beecham, and Sir Malcolm Sargent. They even managed to squeeze in the odd concert with Sir Simon Rattle.

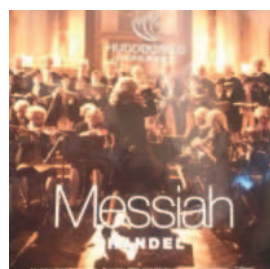
In their formative years the group organised a day's outing to Hollingworth Lake in Rochdale. It's no surprise to note that they were prepared to travel as well as sing for their suppers. They went to Manchester and sang in front of an audience of 8,000 at Belle Vue; they performed a concert in Edinburgh and then decided to spice up their CV by

singing at Armley Gaol in Leeds.

Their concerts abroad read like a list of where's where on the music canon. They performed in Boston, Munich, Lisbon, and The Hague thanks to a good deal of innovation. First, they signed a recording deal with Columbia Records in 1946, got sponsored by the British Council to play in Vienna and were quick to hitch their wagon to the BBC to broaden their appeal.

They have appeared on Omnibus and Songs of Praise, and became the only provincial choir in the festival marking Britain's entry into the European Economic Community. It might not have been earth-shattering to adopt white outfits for the women, and black for the men, way back in 1897 but it was a really smart decision for the women to don pink when they first appeared on colour television.

All-in-all, the Huddersfield Choral Society has attained an international reputation because of its dedication and hard work but the secret ingredient that few other choral groups have, is that all the singers come from the same area. It has the universal support of all its townspeople and that breeds a loyalty that other choirs just can't buy. 





CARRY ON FOREVER

Robert Ross uncovers the Carry Ons' relationship with the small screen

Although it was a comedy franchise totally born of the cinema, the Carry Ons always had a very healthy and hearty relationship with television. The first Carry On film, *Carry On Sergeant* (1958), happily embraced the success of what had been ITV's biggest situation comedy.

The show in question was *The Army Game* and its pivotal military figure of fun

was played by William Hartnell. Charles Hawtrey was an intellectual squaddie nicknamed "the Professor", and Norman Rossington was a chubby work shy soldier billeted alongside him. All three actors were recruited for *Carry On Sergeant* and even *The Army Game* writer John Antrobus was drafted in to contribute additional material.

There were differences. *Carry On* creator and producer Peter Rogers was eager to channel the familiarity and popularity of

The Army Game, but his film was very different in tone. The actors were in the same old khaki, but Norman Hudis's screenplay had a community kindness at its soft centre.

Of course, the nationwide passion for sending-up National Service also did *Carry On Sergeant* no harm at all. It was the third most popular film at the British box office for 1958.

The *Carry On* films were never afraid



Opposite: Sid James as Vic Flange and Joan Sims as Cora Flange in *Carry On Abroad*. An audience of 18 million watched its TV premiere. Above: BBC cameras went behind the scenes of *Carry On Up the Jungle* – which starred Frankie Howerd as Professor Inigo Tinkle and Joan Sims as Lady Evelyn Bagley – for the Film Night Special, *Carry On Forever*.

to cast actors who were currently in a hit hit situation comedy. Harry H Corbett, fresh from the first four series of *Steptoe and Son*, played the bewildered detective in *Carry On Screaming!* (1966) complete with a musical “sting” from the rag-and-bone comedy, as well as one from popular police drama *Z Cars*.

Phil Silvers, at the time forever present on British screens as Master Sergeant Ernest G Bilko in endless re-runs of *The Phil Silvers Show*, became a shoo-in for the duplicitous French Foreign Legion sergeant in *Follow That Camel* (1967).

By then, the early, cosy, black and white *Carry On* films had become high-rating television schedule fillers. So, it was a natural progression and very good business to make *Carry On* comedy exclusively for television. Christmas was the perfect time for such a saucy concoction.

Having long maintained that a *Carry On Christmas* for the cinema would have a limited opportunity in which to make money, Peter Rogers saw television as the ideal medium in which to hit his full audience in one evening. That evening was Christmas Eve 1969.

Writer Talbot Rothwell was always concerned that his raucous jokes were too broad for television, but the

Comedy Playhouse pilot of *Up Pompeii!* had scored in the September of 1969, and that show’s star, Frankie Howerd, was happily in the frame for this first television *Carry On*. At the time, Howerd was at Pinewood Studios filming his second and, as it turned out, final *Carry On* film appearance, as the supercilious ornithologist Professor Inigo Tinkle in *Carry On Up the Jungle*.

While plans were full steam ahead for the Thames Television special, BBC Television cameras at Pinewood were filming behind-the-scenes footage and tasty soundbites from the cast, including a waspish Charles Hawtreay and Bernard Bresslaw in black face, for the Film Night retrospective, *Carry On Forever* (1970).

Carry On series director Gerald Thomas, who had helmed all 18 previous films, was also interviewed. He was able to set the comedies in historical context with his nostalgic memories of *Carry On Sergeant*.

At Thames, Head of Light Entertainment Phillip Jones had already head-hunted Benny Hill from the BBC, establishing good old-fashioned British smut as an in-house



Granada Television’s *The Army Game* influenced *Carry On Sergeant*.

style with the first edition of *The Benny Hill Show* airing on 19 November 1969.

Just four weeks later, Talbot Rothwell’s *Carry On* script seemed as if all his Christmases had come at once. The central plot was that reliable old festive stand-by: Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*.

Sidney James secured top billing as the grumpy old miser, but it being a *Carry On*, Sid was able to lick his lips at a mischievous maiden, Barbara Windsor, as the Spirit of Christmas Present.

This was the beauty of this first *Carry On Christmas*. The established team are all more-or-less present and correct. Just one, Kenneth Williams, refused to have anything to do with the *Carry Ons* on television (during the lifetime of the films at the cinema at least). Peter Butterworth, Terry Scott and Bernard Bresslaw were there and were given gifts of crazy comic characters.

Akin to a brilliant repertory theatre company, the *Carry On* team could, and did, play everything. Bresslaw goes from a timid Bob Cratchit to a peace and love Spirit of Christmas Future and on to a simpering Frankenstein’s monster. Peter Butterworth’s Dracula and Terry Scott’s Doctor Frankenstein in a Hammer Horror homage are huge fun too. Butterworth and Scott later flex their familiar pantomime muscles as the Ugly Sisters.

“It was a natural progression to make *Carry On* comedy exclusively for television.”

Charles Hawtreay is a coughing and wheezing Spirit of Christmas Past (“Well past, if you ask me.”) and Hattie Jacques plays a wan Elizabeth Browning, but it’s Frankie Howerd, relishing the live, invited audience at Teddington Studios, who rips the story asunder as the fourth-wall breaking poet cum gossip Robert Browning.

Inevitably, *Carry On Again Christmas* was commissioned for the following year’s holiday fortnight. Talbot Rothwell handed the writing over to frequent collaborator Sid Colin, and ex-Benny Hill scribe Dave Freeman.

The resulting show, subtitled *Carry On Long John*, allowed the team to plunder Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*. (Later, Freeman would plunder the script when writing *Carry On Columbus*. Jim Dale’s inept explorer repeats dialogue that Sid James’ pirate had muttered in 1970).

Kenneth Connor joined the small screen team as befuddled Doctor Livershake, while



Above: Frankie Howerd's double-entendres in *Up Pompeii!* had paved the way for Carry On's first TV outing in 1969. The ITV "colour strike" caused 1970's *Carry on Again Christmas* to be recorded in black and white. Nevertheless Bernard Bresslaw and Sid James pirated it up.

Charles Hawtrey notched up a couple of unforgettably camp creations: Old Blind Pew and an ageing cabin boy.

One plotline was later pinched for the Frankie Howerd Great War film comedy *Up the Front*. It centred on a treasure map being tattooed on Barbara Windsor's bottom (who was fooling absolutely nobody in male drag as Jim Hawkins).

A strike at Thames over the use of colour cameras dictated that several Light

ranged from a chilling ghost story with a twitching Jack Douglas as a suspicious butler, to a shoddy return to the art of pantomime. Norman Rossington, who hadn't made a Carry On film for a decade, was a last-minute replacement for Charles Hawtrey. He refused to take second billing to Hattie Jacques and soon drifted away from the team for good.

The 1973 *Carry On Christmas* saw the return of writer Talbot Rothwell, and Sid James, this time as a department store Father Christmas who relates tales of Christmases long ago. There's prehistoric hysteria with Sid as a randy caveman, before he dons Lincoln green to play Robin Hood. Barbara Windsor is prominent in both these interludes – as a fur-clad cavegirl, and a brazen maiden.

A sketch in a Georgian drawing room gives Bernard Bresslaw a rare chance to flex his effeminate acting skills. A World War One scene strikes a skillful balance between farce and poignancy. Kenneth Connor brings a subtlety to the smut as a downtrodden British Tommy. Peter Butterworth and Jack Douglas relish giving broad strokes as a couple of jolly Germans.

As was typical in these television Carry Ons, the audience is acknowledged. At the end of this 1973 special, it's suggested that (in *Miracle on 34th Street* style) Sid is the real Father Christmas. Bernard Bresslaw and Joan Sims as a policeman and a traffic warden (she has given Sid a parking ticket on his reindeer and sleigh) break character and wish the viewers yuletide felicitations. Then all the cast emerge, clamber onto Sid's sled and away they go.

The Carry On films continued to do great business at the box office up to the

mid-70s, but any further Christmas specials were scuppered by another television deal.

In 1974, Lew Grade's ATV signed up with Peter Rogers for a series of self-contained situation comedies called *Carry On Laughing*. All set in the past and packed with familiar faces from the films, these 13 episodes were broadcast in two separate chunks throughout 1975.

Dave Freeman, who penned that year's film *Carry On Behind*, also wrote the lion's share of these television episodes, including three based around bumbling detective Lord Peter Flimsy and his chauffeur cum companion Punter. Jack Douglas and Kenneth Connor played these twists on Dorothy L Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey and Bunter.

One of the titles, *The Case of the Screaming Winkles*, should be enough to urge you to search this series out. Peter Butterworth guest stars as the salty old Admiral Clanger, in a plot revolving around a plate of poisoned shellfish.

Carry On Laughing also saw the last series appearances of Sid James and Hattie Jacques, playing Sir Francis Drake and Queen Elizabeth I in *Ornig and Bess*, written by Dick Vosburgh and Barry Cryer. The series opener, *The Prisoner of Spendia*, broadcast on 4 January 1975, also starred Sid James with Barbara Windsor playing both newly-wed Arnold and Vera Basket and their European doppelgangers.

Upstairs, Downstairs was affectionately mocked. The first of two *Carry On Laughing* spoofs was entitled *And in My Lady's Chamber*, from the nursery rhyme that had inspired the title of *Upstairs, Downstairs*. Joan Sims as Mrs Breeches paid tribute to Angela Baddeley's gruff but warm-hearted

“ A 1978 television screening of *Carry On Abroad* brought in an audience of 18 million viewers. ”

Entertainment programmes, including *The Benny Hill Show*, *Doctor at Large* and *Carry On Again Christmas* were recorded and transmitted in black and white. The jokes were as blue as ever.

There was no *Carry On Christmas* for 1971. Instead the usual slot was filled by a stand-alone domestic situation comedy, *All This, And Christmas Too!*, starring Sid James and Kenneth Connor.

The 1972 Christmas special was subtitled *Carry On Stuffing*, with the orgy of feasting and lusting giving plum pudding parts to Hattie Jacques, Barbara Windsor, Kenneth Connor, Bernard Bresslaw and Peter Butterworth. Set in a rowdy old coaching inn, the show was all about filling your faces and your boots.

