



Cotgrave and District U3A

Keeping in Touch 21

The weekly Letter has now reached a notable milestone – twenty-one weeks of honest endeavour! We can bask in the comparison with the significance of twenty-one years in life. But why is 21 so important? Apparently, it dates back to Norman times. It was the age at which one was allowed to become a Knight! Though we should realise that only a relatively few people were ever going to become Knights – there were other ages at which lesser mortals were regarded as old enough to assume certain responsibilities – but Knights were, of course, *important* so it gradually became the standard age at which *men* came of age. This seems to have been the general practice until the year 1969 when the voting age was lowered to eighteen. Then, again, *women* seemed to come of age at eighteen much earlier than that. I guess they were just more sensible than men and better able to cope with responsibility. The whole issue is far too complex for us to attempt any meaningful summary here – even Google is confused by it all!

But! The important thing is that we needed a special article to mark the occasion and we are particularly fortunate in having received one from Chris Soar – not, this time, about odd words but about vintage cars and, as we shall see, he has some considerable experience in this regard. So, without further ado, here it is:

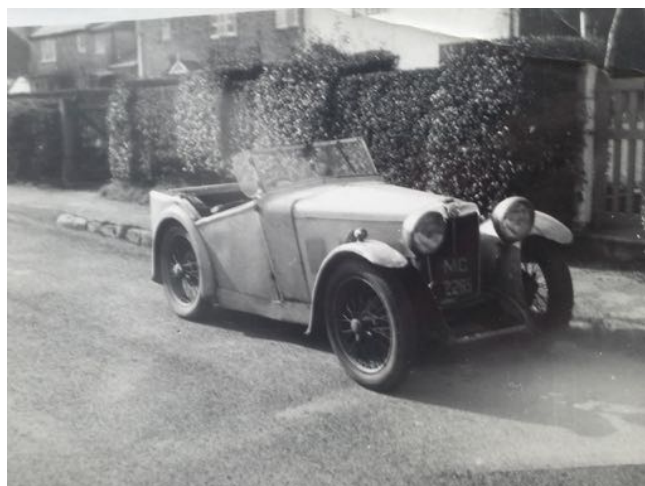
Cars and Coincidence.

When I was a teenager in the early sixties, most of the lads in the village (Attenborough) were interested in old cars. In those days, one had only to look in the Exchange & Mart to see many pre- and immediately post-war cars for sale.

My first car, a 1933 Morris 10 (VO 9303), was bought, for £5, from a chap in the village. My eldest brother taught me to drive in it, and 3 weeks after passing my test, I drove it down to Dorset.



My next car (£10) was an MG J2 (MG 2285)





and after that a Morris 8 Tourer (BOT 765) which cost me the upgraded price of £15.

However, a friend had an Austin 7 and I wanted one, but there were none about. Then, whilst in London taking my exams, I stayed with my Aunt and Uncle in Ruislip. I was browsing through the Exchange & Mart one day when I came across an advert for an Austin 7 for £25 at Northolt, which was only a few miles away. My cousin drove me there and I agreed a price of £5! Next day we collected it and on the way back home, the tow rope (my Aunt's old washing line) snapped, on a roundabout, and we had to drive the rest of the way using my Nottingham University scarf, which meant we were almost bumper-to-bumper.

I drove home to Nottingham in that car after my exams were over, and on a chilly and rainy Easter break I drove over to Southwold in Suffolk - quite a long journey even today in a modern car!

Her registration was ANA 615, so she was obviously known as Anna -



the only car I have ever named.

I qualified, got married, and bought a modern car (a Sunbeam Rapier).

My first house was a cottage with a small back garden. Anna was under sheets in the garden. I had no time to use or maintain her, so she had to go, and I sold her for £25.



In 1969 I moved to Radcliffe on Trent and the following year I bought a 1951 Bentley Mk VI, which I had for 47 years. During subsequent years at country shows, classic car events, and other places, I always looked for Austin 7s, but never saw one of the same model as Anna.

In September 2016 I made the decision to sell the Bentley. I had not the skill to restore it, and professional restoration would be more than the car was worth. I sold it through

Brightwells classic car auctions. Following that sale, they continually sent me emails with details of future sales on the basis that either I had lots more to sell or wanted to replace what I had sold.

I used to delete them, but, in Summer 2017 I had time to open one of their online brochures for a sale at Bicester, but it was 3 or 4 weeks after the sale so the details were not there, However, there was another sale in September in Leominster where I had sold the Bentley.

I opened the brochure to see if any other Mk VI Bentleys were for sale and what the sale expected price was, and then went on to check Austin 7s.

Blow me, but there was of the same model as Anna. I opened up the details - and it WAS Anna!

This was more than a coincidence! This was fate!

Obviously, I had to buy her - and so I did (for considerably more than £25!) – exactly 50 years after I had sold her.