Sketches within this framing device



Above: There was no Christmas Carry On in 1971 but three long-term Carry On ladies, Hattie Jacques, Joan Sims and Barbara Windsor appeared in 1972's Carry on Christmas (or Carry On Stuffing). Kenneth Connor in the last Christmas TV offering in 1973.

cook Mrs Bridges. Jack Douglas played Clodson the butler, in an understated Scots spoof of Gordon Jackson's Hudson.

Even at its weakest (as in a couple of threadbare King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table episodes) the series featured Carry On stars like Kenneth Connor, memorably po-faced and earnest as the diminutive monarch and Joan Sims as his Lady Guinevere, giving life to Lew Schwarz's scripts.

Carry On's annus horribilis was 1976. Sidney James died in April, just one week before filming began on Carry On England. Carry On Laughing, a summer season show at the Scarborough Opera House, struggled with apathetic audiences and the effects of a record-breaking heatwave.

It was in television re-runs that the Carry Ons found a forever home. A January 1978 screening of Carry On Abroad brought in an audience of more than 18 million viewers.

A popular television premiere for compilation film *That's Carry On* then led to the Carry Ons' most successful television venture.

Having watched himself in *That's Carry On*, and noted that it drew huge audience figures, Jack Douglas suggested that Peter Rogers and Gerald Thomas make a television series of Carry On clips. They eventually made three.

The resultant programmes, *What a Carry On* for the BBC, and *Carry On Laughing* for Thames were watched by millions throughout the early 1980s. The ITV series even got a special for 1983: *Carry On Laughing's Christmas Classics*.

Kenneth Williams (back in the TV fold) and Barbara Windsor sat in front of a

decorated tree to introduce excerpts from *Carry On Camping* and *Carry On Dick*.

A decade later *Laugh With the Carry Ons* mopped up excerpts from the early films and *Carry On Emmanuelle*, for another cut and paste celebration.

Documentary filmmakers celebrating British cinema and Pinewood Studios in particular were always assured an hilarious Carry On anecdote or two if Kenneth Williams, Joan Sims, Kenneth Connor, Barbara Windsor or Bernard Bresslaw were willing and available.

The Golden Gong saluted 50 years of the Rank Organisation in 1986, and even Hollywood UK, a worthy 1993 documentary investigation into British films of the 1960s, found room for Peter Rogers, Gerald Thomas and the Carry Ons.

Later documentaries have ranged from the celebratory (such as *What's a Carry On?*) to the incendiary (*Carry On Darkly*). Then there was the frothily feminist *Can We Girls Carry On?*

Among them was the exhaustive *Carry On Forever*. Bursting with sauce and sentiment, this three-part, three-hour film took Shirley Eaton back to Pinewood Studios, and reunited Carry On Jack romantic leads Bernard Cribbins and Juliet Mills. Then it brought Carry On sons Tyler Butterworth and Jeremy Connor together to reminiscence about the laughs and larks their dads Peter Butterworth and Kenneth Connor had shared.

Even now, with modern sensibilities at fever pitch, the Carry Ons have a firm grip on the British psyche, fuelled by television. A wet bank holiday weekend wouldn't be the same without a Carry On marathon on ITV3. Meanwhile, labelled with fair

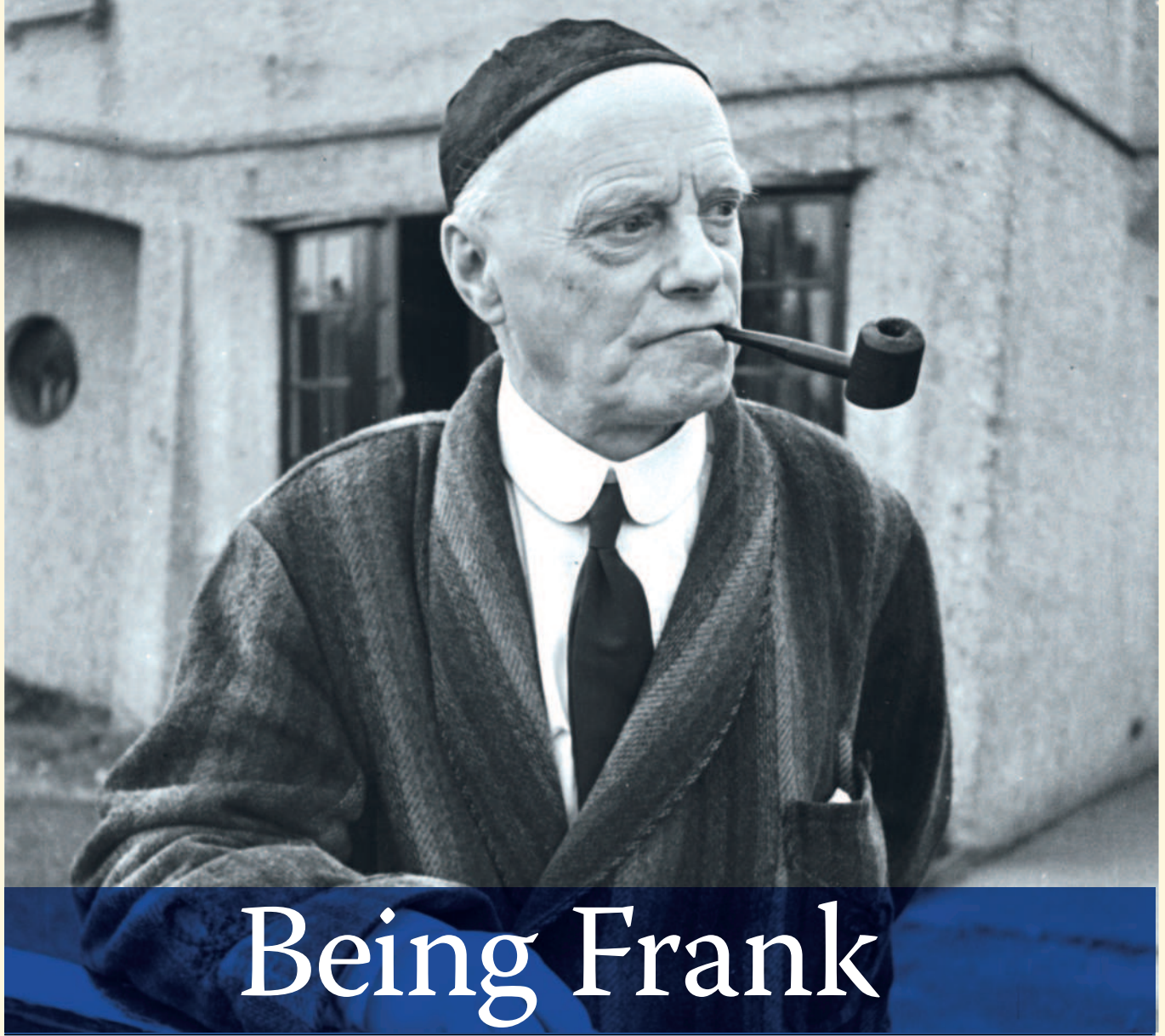
warning of outmoded comic ideas and topics, cheeky films like *Carry On Up the Jungle* and *Carry On Girls* are up there to enjoy on BritBox.

Carry On remains a cheeky, winking, gloriously irreverent guest who refuses to leave the party. 🇬🇧

Visit the website of Robert Ross at www.robertross.co.uk



The four made-for-TV Christmas Carry Ons are available on DVD from Network (networkonair.com). Priced £7.99, they are accompanied by interviews with Peter Rogers, Jack Douglas and Wendy Richard, extensive programme notes, and the 45-minute *An Evening with Peter Rogers* feature, filmed at Pinewood Studios.



Being Frank

Margaret Brecknell on the prolific writing life of Billy Bunter creator Charles Harold St John Hamilton, better known as Frank Richards

Charles Harold St John Hamilton died 60 years ago on Christmas Eve 1961. He's best known today for creating one of fiction's most memorable schoolboy characters, Billy Bunter, under the pen name of Frank Richards.

In later life Hamilton appears to have increasingly identified himself with this pseudonym, commenting in his autobiography that "Charles became so accustomed to the name of Frank Richards that it grew to seem like his own." Richards was just one of around two dozen different pen names used by the prolific author over the course of a long and eventful career.

Born in August 1876, Hamilton's early life is largely undocumented, but he is known to have been educated privately at Thorn House, a school close to his childhood home in Ealing.

He developed a lifelong aptitude for

languages, both classical and modern. One visitor to Hamilton's Kent home during the 1950s recalled being asked to accompany him in a version of *Waltzing Matilda*, which the author had translated into Latin.

On leaving school at the age of 17, Hamilton set his sights on writing for a living. By 1895, he was contributing to several boys' story papers with perhaps now forgotten titles like *Pluck*, *Union Jack* and *Boys' Friend*.

William George Bunter, to give the character his full name, did not appear in print for the first time until February 1908. That's when Amalgamated Press launched a new comic called *The Magnet*.

At first just one of the crowd of boys at Greyfriars School, Bunter quickly became established as a reader's favourite. Introduced as "a somewhat stout junior, with a broad, pleasant face and an enormous pair of spectacles", the schoolboy's physical attributes quickly

earned him his famous nickname of "the Fat Owl of the Remove".

In his very first appearance, he asks to borrow money from a schoolmate, promising to repay him as soon as he receives a postal order he is expecting from a wealthy relative. Needless to say, the anticipated postal order never arrives, setting a trend which continued throughout Bunter's entire school career.

Hamilton wrote at such a prodigious rate, using so many different pen names, that for many years seemingly nobody was aware of just how much work he had produced. As Martin Clifford, he contributed the Tom Merry stories to another Amalgamated Press comic, *The Gem*, for 30 plus years. Other pseudonyms included Owen Conquest, Ralph Redway and Hilda Richards, the last used for a series of tales about one Bessie Bunter, sister of Billy.

As Peter Todd, he produced a parody of



Left: Making his debut in *The Magnet* in 1908, Billy Bunter is pictured here with Dicky Nugent in the 1910 story *Nugent Minor*. Right: Franks Richards' other creations included Tom Merry, a character written for *The Gem* under the pseudonym Martin Clifford.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous detective stories entitled *The Adventures of Herlock Sholmes*.

Substitute writers were sometimes used to stand in for the absent Hamilton, particularly in the years prior to World War One when he became distracted by compulsive gambling on frequent visits to the casino at Monte Carlo.

Hamilton himself would later admit to the occasional use of substitutes in his autobiography and is especially dismissive of one of them, commenting that he did not know who had written one particular Tom Merry story but "guessed from the literary style that it was probably the office boy."

It took an intervention from the unlikely source of George Orwell for the truth to emerge regarding Charles Hamilton's many writing identities. In a 1940 essay called *Boys' Weeklies*, Orwell criticised the writing style of *The Magnet's* Frank Richards and *The Gem's* Martin Clifford, arguing that the stories could not possibly be the product of one author because "a series lasting 30 years could hardly be the work of the same person every week".

Orwell argued, "they have to be written in a style that is easily imitated, an extraordinary, artificial, repetitive style, quite different from anything else now existing in English literature". Furthermore, Orwell believed, the stories were outdated, meaning their young readers were led to believe that "the problems of our time do not exist" and that "there is nothing wrong with laissez-faire capitalism."

Hamilton responded in typically robust fashion, letting it be known that not only were Frank Richards and Martin Clifford

the same person, but that he had also used many other pen names. "Human nature, Mr Orwell, is dateless", he continued, "and boys' minds ought not to be worried and disturbed by politics."

Charles Hamilton's school stories had entertained successive generations of *Magnet* and *Gem* readers for over 30 years, but by the late 1930s both publications faced increased competition from more recent arrivals, notably those from the DC Thomson stable. Neither comic survived World War Two, their seemingly inevitable ending hastened by paper shortages in wartime.

“ Hamilton wrote an estimated 100 million words over the course of his lifetime. ”

The *Magnet's* demise did not, however, mark the end for Billy Bunter. In 1946 Hamilton was commissioned by publisher Charles Skilton to write a series of hardback books featuring the iconic schoolboy character.

This marked a new era of activity for the prolific Hamilton, who, despite now having reached the age of 70, went on to produce more than 30 hardback books featuring his most popular creation.

The books proved to be immediate bestsellers and a popular BBC TV series, *Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School*, followed in 1952, for which Hamilton also wrote the scripts. A few eyebrows were raised when a 30-year-old father of two called Gerald Campion was chosen to play the

errant schoolboy. However, the diminutive Campion proved perfect for the role. Such was the popularity of the show, which ran until 1961, that Campion became one of television's earliest celebrities.

"Sweet shops were the worst", he would later recall. "I'd be in them, and blokes would manhandle their kids round to face me, and point at me and shout: 'Look, that's Billy Bunter.'"

Ever since an accident in 1926, Charles Hamilton had suffered serious eyesight problems and he became an increasingly reclusive figure, content to stay at home in Broadstairs, Kent, where he was cared for by his housekeeper, Edith Hood.

He never forgot his young readers, however, and was always ready to respond to the mountain of fan mail which he continued to receive right up until his death in December 1961.

As with Orwell, many other critics have seen fit to criticise Hamilton's basic writing style over the years. The late writer and broadcaster Benny Green once wrote disparagingly of Hamilton that "he appears on nobody's short list of great writers of the 20th century".

However, even he could not help but admire Hamilton's prodigious output. Billy Bunter's creator is estimated by the Guinness World Records to have written around 100 million words over the course of his lifetime.

Even Hamilton's most ardent admirers concede that because of his huge output, the quality of his writing occasionally suffered. However, his lively stories, full of wit and good humour, and his innate ability to connect with his many devoted readers mean that his work has lived on long in the public imagination.



Our Favourite Nana

Chris Hallam pays tribute to Liz Smith

The death of the much-loved character actress Liz Smith on 24 December 2016 probably received far less attention than it would ordinarily have done.

She passed away in the final weeks of a year which had seen an unusually high number of famous people dying, sometimes prematurely. Her own demise came less than two weeks after her 95th birthday.

Late in her life, thanks to countless TV and film appearances, notably her roles in the BBC TV comedies *The Vicar of Dibley* and *The Royle Family*, Smith had become something of a national treasure.

She did not achieve any real fame until the second half of her long life, but she had an eventful time from the very beginning. Born Betty Gleadle, in Scunthorpe on 11 December 1921, her early years were characterised by a great deal of loneliness, hardship and personal loss. In 2008, she would pick Roy Orbison's *Only the Lonely* as her favourite track on Desert Island Discs arguing that, for her, it had become a theme tune.

"My mother's death in childbirth when she was 23 and I was two years old became the leading factor in the strangeness of my life," she later wrote. "I have missed my mother all my life and have spoken out loud to her frequently, as I feel she is near to me."

Her father proved unreliable. One day, when his only daughter was just seven, he picked her up from Sunday school. "I'm going away for a little while," he said. "But I will write to you."

For five years, she waited eagerly for his first letter from him. It never came. She never saw or heard from her father again.

She was brought up by her loving grandparents. "I can cook anything with feathers on except a shuttlecock," her Gran promised... and she did. Some 70 years later, Liz would be famous for playing a much worse cook in *The Vicar of Dibley*.

She retained fond childhood memories of sweetshops, gramophones, games of hopscotch in the streets and trips to see Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd films at



Opposite: Liz Smith as Letitia Cropley in *The Vicar of Dibley*. Above left to right: Ricky Tomlinson (Jim) heads *The Royle Family* with, clockwise from left, Liz Smith (Nana), Ralf Little (Antony), Sue Johnston (Barbara), Craig Cash (Dave) and Caroline Aherne (Denise). Liz had a small part in Mike Leigh's breakthrough film *Bleak Moments*. Pictured with Billy Murray in one of her several appearances in *The Bill*.

the cinema. She first discovered a love of acting after reducing an audience to hysterics in a production of a one-act play called *Between the Soup and the Savoury* at the local church hall. From that moment on her ambition was clear: "That was it. That was what I wanted to do with my life."

Life grew harder following her grandfather's death in 1930. Money was tight. "When I'm gone, Betty, you will be completely alone," her gran warned her. "No one will care about you. I will try and live until you are 20. I will try and leave you some money." She did indeed die when Liz was 20.

By that point, the world was at war. Attracted by the uniform, Liz joined the WRNS and was stationed in Scotland. She was then transferred to Ireland, then South Africa just after the victory at El Alamein and then India where she met her husband who she married in November 1945. They had a son and a daughter but divorced in 1959 after her husband had an affair with someone he met in a pottery class.

For 25 years, Liz worked hard to support her two children, living in poverty and suffering the social stigma which then surrounded divorce. Throughout this often very difficult period of her life, she never gave up on her dream of acting.

She took acting classes, developed her improvisation skills and responded to opportunities she saw advertised in theatre journal *The Stage*. She got nowhere.

Finally, at the end of the 1960s, she got a

break. She was working in Hamleys when she received a life-changing phone call. A young film director called Mike Leigh was looking for a middle-aged actress with improvisational skills for a role in his debut feature film, *Bleak Moments* (1971). Liz got the part.

In 1973 she took the lead role in another Leigh drama, *Hard Labour*, playing the mother of Bernard Hill's character.

Her career had turned a corner. For the next 40 years she would be a prolific stage, TV and film character actress, playing mothers, grandmothers and what Kirsty Young would later describe as "a series of idiosyncratic old bats."

It wasn't all success. A role as Compo's housekeeper in one of the very first episodes of *Last of the Summer Wine* in 1973 was a one-off appearance. She found her sitcom feet as Mrs Brandon in the comedy *I Didn't Know You Cared*, Peter Tinniswood's adaptation of his own novels.

The years ahead would see her grow steadily more familiar to the public as her list of TV and film appearances multiplied. She appeared in *Crown Court*, *The Bill*, *Casualty* and *Doctors* and in nine different Dickens adaptations.

She was in big films such as *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981), was Grandma Georgina in Tim Burton's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005). Her distinctive voice was heard as Mrs Mulch in *Wallace and Gromit in The Curse of the Were-*

Rabbit (2005). On TV, she appeared in shows as diverse as *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*, *Bottom* and *Lark Rise to Candleford*.

Comfortable in eccentric roles she was Lady Philippa of Staines, an aristocrat with a penchant for dipping her false teeth in champagne in Vivian Stanhall's *Sir Henry at Rawlinson End* (1980). Her appearance as Madame Balls in *The Pink Panther Strikes Again* (1976) caused Peter Seller to crash into

the furniture through laughing so much. Oddly, her role was cut from the finished film, although it was incorporated into the later *Trail of the Pink Panther*

Her bestselling memoir, *Our Betty*, was published in 2006. In 2009, aged 86, Liz was forced to retire from acting after suffering a series of strokes.

Three roles in Smith's prolific career deserve a special mention. She won a Bafta for her role as Maggie Smith's mother in Alan Bennett's postwar comedy *A Private Function* (1984).

She then found a new audience in the role of Letitia Cropley in Richard Curtis's *The Vicar of Dibley* between 1994 and 1996. The role saw her specialising in fishpaste pancakes and parsnip brownies.

She was shocked and disappointed when the character was killed off fairly early in the long-running sitcom's life.

Death also came to Norma Jean Speakman, *The Royle Family*'s Nana, a role she played between 1998 and 2000. She considered it a highlight of her professional career. In 2006, she returned to the role for *The Queen of Sheba*, a very moving hour-long special episode, which reduced many viewers to tears as Nana said goodbye to her family for the last time.

In December 2016, the episode was aired again as a tribute to writer and star Caroline Aherne who had died earlier that year. The timing turned out to be unexpectedly poignant, effectively also serving as a fond farewell to the great Liz Smith herself. She died just two days later. 🇬🇧

The Royle Family and The Vicar of Dibley are both available on BritBox, while classic episodes of The Bill can be streamed on UKTV Play.

Christmas With the Beatles

Stephen Garnett remembers a time when members of the Beatles' fan club were rewarded with a special seasonal gift



Pop artists have always enjoyed a bit of extra satisfaction and kudos when one of their records is No 1 over the Christmas period. For listening fans, the songs may hold a special significance to them for the rest of their lives, recalling memories of what they were doing and the people they were with, whenever they are played on the radio. This writer has fond memories of the Christmas No 1 of 1971. It was Ernie (The Fastest Milkman in the West) by Benny Hill, but that's another story.

The group with the most Christmas No 1s is the Beatles, with four festive chart toppers: I Want to Hold Your Hand (1963), I Feel Fine (1964), Day Tripper/We Can Work it Out (1965) and Hello, Goodbye (1967). None of the Lennon/McCartney songs had a seasonal theme, but fans of the Fab Four, caught up in the Beatlemania phenomenon, couldn't have cared less.

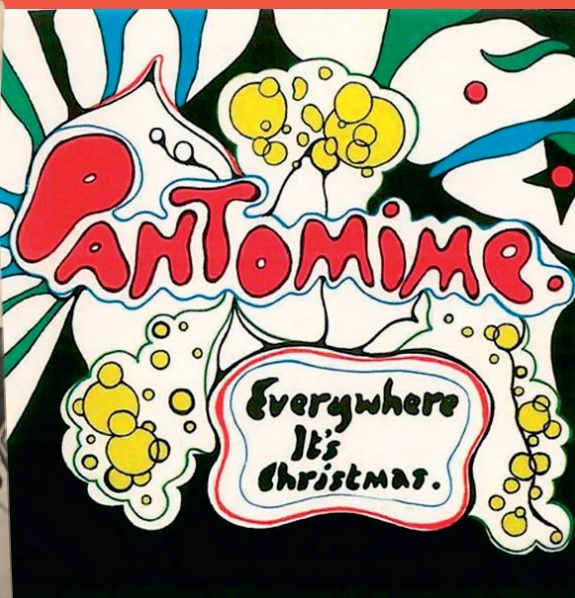
If they were members of the group's huge UK fan club, each year from 1963 until 1969 they had their very own Beatles Christmas records delivered to their doors. This aspect of the Beatles' career seems to have been largely forgotten.

The 7ins Christmas discs were the idea of Tony Barrow, the Beatles' press officer. The group had been overwhelmed by the mail sent to their fan club and it was impossible to reply to the thousands of letters, so an annual message was a good way of keeping in touch with fans and showing them they were not forgotten.

The first disc was a jolly, light-hearted affair, full of word-play, puns and madcap humour. It opens with the boys singing a version of Good King Wenceslas ("When the snow lay round about, deep and crisp and crispy"). It had a message from John: "This is John speaking with his voice..."

He says that it has been "a really gear

The Beatles at Christmas, clockwise from left: Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, John Lennon and George Harrison.



year” for the group, and he thanks all “the Beatle people.” He looks back on their first hit records, Love Me Do and Please Please Me and their top of the bill spot at the London Palladium and appearance in the Royal Variety Show (cue a short rendition of God Save the Queen by the group).

As Christmas bells ring in the background, Paul is next. The group had talked about their likes and dislikes, and said they enjoyed jelly babies. This had led to crates full of the sweets arriving at their offices, so Paul tells fans that they no longer like them so much.

Before signing off his section with a: “Happy Crimble and Merry New Year”, Paul tells listeners that his favourite part of being a Beatle isn’t the live performances but the recording sessions in the studio.

Ringo has a short slot and sings Good King Wenceslas in the style of Elvis Presley. George thanks their secretaries. They all sing Rudolf the Red-Nosed Ringo.

The following year saw huge success for the Beatles, with hit records in the UK (Can’t Buy Me Love, A Hard Day’s Night, I Feel Fine) and in the United States where they caused a stir with an appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show. There were also sell-out tours of Europe, Australia and New Zealand. They appeared in their first film, A Hard Day’s Night, and John had published a nonsense book of poems and stories, In His Own Write, which became a best seller.

So the four-minute Christmas disc inevitably found John, Paul, George and Ringo in high spirits. It opens with the sound of marching feet and a raucous rendition, with piano and kazoo, of Jingle Bells, reminiscent of the Goons.

Paul speaks first, wishing fans a happy Christmas and thanking them for buying their records: “I don’t know where we’d be without you (‘In the army perhaps’, says John in the background).

“I hope you’ve enjoyed listening to the records as much as we enjoyed melting them.” He says they are recording the disc in “Number Two Studio at EMI”, where they recorded their recent hits.

Then it’s John’s turn: “Thanks all of you who bought my book, it was very helpful.

The first few Christmas records were presented with straightforward pictures of the Fab Four – later the covers became more psychedelic. The Christmas 1966 disc was the first to be given its own title, Pantomime: Everywhere it’s Christmas.

There’s another one out pretty soon, it sez ‘ere, hope you buy that too. It’ll be the usual rubbish, but it won’t cost much – that’s the bargain we’re going to strike up. I write them in my spare time, it sez ‘ere...”

George thanks those who went to see the film and looks forward to the next one, which will be in colour: “It’ll be a big laugh, we hope.”

Ringo also thanks the fans and mentions their overseas tours: “Those airport receptions knocked us out.” Another Goon-type song, Can You Wash Your Father’s Shirt? ends the record.

The Beatles’ third Christmas offering, at the end of 1965, is a chaotic affair, held together by self-mocking a cappella versions of Yesterday. Fans are thanked for the presents they have sent, John sings Happy Christmas To Ya Listeners and there is a spoof of the popular radio request programme Family Favourites.

Their 1966 disc was given a title: Pantomime: Everywhere it’s Christmas. The astonishing musical development of the Beatles had seen them go from Please Please Me to Rubber Soul and Revolver. This had been a challenge to die-hard fans, many of whom wondered where their heroes were headed. As the stylus dropped on this latest Christmas gift, more surprises were in store.

The song Everywhere it’s Christmas (At the End of Every Year) again recalls the Goons, but also the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band. There are several unrelated sketches and songs Orowayna, A Rare Cheese, Felpin Mansions, Podgy the Bear, Jasper, and a short music hall type song, Please Don’t Bring Your Banjo Back. Gone are the personal messages to their fans.

Christmas Time is Here Again! was the title of the 1967 festive record, with the style of the studio experimentations

and strange sound effects that had played such a part in Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band very evident. The title song is repeated, built around the concept of a group, the Ravellers, auditioning for a BBC radio show.

It’s a rambling, incoherent journey, taking in a game show where the prize is a trip to Denver and appointment as “independent candidate for Paddington”. The Ravellers sing a song about jam jars for a woman in hospital in Blackpool. Producer George Martin is heard saying: “They’d like to thank you for a wonderful year,” as if to insert a moment of sanity.

There is a magical moment at the end when, in a thick Scottish accent, as the wind blows and Auld Lang Syne plays softly in the background, John recites a self-penned, Rabbin Burns type poem.

There were two more Christmas discs, but as the boys began pursuing different projects and the group inexorably started to split, the contributions were recorded separately and cobbled together. They are mostly confusing collages of musical bits and pieces, individual messages, and poems from John: Jock and Yono and Once Upon a Pool Table.

There is even a performance of Nowhere Man by Tiny Tim on the ukulele. Bringing his own eccentricity and wacky sense of humour, the records were produced by Kenny Everett.

In thousands of homes, tucked away and gathering dust among stacks of old vinyl, there must be surviving copies of those unique, early flexi-discs. To listen to them today is to be reminded afresh of the excitement, joy and optimism that they generated. Being transported back to a different and more innocent Britain, through the crackle and hiss of an old record, cannot be bad.



Shire Joy

They were selectively bred for Tudor battles, but the mighty Shire horse still has an important role in the modern world, as **Claire Saul** discovers

King Henry VIII is noted for many things, most commonly his multiple marriages and his sweeping changes to religious practice in this country. But there's a little-known achievement of the Tudor monarch that remains a cause of celebration to this day: the Shire horse.

"In most places of this Realme little horsis and naggis of small stature and valeu be suffered to depasture and also to covour marys and felys of very small stature..." stated the Breed of Horses Act 1535. It noted the decline in equine physical attributes at a time when there was a need for a war horse capable of carrying the considerable weight of a knight in full battle armour. The act required owners of enclosed deer parks to possess at least two mares of a minimum height of thirteen hands high (hh) for the purpose of breeding with horses of a minimum of 14hh.

A further act in 1540 forbade the free running of stallions under 15hh, mares under 13hh and two-year-old colts under 11.2hh. Enforced, annual round-ups on common land acted on orders to destroy animals that did not comply with these rules. To ensure that Henry's new, super-sized breed remained out of enemy reach, it became illegal to export the biggest horses without special licence.

This breed, named the Shire, from the Saxon word "schyran", meaning to shear or divide, became the largest horse in the world. It remains so to this day.

Henry's acts continued in force over three centuries, by which time Shires had become integral to agriculture, and then industry. Then the introduction of the internal combustion engine resulted in a drastic decline in demand. Their numbers dwindled.

Today, this loyal horse is endangered breed, with fewer than 1,500 brood Shire mares remaining globally, making them rarer than the Giant Panda.

Now, Operation Centaur aims to prove that this threatened breed still has an important role to play in the 21st century, even in urban settings. The Richmond Park-based organisation does its work with Shires in several capacities.

First, conservation work which sees Shires busy working in activities such as rolling bracken, helping with meadow management or logging. The chosen locations have reaped many benefits, such as increased and more diverse wildflower yields.

"We roll the bracken because you don't really want to spray it in a place like this, and by rolling you bruise, not cut, the stems so the plant then uses all its energy to try and repair itself and stops spreading," explains Operation Centaur's founder and CEO, Professor Andreas Liefoghe.

On a distant slope of Richmond Park a Shire pulls a rolling machine over bracken. "The bracken is gradually being pushed back. You don't want to get rid of it all because the



Above: Winter carriage rides in Richmond Park include a tour of the stables at Operation Centaur's Holly Lodge headquarters. Above right: Shires were bred as warhorses but also make fine workhorses. Below: The horses become talking points wherever they go.

fauns are born into it. This year, we held back the start of rolling by one week because the game keepers told us there were still some births to be had.

"That is a good example of working with the land and having stewardship over it, rather than having contractors coming in and mowing down wildflower meadows just about to start flowering, for example. For contractors, there's a slot in a spreadsheet, they have a machine, and it is just about that.

"We can work with the environment; if we see a bird nesting somewhere in the park, we just leave a swathe of bracken around it. If you're in your Massey Ferguson with your headphones on, you aren't necessarily going to notice these things."

Second, to share the unique heritage of the Shire horse, Operation Centaur offers carriage and tram rides for the public, the latter at Henry VIII's former residence Hampton Court Palace, where information about these gentle giants is shared.

The majority of the organisation's ten shires are stabled just behind the palace, at Home Park.

In a third activity, a distinguished clinician of psychology, Professor Liefoghe also talks passionately about the role of the Shires in equine assisted learning and community work, where there have been demonstrable results in anti-bullying and addiction work, therapeutic programmes for prisoners and refugees. The

horses even visit homes for the elderly.

"When we are out in the community, people come over and talk to us, they want to come and reminisce. They remember their grandfather who used to work with horses, for example, or they'll say to us: 'I haven't spoken to anybody for two weeks and it is just so lovely to come and see these horses, and to talk to you.' Horses are incredible ice breakers and working with them, we're bringing something into people's lives that allow some kind of connectivity.

"What Operation Centaur is trying to do is to make the case that there is a future for working Shire horses, even in urban settings. It is not a romantic ideal, we're not saying let's bring the countryside back to real horsepower, what we are saying is that in some places, it totally makes sense to bring a Shire in to work. And we have very strong evidence to prove it." 

operationcentaur.com



ENJOY A SHIRE EXPERIENCE

Take a ride in a park brake drawn by Shires through Richmond Park.

Your 75-minute experience includes a tour of the stables at Operation Centaur HQ at Holly Lodge, plus sloe gin and mince pie refreshments. Your private carriage is for up to six people. Available until 2 January. **For more details and to book your ticket, go to seetickets.com/tour/winter-rides-in-richmond-park**

A Shire Experience Day makes an unusual and memorable gift.

Learn how to groom, harness and work with the horses at Operation Centaur HQ in Richmond Park. **seetickets.com/tour/shire-horse-experience-day**

The Shires will be taking visitors on **Tram Rides** around the gardens of Hampton Court Palace once again, from April to October 2022. **For details of this and all seasonal palace activities visit hrp.org.uk/hampton-court-palace or call 033 3320 6000.**



BEST OF BRITISH

puzzle page

Twenty Questions

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

1. Which member the royal family was the last to be born in the presence of the home secretary?
2. Which actor is best-known for playing Sergeant Benton in Doctor Who?
3. Who was the first British chef to be awarded three Michelin stars?
4. Which presenter, actress and model was a co-host of Wheel of Fortune and the presenter of Changing Rooms?
5. Who composed The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra?
6. At which hospital was the world's first heart, lung and liver transplant carried out on 17 December 1986?
7. Who was the last British prime minister to have born in the 19th century?
8. Whose appointment as director general of MI5 was announced on 16 December 1991?
9. Which song returned to the top of the UK Singles Chart for five weeks from December 1991, 16

years after if first spent nine weeks at No 1?

10. Which I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue panellist co-founded Private Eye?
11. Who played Sir Humphrey Appleby in the sitcoms Yes Minister and Yes, Prime Minister?
12. Who wrote the children's fantasy novel Tom's Midnight Garden?
13. Who was the star of the ATV sitcom The Worker?
14. Who, with Ronald Chesney, wrote the sitcoms The Rag Trade, On the Buses and Meet the Wife?
15. Which illustrator was the creator of St Trinian's School?
16. Which actor is best known for playing the "Genial" Harry Grout in the sitcom Porridge?
17. Who played Mrs Perks in the 1970 film adaptation of The Railway Children?
18. Who, after Francis Rossi, was the longest-serving member of Status Quo?
19. Who wrote the novel Watership Down?
20. By what name was singer Georgios Kyriacos Panayiotou, who died on 25 December 2016, better known?

And I quote...

Which tenor saxophonist, while speaking about his eponymous jazz club, joked: "I love this place, it's just like home, filthy and full of strangers?"

Dialect Detective

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

1. Fennery (Kent)

- a) Mouldy
- b) Neat, dextrous
- c) Best dress

2. Jammock (Norfolk/Suffolk)

- a) A soft, pulpy substance
- b) A short time, an instant
- c) A hodge-podge

3. Newdicle (Norfolk)

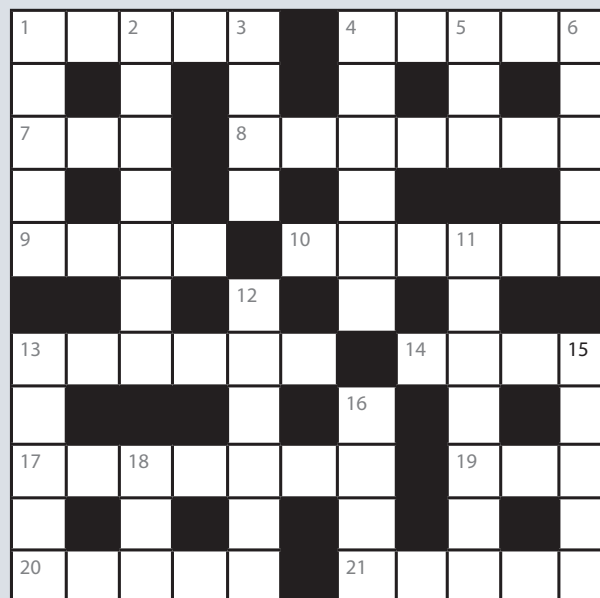
- a) Complete ruin
- b) Something new
- c) The weakest of the brood

4. Shuckish (Hampshire)

- a) A hay fork
- b) Changeable weather
- c) An accidental blow

Cryptic Crossword

Compiled by CADOC



Across

1. See 14 Across
4. See 14 Across
7. Colour of his hooter when reindeer eyelids droop at first? (3)
8. See 14 Across
9. Sounds like you'll be describing Christmas (4)
10. Writer Louisa who once produced small females so to speak (6)
13. Stirling almost with first class start to Christmas for coloured design (6)
- 14, 4, 8, 18 Down and 1 Across. King Harry's cold manner fend off traditional gifts (4,12,3,5)
17. "Burn the French" – Dickens, perhaps (7)
19. Going after the head of Dasher, I'm like a Toc H lamp, supposedly! (3)
20. Twankey, say, in look out place obliterating north (5)
21. World War One site where originally young people risked everything sadly (5)

Down

1. Go astray in belonging to me but I wish you this sort of Christmas (5)
2. Sifts the things you often find in Christmas crackers (7)
3. "... Mary...Blessed art thou among women" (The Angelic Salutation) (4)
4. Father Christmases initially like changes – because they are this? (6)
5. Girl who is always to be found in Christian nativities (3)
6. Asked for forgiveness perhaps when thousand lent unwisely (5)
11. Working command expected from Amazon? (2,5)
12. Such a case is expected by over-optimistic children at Christmas (6)
13. Scotsman has unending fear for exotic bird (5)
15. Are they honoured to be in pantomimes? (5)
16. Children's game – as Guy Burgess might have said? (1,3)
18. See 14 Across

What is it?

This will point you in the right direction



The solutions to all of this month's puzzles are on page 78



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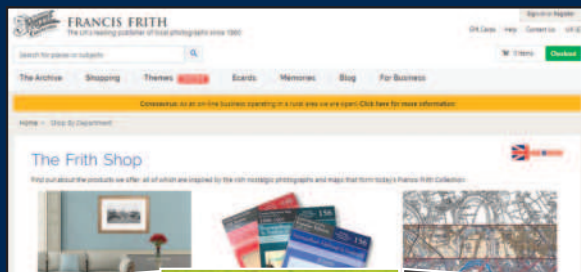
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NEXT MONTH

In the **January Issue** of Best of British



YOU'RE NICKED!

**Remembering The Sweeney and
Inspector Morse star John Thaw**

Something Completely Different

We speak to
actress and dancer
Aimi MacDonald

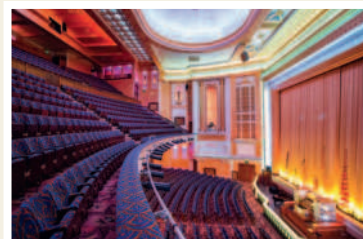


In my Liverpool Home

A local's tour of
the city

Dream Palaces

The golden
age of cinema
buildings



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Bookshelf

David Brown checks out the latest releases

BOOK OF THE MONTH



The Myths and Legends of Britain's Pubs – East of England

By Rodney Simmonds, The Book Guild Ltd, paperback, £9.99

Subtitled A Thousand Years of History and Trivia, this thought-provoking volume combines a selection of the origins of pub names together with specific examples with stories relating to associated ghosts and

other fascinating facts along the way.

This volume covers a generous geographical area from the East Midlands to counties bordering on the suburbs of London. It's presented by pub names in alphabetical order, and we travel from the Abbey Inn in Crowland, Lincolnshire and the Admiral Rodney in Wollaton, Nottinghamshire to the Woolpack in Coggeshall, Essex.

The final selections, under the letter "Y" reveal two examples – the Yarborough Arms in Ulceby and the Yarborough Hunt, Brigg, both in north Lincolnshire.

The author admits that he put this

project together over an extended period and that some of the pubs may no longer be trading, especially after the problems associated with running a public house during lockdown. Check the current situation before venturing out to visit locations.

There have been several books on the subject of pub name origins and this one does not claim to be definitive. It also breaks the recent trend of pictorial pub books. This is a purely a book to read – and a very good read it is too. Great for sampling by the fireside in a quiet corner of a pub or with the tippie of your choice at home. Cheers.



Britain's Toy Car Wars

By Giles Chapman, History Press, hardback, £12.99

Britain has not only been home to some great manufacturers of real cars in the

past, the country has also introduced some highly collectable models creating a market that is still catered for today.

You only have to look at the prices realised in regular and specialist auctions by nostalgic toys from the past to realise what great interest model cars evoke. They send people up into their lofts in search of old gems, hopefully not too play-worn and maybe even with their original boxes and packaging. There is even much enjoyment from skilled restorers to breathe life back into neglected items.

Author Giles Chapman, in this illustrated and expanded edition of his study of The War of Wheels between Dinky, Corgi and Matchbox shows the rise and fall of the main producers in the model vehicle trade.

Giles has owned many diecast models over the years as a boyhood passion took hold in adult life. The early models may not have been that accurate alongside the real thing, but they had a presence about

them and when you took the box artwork and advertising material into account, collectors were seemingly helpless to resist their appeal.

The author enquires: "Are toy cars still relevant?" and concludes that yes, even in a digitally-led era they are. With questions about the future hanging over the survival of our real classic vehicles, these models may have a continued role as reminders of what we once had and loved.



Sergeant Cluff Goes Fishing

By Gil North, Great Northern, paperback, £7.99

Some readers may remember the BBC TV drama Cluff that was screened in two series

in 1964-1965. The scripts were written by Gil North, the penname of Geoffrey Horne (1916-1988), author of the Cluff novels about a no-nonsense Yorkshire policeman.

Just as the author changed his name, he also used the name Gunnershaw to disguise his hometown of Skipton, though many may recognise it.

The straightforward title reveals the nature of this Dales detective. After all, who else would take time out to go fishing

when Colonel Amber, owner of a nearby hall, is found dead at the riverside? Our hero uses his eyes, ears and instinct to fathom the matter out, but not before further deaths occur.

Murder mysteries set in distinct geographical locations are big business today, though there now seems to be a need to incorporate numerous sub-plots to ensnare the reader. This is a more succinct work that is rich in its description of characters and locations that gradually reel the reader in, like the detective sergeant's angling, to produce a very readable drama.

Great Northern is offering four paperback volumes of the Cluff crime classics. Goes Fishing was originally published in 1962, and More Deaths for Sergeant Cluff (1963), is accompanied by The Blindness of Sergeant Cluff and Sergeant Cluff Laughs Last (both from 1964). A good read and a worthy revival.



Shepperton Studios: A Personal View

By Derek Threadgall, self-published, paperback £6.50

The sheer excitement of being offered a job in the operating

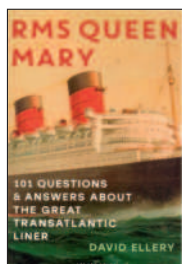
office at Shepperton Studios, the largest British film studio, was not something that cinema fan Derek Threadgall was going to miss.

Derek entered the famous studio gates in April 1960 and would stay for five years. It was an interesting period to work there. During those years, some US stars found their way to Shepperton, including Bing Crosby and Bob Hope, Howard Keel and Judy Garland.

Each weekday morning, Derek and a colleague would walk round the 60-acre studio site visiting all the stages and back lots, noting what each was being used for. They often found discarded items including pieces of Triffids from the 1962 film *Day of the Triffids*, and Daleks from *Dr Who* and the Daleks, and Daleks' Invasion Earth 2150AD.

Seven years after leaving the studios, Derek and his family moved to the area to live, and he became actively involved with the Shepperton Studios Action Committee fighting off a challenge by buyers who wanted to build housing on the site.

Signed copies of the book full of movie memories are available at £7.50 including UK P&P. Orders and payment to: Derek Threadgall, 10, Robjohns Road, Chelmsford CM1 3AF.



RMS Queen Mary: 101 Questions & Answers About the Great Transatlantic Liner

By David Ellery, Adlard Coles, paperback, £9.99

The year 2022 marks the 85th anniversary of the maiden voyage of what became one of the most famous ships in the world, RMS Queen Mary.

The largest ship built in Britain at the time, RMS Queen Mary would break the record for the fastest Atlantic crossing on two occasions.

Designed with luxurious accommodation for wealthy travellers, with cuisine rivalling that of the best European hotels, it would also transport up to 16,000 US troops to Europe when converted for wartime service. Although the ship avoided damage from the enemy, it was involved in a tragic collision with HMS Curacoa off Scotland, with 329 of the light cruiser's 430 crew lost.

In 1967, Cunard announced plans to withdraw the Queen liners and the city of Long Beach in California paid £1.23m to secure Queen Mary and convert it into a tourist attraction as a museum.

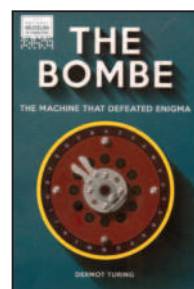
There have been more substantial volumes on RMS Queen Mary but this question-and-answer format, with a commendable choice of photographs and diagrams of the ship's layout, provides a workmanlike introduction.

This is an updated edition of a publication first published in 2006 with new photographs and an additional chapter concerning the all-important future of the ship.

A well-timed item for the potential stocking filler market.

The Bombe: The Machine That Defeated Enigma

By Dermot Turing, The National Museum of Computing, paperback, £11.20



The German armed forces sent thousands of messages daily conveying crucial strategic information encrypted by their Enigma machine.

To access this information, brilliant minds and mathematical experts

sought ways for the Allied forces to crack the daily code which would provide the key.

Polish codebreakers had made some progress in 1939 with their Bomba, but the British were still unable to decipher the messages they intercepted.

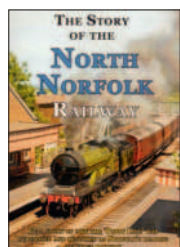
A prototype Bombe introduced in the spring of 1940, the brainchild of Alan Turing and Doc Keen at Bletchley Park, was only partially successful. Later that year, the idea of a diagonal board was suggested, giving the Bombe the power to start breaking the daily key. It was the idea of Cambridge mathematician Gordon Welchman. By the end of the war, some 200 Bombes were deciphering up to 5,000 messages each day.

To aid the author's text and help readers understand the whys and wherefores of the Enigma and Bombe machines, there are some useful diagrams and illustrations.

These would be a fascinating guide for visitors to The National Museum of Computing, where a reconstructed Bombe is one of the main exhibits at Block H, Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes.

Copies signed by the author, nephew of Alan Turing, are available for a small additional fee from tnmoc.org

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT



The Story of the North Norfolk Railway

DVD, Kingfisher Productions

In 1958, British Railways decided it could manage without

the former Midland & Great Northern Joint Railway cross-country route that linked the East Midlands with the east coast at Norfolk, withdrawing most of the passenger services at the end of February 1959.

One short stretch of line to survive the axe for passenger trains was from Melton Constable to Holt, Sheringham and

Cromer. In 1964, they cut the line back to Sheringham, including a new basic platform that made the attractive old station redundant.

Fortunately the M&GNJR Society stepped in to revive part of the line's fortune. They started acquiring locomotives and rolling stock for restoration.

With track relaid, trains originally ran between Sheringham and Weybourne, then to Kelling Halt and a new station on the outskirts of Holt.

Former industrial tank locomotives originally worked most of the trains while ex-BR locomotives were being returned to service. Many of the line's own fleet and some of the many visiting

locomotives are seen in action on regular services and at special events.

It's not all been plain-sailing. One example was a supermarket planned at Sheringham that would have more than cramped their style.

With a running time of just over an hour, this entertaining programme is available direct from Kingfisher Productions (0333 1210707, railwayvideo.com) priced £12.95.

Unless otherwise stated, these books & DVDs can be ordered from bookshops and online booksellers by quoting the title and author.



THE MOST MAGICAL TIME

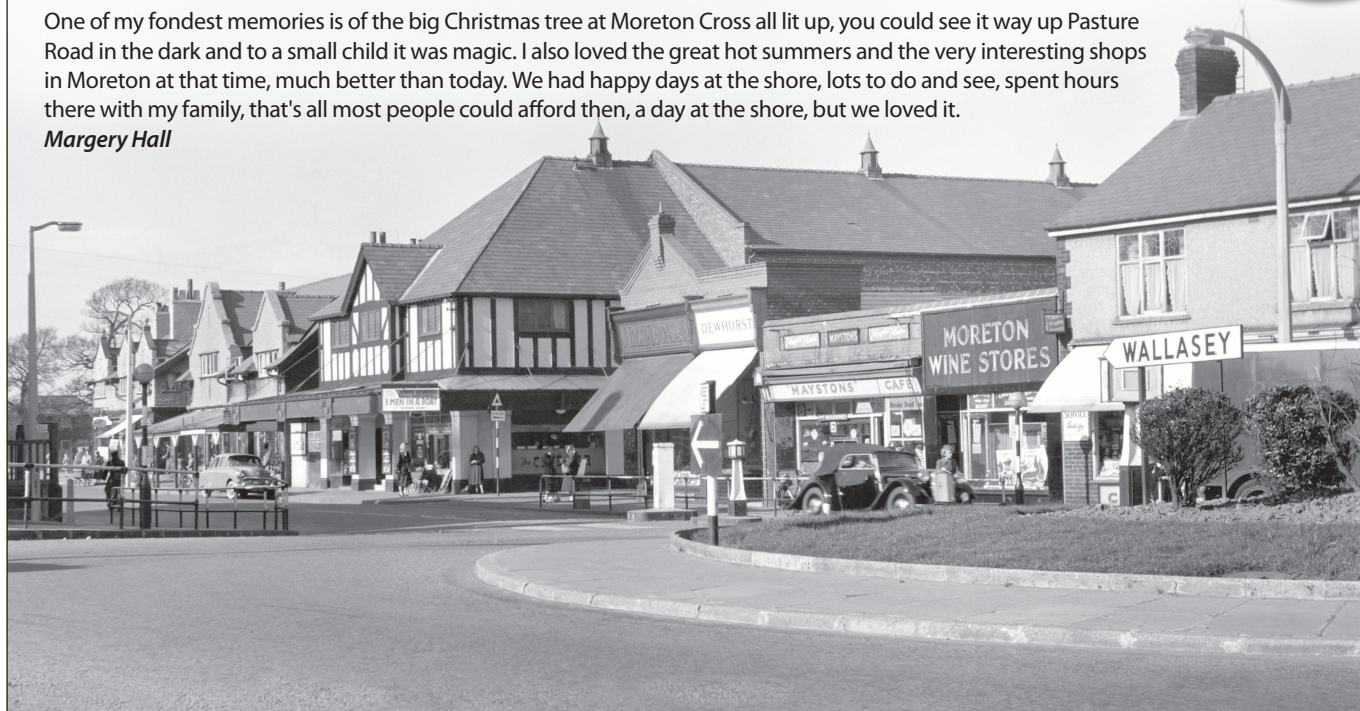
Christmas memories from The Francis Frith Collection

Enjoy 25% off your first order at Francis Frith by being a BoB subscriber. Apply for your discount code at renewal or subscribe today. See page 68 for details.

Moreton Cross and Pasture Road, Moreton, Cheshire (Photograph taken around 1958)

One of my fondest memories is of the big Christmas tree at Moreton Cross all lit up, you could see it way up Pasture Road in the dark and to a small child it was magic. I also loved the great hot summers and the very interesting shops in Moreton at that time, much better than today. We had happy days at the shore, lots to do and see, spent hours there with my family, that's all most people could afford then, a day at the shore, but we loved it.

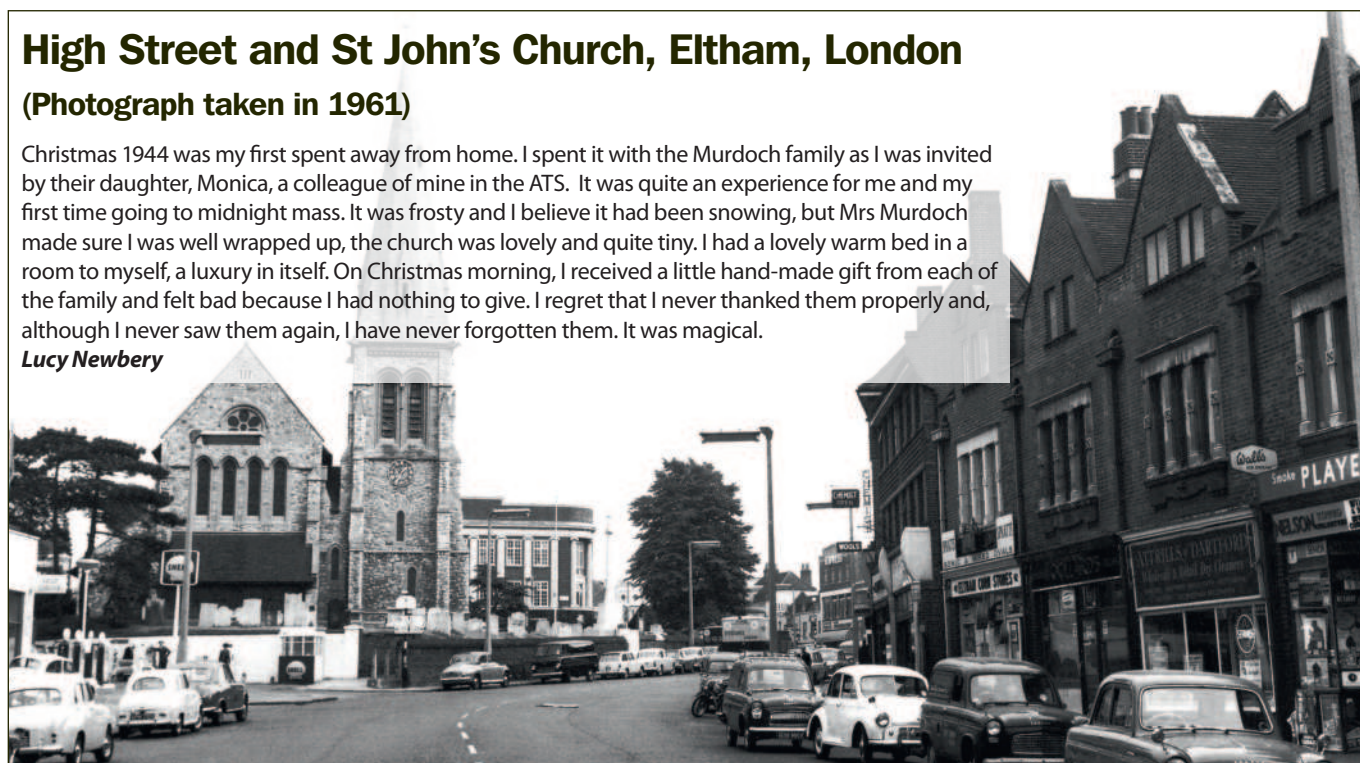
Margery Hall



High Street and St John's Church, Eltham, London (Photograph taken in 1961)

Christmas 1944 was my first spent away from home. I spent it with the Murdoch family as I was invited by their daughter, Monica, a colleague of mine in the ATS. It was quite an experience for me and my first time going to midnight mass. It was frosty and I believe it had been snowing, but Mrs Murdoch made sure I was well wrapped up, the church was lovely and quite tiny. I had a lovely warm bed in a room to myself, a luxury in itself. On Christmas morning, I received a little hand-made gift from each of the family and felt bad because I had nothing to give. I regret that I never thanked them properly and, although I never saw them again, I have never forgotten them. It was magical.

Lucy Newbery





The Methodist Church, High Etherley, County Durham (Photograph taken around 1960)

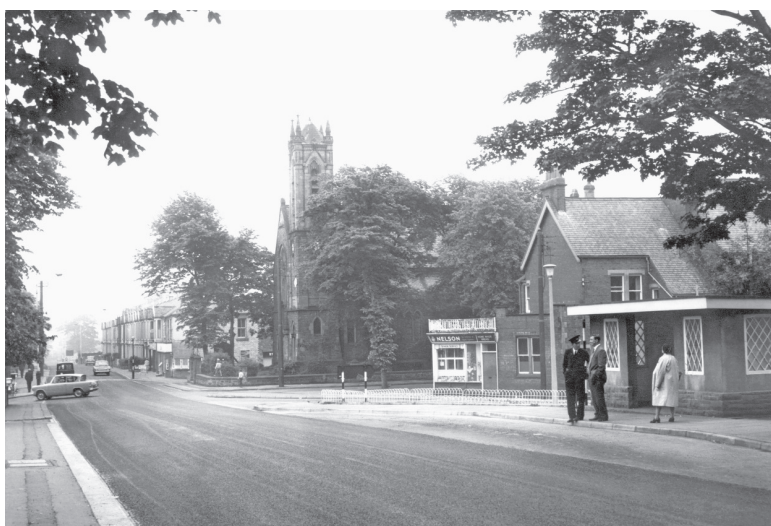
Christmas was a wonderful time. Making lanterns decorations and

having Christmas parties at school. Even though we didn't have much Christmas morning, we couldn't wait to see what had we got, then we would be running to everybody else's house to see what they had received. It meant the world to us, it was magical.

Ronnie Leonard

Lane Head, Ryton, County Durham (Photograph taken around 1960)

I was born in 1951. My parents owned the W Websters store in Barmoor Lane. My older sister helped serve sometimes after school. Dad set up a train set for Christmas for village folk to look at through the front window. Being also a wine and spirit merchant, he put tiny liqueur bottles on the carriages. I have such fond memories of the delight it brought to people's faces.
Anonymous



The Francis Frith Collection

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

Share Your Memories

The Francis Frith Collection invites you to visit the website and add memories to the places featured in the photographs, or comment on others already added. Seeing a place from your past can rekindle

forgotten or long-held memories. Why not add your story for others to read and enjoy – making your memories and stories part of this growing chronicle of British life? 

OUT & ABOUT

Places to go, people to see

My Christmas Trails

Fourteen outdoor light trails choreographed to music have been unveiled in historic and iconic venues across the country. Designed for visitors of all ages to enjoy, My Christmas Trails are a unique way of celebrating the festive season outdoors. Each magical trail is created to showcase the natural and unique environment of the individual location, which include Killerton, Exeter; Kingston Lacy, Dorset; Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire; Stourhead, Wiltshire; Bedgebury, Kent; Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Wimpole, Royston; Belton, Leicestershire; Gibside, Tyne & Wear; Delamere Forest, Cheshire; Temple Newsam, Leeds; Dunham Massey, Cheshire; Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh; and Hillsborough Castle and Gardens, Hillsborough.

mychristmastrails.co.uk



Each magical trail is created to showcase the natural and unique environment of the individual location, such as this Fire Garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Hogarth & Europe

An exhibition presenting the work of William Hogarth alongside those of his continental contemporaries has opened at Tate Britain, London. Running until 20 March, Hogarth & Europe shows Hogarth's best-known paintings and prints, such as *Marriage a-la-Mode*, *The Gate of Calais* and *Gin Lane*, alongside pieces from Jean-Siméon Chardin, Pietro Longhi and Cornelis Troost. Featuring more than 60 of Hogarth's works, brought together from private and public collections around Europe and North America, the exhibition draws on decades of research to show Hogarth in all his complexity, and examine the shifting status of artists in the 18th century, from workshop artisans and court painters to independent freelancers enjoying prominence alongside actors, musicians and writers.

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



Works by William Hogarth, including the famous *Gin Lane* (1751), have been put on display alongside pieces by his continental contemporaries including Chardin, Longhi and Troost.

Second World War and The Holocaust Galleries

Three times the size of IWM's award-winning First World War Galleries and spanning two floors at IWM London, its new Second World War and The Holocaust Galleries is one of Imperial War Museums' most ambitious projects to date. With more than 1,500 items and personal stories from over 80 countries, the Second World War Galleries shows how this was a global conflict on an unprecedented scale, and in The Holocaust Galleries, individual stories from some of the six million Jewish people murdered in the Holocaust will be told through more than 2,000 photos, books, artworks and letters, and personal objects ranging from jewellery and clothing to toys and keepsakes.

020 7416 5000, iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-london



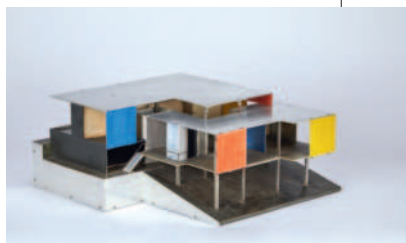
A section of concentration camp barrack, likely to be the last remaining part of Velten, on public display for first time in UK history.

NOT TO BE MISSED

Rhythm and Geometry: Constructivist Art in Britain Since 1951

(Until 30 January)

A celebration of the abstract and constructed art made in Britain



House model 'Néovision', Stephen Gilbert, 1955.

since the 1950s to present day. Includes around 120 objects across mediums, with many works having not been exhibited in public for decades.

Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia, Norwich
01603 593199,
sainsburycentre.ac.uk

Tapestry: Changing Concepts

(Until 13 March 2022)

Reflecting the unconventional approach of the former Tapestry Department

at Edinburgh College of Art through a display of drawings, installations and sculptures alongside works made of textile.
City Art Centre, Edinburgh
0131 529 3993,
edinburghmuseums.org.uk

GlaswegAsians

(Until 1 January)

A colourful heritage exhibition celebrating 150 years of South Asian and Muslim history in Glasgow. Explore the community's contribution to the city and learn about the British Indian Army soldiers who fought in both world wars.

Scotland Street School Museum, Glasgow
0141 287 0500,
glasgowlife.org.uk/
museums/venues/scotland-street-school-museum

The Open Exhibition

(04 December - 21 January)

Leicester's premier showcase for visual art within the city, celebrating the rich and diverse skills of its local artists.

New Walk Museum & Art Gallery, Leicester, Leicestershire
0116 225 4900,
visitleicester.info



What to see: Exploring the story of the people of Southampton, their fascinating lives and historic connections to the sea. Southampton's Titanic Story tells of the impact of the sinking of the Titanic on the city through interactive displays, oral testimony from survivors, and physical exhibits. Gateway to the World uses the city's historic collections to recount the stories of the people who have departed from or arrived in the port of Southampton over the last 200,000 years, including Roman traders, Saxon settlers and Huguenot Protestants seeking refuge. Southampton Stories is a recent addition, which brings to life some incredible stories from the city's rich and diverse maritime, local history, archaeology and archive collections.

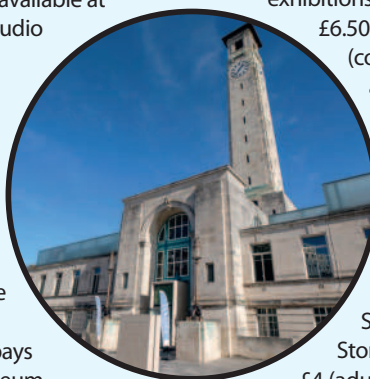
What to eat: The fully licensed Galley Cafe, which is open 10am-4.30pm daily, serves light lunches, traditional cream teas, hot and cold drinks, and cakes and pastries.

Disabled access: All areas of the museum, apart from the clock tower, have step-free access and the first floor can be accessed

ATTRACTION OF THE MONTH:

by lift. Accessible toilets are available on the ground and first floors. Baby change facilities are available on the ground floor. Wheelchairs are available to borrow during your visit. Guide dogs, hearing dogs and assistance dogs are welcome throughout the museum. Large print guides are available at the front desk. Audio induction loops are fitted at the front desk, the gift shop and the cafe. Free admission for companions to visitors with disabilities. There are several blue badge parking bays close to the museum.

How to get there: Based in the heart of Southampton, on the west facing side of the Grade II* listed Civic Centre building, the entrance to SeaCity Museum is directly beneath the clock tower. A five-minute walk from Southampton Central railway station, which is operated by South Western Railway (0345 6000 650, southwesternrailway.com), the nearest bus stops are on Havelock Road and Commercial Road (myjourneysouthampton.com). There are several car parks



nearby, with the nearest being West Park Multi Storey, Civic Centre Forecourt and Marlands Multi Storey (southampton.gov.uk/travel-transport).

Opening times and admission:

Open daily, 10am-5pm, last entry is at 3.30pm. Admission to all exhibitions is £9 (adult),

£6.50 (child), £7 (concession), and £27

(family: two adults, three children).

Under 5s free.

Admission to Southampton Stories only is

£4 (adult), £3 (child)

£3.50 (concession) and £12 (family). Carers go free with a full paying disabled adult/child. Discounts available for National Trust and English Heritage Members, Forces and NHS Staff Discounts holders, and booked groups of 10 or more. Joint tickets with Tudor House and Garden (023 8083 4242, tudorhouseandgarden.com) and annual passes are also available. Booking recommended at least a day in advance to guarantee admission, however a limited number of tickets are available at

reception on arrival.

Staying a while? A two-night stay for four sharing in a Loft room at the nearby room2 (room2.com) "hometel" starts from £140.80 per night.

With a mission to bring better coffee and fresh, made from scratch food to Southampton, Mettricks Guildhall (mettricks.co.uk) is a short walk from SeaCity Museum and is open for brunch, lunch and evening meals from 8am-10pm.

Housed in the historic Royal Pier building, Kuti's Brasserie (023 8022 1585, kutis.co.uk) was winner of the Tiffin Cup 2019 – the prestigious competition to find the best South Asian restaurant in the UK.

Uncover the city's hidden history on a tour led by See Southampton's (seesouthampton.co.uk) multi-award-winning guides.

Find inspiration on what to see and do, tips on food and drink, great attractions and comprehensive itineraries suggested by locals at visitsouthampton.co.uk

SeaCity Museum, Civic Centre, Havelock Road, Southampton SO14 7FY
(023 8083 2020,
seacitymuseum.co.uk)



DIARY DATES

GREAT BRITISH EVENTS

SOUTH WEST OF ENGLAND

Cornwall, Dorset, Devon, 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

17 PRINCESS MARY'S CHRISTMAS GIFT (12PM)

Join Peter Doyle as he tells the story of Princess Mary's appeal to fund Christmas gifts for those serving in the First World War. Booking essential.

National Army Museum, Chelsea, London
020 7730 0717, nam.ac.uk

WEST OF ENGLAND

04-05 CHRISTMAS CRAFT & FOOD MARKET

Get into the Christmas spirit with gorgeous handmade gift ideas and festive food and drink along with Christmas shopping from the gallery, gift barn and Christmas shop.

Waterperry Gardens, near Wheatley, Oxfordshire
01844 339254, waterperrygardens.co.uk

07 TUESDAY OPEN DAY (11AM-4PM)

While only a few of the exhibits will be in operation, visitors can see the collection being maintained and speak to the museum's volunteers.

Waterworks Museum, Hereford, Herefordshire
01432 342192, waterworksmuseum.org.uk

11 BEHIND THE SCENES TOURS (2PM)

An insightful and unique tour of the museum galleries and storage areas with highlights including dinosaur fossils and a sword belonging to Richard III. Booking essential.

Museum of Gloucester, Gloucester, Gloucestershire
01452 396131, museumofgloucester.co.uk

15-23 A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS

Wander around the cottages in the town and enjoy cosy fireside chats with the villagers, listen to tales of how they're preparing for the big day.

Blists Hill Victorian Town, Telford, Shropshire
01952 433424, ironbridge.org.uk/explore/blists-hill-victorian-town

EAST OF ENGLAND

02 ILLUMINATED WALL WALK

Enjoy spectacular views over Lincoln Christmas Market every evening.

Lincoln Castle, Lincoln, Lincolnshire
01522 554559, lincolncastle.com

SOUTH WEST OF ENGLAND

05 HAYNES BREAKFAST CLUB (8AM)

Bringing together like-minded motoring enthusiasts to meet and share their automotive passion and enjoy breakfast. Booking essential.

Haynes International Motor Museum, Sparkford, Yeovil, Somerset
01963 440804, haynesmotormuseum.com

10 CHRISTMAS CONCERT UNDER CONCORDE (7PM)

Join the HMS Heron Royal Navy Volunteer Band under Concorde 002 for several classics and festive numbers. Booking essential.

Fleet Air Arm Museum, RNAS Yeovilton, Ilchester, Somerset
01935 840565, fleetairarm.com

15 BUGS, EPIDEMICS AND PLAGUES (1-3PM)

An interactive workshop on medical history and heritage featuring a talk, Q&As and a handling session of medical items from our collection. Booking essential.

St Nicholas Priory, Exeter, Devon
demht.org



A Victorian Christmas, Blists Hill.

26 BOXING DAY BBQ

Enjoy a lunch barbecue with live music on the quay with free entrance into the village all day. Cooking starts at midday and the live music runs from 1pm to 3pm.

Clovelly, near Bideford, Devon
01237 431781, clovelly.co.uk

SOUTH EAST OF ENGLAND AND LONDON

03 GAMES NIGHT (6.30-9PM)

Get warmed up and discover the galleries on a museum scavenger hunt. Try out transport themed board games while enjoying a winter drink or two with friends.

London Transport Museum, Covent Garden, London 0343 222 5000, ltmuseum.co.uk

03-04 ADVENT: A CHRISTMAS EXPERIENCE & MARKET

Immerse yourself in all things festive, with live demonstrations and activities for all to enjoy. Plus, a boutique Christmas market around the museum's mill pond. Booking essential.

Weald & Downland Living Museum, Chichester, West Sussex
01243 811363, wealddown.co.uk

09-12 SHUTTLEWORTH IN LIGHTS: A FESTIVE SPECIAL

A bevy of wonderful Christmas and festive elements to find along your walk as you discover an enchanting world of light and colour. Booking essential.

Shuttleworth, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire
01767 627927, shuttleworth.org

08-12 EPPING ONGAR LIGHT FANTASTIC

A specially designed lightshow to highlight our stations, rural setting and woodlands, that you can experience from the comfort of a train carriage.

Epping Ongar Railway, Ongar, Essex
01277 365200, eorailway.co.uk

10 CHRISTMAS PARTY NIGHT

Three great acts – 60s favourites the Union Gap, the Harc Duo, and Peter Kay tribute Simon Mark – plus disco, raffle and hot food available to buy. Booking recommended.

Parkway Sports & Social Club,
Peterborough 01778 700226,
stagedoorentertainments.co.uk

17 CATHEDRAL BY CANDLELIGHT TOUR (7.30PM)

The cathedral is beautiful by daylight, but even more so by candlelight. Come and enjoy an after-hours guided tour in this most atmospheric of settings.

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

MIDLANDS

17-19 A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Pulp Rocket Theatre return to produce this immersive Christmas theatre experience which will see you explore the Hall in Victorian Christmas splendour. Booking essential.

Lampport Hall, Lampport, Northamptonshire
01604 686272, lamporthall.co.uk

17-22 CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT (7.30PM-10PM)

An atmospheric sequence of music and readings – old and new – celebrating the Christmas story in all its guises. Booking recommended

St Paul's Church, Birmingham
0121 289 6333, excathedra.co.uk



Christmas Music by Candlelight

19 ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH (10AM)

A guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child. Booking essential.

Sarehole Mill, Birmingham
0121 348 8160,
birminghammuseums.org.uk/sarehole

31 NIGHT RIDER: NEW YEAR'S EVE

Join us for an evening train with both steam and diesel haulage to see in the New Year. Booking essential. **Great Central Railway, Loughborough, Leicestershire,**
01509 632323, gcrailway.co.uk

NORTH OF ENGLAND

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

Everyone is welcome to attend whether you're an owner, enthusiast or just keen to see some great examples of classic local cars. **Lakeland Motor Museum, Ulverston, Cumbria 015395 30400,**
lakelandmotormuseum.co.uk

11 CANDLELIT CHRISTMAS CONCERT (8-11PM)

Warm your cockles with a mulled wine and listen to classic Christmas tunes and acoustic renditions of famous festive numbers. Booking essential.

Holy Trinity Church, Goodramgate, York
eventbrite.co.uk/e/candlelit-christmas-york-tickets-166775599307

12 SINGAROUND SUNDAY (11AM-2PM)

Come along to Hetton band hall in the 1900s Pit Village, have a good laugh and enjoy some traditional tunes.

Beamish Museum, Beamish, County Durham 0191 370 4000,
beamish.org.uk

19 CHRISTMAS CAROLS IN THE STABLEYARD (3-4PM)

Meet up with friends and family, pick up your song sheet, and sing-along to Christmas classics with the King Edward Musical Society Band and choir.

Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire
01625 374400, tattonpark.org.uk

WALES

28 BROTHER THOMAS THE CELLARER (10.30AM-15.30PM)

Step back in time and learn what life was like as a monk here. Booking essential.

Tintern Abbey, Tintern
03000 252239, cadw.gov.wales

11 FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE: A WOMAN AHEAD OF HER TIME? (11AM)

Join Dr Anne Kelly for this fascinating talk on Florence Nightingale, originally written to mark the 200th anniversary of her birth. Booking essential. **National Waterfront Museum, Swansea 07971 665594,**
haswansea.org.uk

SCOTLAND

03 FINDING SPACE ROCKS (7.30-9PM)

Will Joy shares stories of his meteorite hunting adventures and explains how to identify and find meteorites.

Augustine United Church, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh
astronomyedinburgh.org

09 CHRISTMAS IN THE TRENCHES (7.30PM)

An evening lecture presented by historian and researcher Ruth Boreham.

St Peter's Church Hall, Musselburgh
musselburghheritage.org.uk

10 TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS

Our resident storyteller will share tales of Christmas past as we celebrate the festive season. Craft activities will also be available – fun for all the family. Booking essential.

Trinity House, Leith 0131 554 3289,
historicalenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/trinity-house

17 INSPIRED GALLERY MEETS (11-12.30PM)

If you love sketching, crafts or creative writing then this regular relaxed workshop is where to meet up with others who do too.

Aberdeen Art Gallery, Schoolhill,
Aberdeen 03000 200 293,
aberdeencity.gov.uk/AAGM

NORTHERN IRELAND

08 MOURNE MEN AND THE U-BOATS (8PM)

Matt Maguiness discusses the seamen and fishing boats of County Down and their encounter with German submarines during World War One.

Ards Arts Centre, Newtownards
ardshistoricalsociety.com

18 CONNECTED WALKS (10AM-12PM)

Enjoy a guided walk led by local expert followed by a hot drink and some time for socialising. **People's Park, Ballymena**
0300 124 5000, midandeastantrim.gov.uk/events

● Details correct at time of press – please confirm with event organisers before travelling.

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PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

Twenty Questions

- Princess Alexandra (The Honourable Lady Ogilvy) who was born on 25 December 1936.
- John Levene who was born on 24 December 1941.
- Marco Pierre White who was born on 11 December 1961.
- Carol Patricia Smillie who was born on 23 December 1961.
- Benjamin Britten who died on 4 December 1976.
- Papworth Hospital, Cambridgeshire.
- Harold Macmillan, 1st Earl of Stockton, who died on 29 December 1986.
- Stella Rimington.
- Bohemian Rhapsody by Queen.
- Willie Rushton who died on 11 December 1996.
- Sir Nigel Hawthorne who died on 26 December 2001.
- Philippa Pearce who died on 21 December 2006.
- Charlie Drake who died on 23 December 2006.
- Ronald Wolfe who died on 18 December 2011.
- Ronald Searle who died on 30 December 2011.
- Peter Vaughan who died on 6 December 2016.
- Deddie Davies who died on 21 December 2016.
- Rick Parfitt who died on 24 December 2016.
- Richard Adams who died on 24 December 2016.
- George Michael.

And I quote...

Ronnie Scott who died on 23 December 1996.

What is it?

A Lucas trafficator.

Dialect Detective: 1a, 2a, 3b, 4b

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

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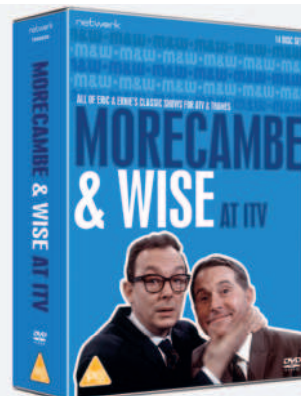
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WIN A MORECAMBE & WISE DVD SET

Undoubtedly the best-loved double act that Britain has ever produced, Morecambe and Wise first came to fame in the mid-1960s with *Two of a Kind*, their hit comedy series for ATV. By the late 1970s, Morecambe and Wise were in residence at Thames Television, where their festive specials were as much a part of Christmas as turkey, tinsel and terrible pop songs. *Morecambe and Wise at ITV* is a 14-disc set containing all 48 editions of *Two of a Kind* (plus a wealth of special features from that era) alongside all 26 editions and seven specials of Thames Television's *The Morecambe and Wise Show*. To be in with the chance of winning one of two copies of this DVD set, courtesy of Network, answer the following question:

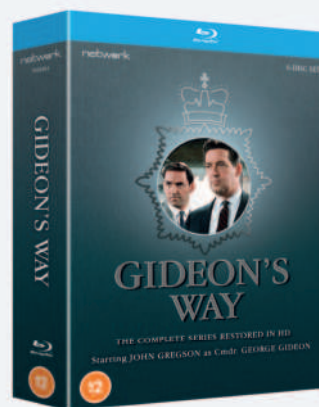
Which writing team wrote *Two of a Kind*?



WIN A GIDEON'S WAY BLU-RAY SET

The hard-hitting ITC crime series, *Gideon's Way: The Complete Series*, has been remastered in High Definition from original 35mm film elements for this very special Blu-ray release, available exclusively from networkonair.com. Made by the same production team that brought you *The Saint* and extensively shot on location in and around London, *Gideon's Way* stars John Gregson and features notable guest stars Gerald Harper, Alfie Bass, George Cole, Ray McAnally, Rosemary Leach, George Baker and Gordon Jackson, among others. To be in with the chance of winning one of two copies of this Blu-ray set, courtesy of Network, answer the following question:

Who first played the character of DCI George Gideon in the film *Gideon's Day*?



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Gay Hill, Kidderminster

DVDs
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Maria Marston, Chesham
Maggie Rickards, Wimborne
Andrew Kehoe, Warrington

The Dark Eyes of London
Hayley Skilton, Market Harborough
Eric Fulford, Plymouth
Michael Scorgie, Montrose
Gerard Hughes, Romford

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BACK IN TIME WITH COLIN BAKER



BoB's very own Time Lord remembers the Fat Owl of the Remove, "Shakespeare's finest creation" and the disappearance of some of his favourite childhood toys

Is it really 60 years since Frank Richards left us? I was nine when his Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School appeared on TV, fleshed out, with the help of some improbable padding, by Gerald Campion, who was 30 when he started playing the part. Bunter's greed, appalling mendacity and selfishness made him a beguiling comic anti-hero, surrounded as he was by decent, upright fellow schoolboys whose tuck was never safe while the "Fat Owl of the Remove" was in tasting distance. I also devoured the books, the last of which appeared in 1965.

In the 1970s, I met Gerald several times when he owned Gerry's, his club in Soho, frequented by actors at night after their respective curtains had descended. Sadly, I can't recall him ever saying "Yaroo" or "Crikey", his customary expressions of surprise and pain when confronted with evidence of cake appropriation. My dear late friend Jeremy Bulloch was one of his fellow students – Bob Cherry – for some years, but Gerald was the only cast member who was in all 51 episodes, finishing when he was 40.

The 75th anniversary of David Lean's *Great Expectations* coincides with the 25th anniversary of my playing Abel Magwitch, the convict philanthropist, in a national tour of Mike Read's musical version. I have a wonderful memory of the read-through on the first day of rehearsal. It was prefaced by a welcoming speech from one of the producers of the show, who will



Gerald Campion, pictured with actress Bernadette Milnes, during promotion for the 1958 stage show *Billy Bunter's Christmas Circus*.

remain nameless for reasons that will immediately become apparent. He expressed his pride at presenting to the British public such a wonderful cast in a work that he considered to be "Shakespeare's finest creation". I was sitting opposite the director and caught the slight raising of the eyes to heaven which was replaced by a conspiratorial smile when I whispered: "Ah well, it can only get better..." And it did of course. Pip, the proud possessor of those *Great Expectations*, was played by Darren Day. With effortless charm, he sang like a

pop star and is currently charming them all over again and giving them the old Razzle Dazzle as Billy Flynn on tour in Chicago.

I feel only slightly guilty about some of the things we did to each other on stage. Actors are sometimes a bit naughty on stage and my rule is that the audience must never be aware of it, or short-changed in any way. I do recall once clutching hold of his frock coat in a vice like grip as I died, so that he had either to sing in the dark upstage by my corpse or take it off and walk downstage to sing of his heartfelt loss at my demise in the light. He wisely opted for the latter. We had a lot of fun.

I am sometimes accused by my wife of being a hoarder. She is right as I do find it very hard to get rid of anything. It stems, I think, from having a mother who took unsentimentality to its extreme. Years after leaving home, I asked where my old teddy bear was. A bit like Christopher Robin, I had "grown up" and temporarily forgotten my best friend. "Oh, I gave him away years ago..." was her blithe and shattering response.

Later nervous enquiries about my treasured Hornby-Dublo train (a set worth quite a lot today), my Billy Bunter and William books, my Meccano and Bayko all got the same response. So, we have quite a large shed stuffed to the rafters with the treasured toys of my daughters' childhood. But I am beginning to see my mother's point. 

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In the aftermath of the D-Day landings and subsequent Allied advance across France, it seemed, for a fleeting moment, that the end of the war in Europe was in sight. Instead, Allied forces faced months of bitter fighting against a tenacious enemy.

Operation Market Garden was a daring airborne plan to outflank the Siegfried Line, secure the River Rhine crossings and advance into Northern Germany. One of the largest Allied operations of the Second World War, it was also the only major Allied defeat in the North West Europe Campaign. Although ultimately it failed to achieve its objectives, Operation Market Garden was one of the largest airborne operations in history, and this remarkable feat of arms led to the liberation of a large part of the Netherlands at a time when many Dutch people were close to starvation. Almere, located to the east of Amsterdam's city centre will be the stage for the Floriade Expo, a world famous, floral spectacle which is held every 10 years. Floriade will focus on a theme of Growing Green Cities making our cities more fun, liveable and sustainable and visitors will be treated to the sight, scent and colour of a variety of flowers, plants, vegetables and fruit bespread over five themed zones.

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