Although my daughter had expressly forbidden me to get carried away and buy another old car, all the family loves her, so hopefully she will stay in my family for years to come.

The wonderful outcome of all this is that the Real Ale Group has been privileged to witness Chris driving into Orchard Cottage in ANA so, of course we took a photograph of her and here it is showing how carefully we keep two metres apart. Thanks to Michael O'Connor for the photo.



Finally, I can't resist adding a snatch of 'Verse and Worse' which seems appropriate:

The Children of Israel wanted bread
The Lord he sent them manna
But this good man he wanted a car
And Providence sent him Anna.

I've altered it only very slightly to make it fit!

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The Real Ale Group

Five of us had a very pleasant lunch on Friday.

As predicted, the bus was nearly empty, and we sat separately with our masks on.

It was a warm day, as you know, and we debated (for all of 10 seconds) whether to take a table outside.

Inside won, and we had a table next to wide open "French" doors opening onto a terrace- very comfortable, with a gentle breeze.

We had all agreed that, despite what the bar staff had originally insisted, we have had no evidence of a change in the stance of a maximum of 6 per table.*

Our table could seat 8, and a couple of metres away was another similar sized table within easy talking distance, so we could legally, and sensibly, have accommodated a 100% turn out.

There were 3 cask ales: The first was Marstons' Pedigree. Now, this is normally a safe bet, but it really wasn't very good, and only received a total of 25 points.

The next one was Wainwright's, much more refreshing, and, apart from Alan taking over John H's stance over light, vaguely citrusy ales and scoring it 3, it achieved a score of 31.

(Well done? You've calculated that the rest of us each awarded it a 7!)

The final beer was Hobgoblin, which achieved a winning score of 33. It was very pleasant, and we had it again as our 4th and final half.

4th September should be our next meeting. No decision was taken but it was mooted that we should either go to The Test Match or to The Embankment.

However, let's see what the next month brings!

Cheers.

Chris

P.S. *Whilst at the bar, ordering, I spoke to whom appeared to be the Manager, and asked him if it was still 6 per table. He said yes, it was, but they could take a booking of up to 11 people, seating them at 2 tables. I said "But you took a booking of 9 people on a table for 10!" He seemed to lose interest in my questioning at this point, and I didn't press the matter – I wanted us to get served!

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But Did You Know?

Not all was well in Downing Street! Rumours have been circulating for some time, now but clarification was still lacking until very recently. It appears that certain catty exchanges had been



occurring for as much as two-to-three years between the respective representatives of Number Ten and the Foreign Office – all very much behind closed doors, of course – it would hardly be politic to allow such simmering ill-feeling between these important departments to become public knowledge. Documentary evidence is scanty but the use of an extended claws here and there suggests that we might well pause for thought before dismissing the matter as just another inter-departmental cat-astrophe.

However, in spite of all efforts to maintain outward calm, the sad truth has finally come to light and one of the combatants has had to accept defeat. Palmerston, the black-and-white representative of Foreign Affairs has been obliged to retire to the countryside, leaving tortoiseshell Larry, his opposite number at Number Ten, in total control of the whole Street. How long this idyllic state of



affairs can last is anyone's guess, feline feelings being as sensitive as they undoubtedly are but Larry is obviously enjoying his victory – did you ever see such a self-satisfied moggy as this? Poor Palmerston deserves our sympathies – we can only hope that he settles down to a rewarding life in the country, where he will be able to entertain the local cattery with tales of political intrigue, (possibly slightly exaggerated?), culled from his years in charge at the Foreign Office.



Pi in the Sky

We have no puzzles for you this week – after all, I assume that you are all still battling with the challenge of how to calculate Pi to ten significant figures and that must surely take a week or two so it would be grossly unfair to burden you with the distraction of another quiz. But, whatever you do, don't allow all this to drive you to distraction – like the man who went all the way to Paris simply to drown himself in the river there – but he was in Seine.

What we do have for you, though, is a delightful short story about one particular Mother/Son relationship:

The Missing Silver Plate

Mum had wondered for some time whether her son had developed a 'relationship' with his college roommate, a very attractive young lady. She is therefore more than a little interested when invited to have dinner with the two of them one evening.

During the course of the meal she couldn't help noticing that there was something more in their relationship than one might expect from a couple of casual roommates and her suspicions were thereby further stimulated. However, her son had obviously read his mother's thoughts and quietly assured her that there really was nothing between them other than that they were roommates.

About a week later, the girl came to him and said "Ever since your mother came to dinner, I've been unable to find the silver plate. You don't suppose that she could have taken it, do you?" To which he replied "Well, I very much doubt it but I'll e-mail her and ask her"

This is what he wrote:

Dear Mum,

After your visit to me the other week, the silver plate has been missing. Now, I'm not saying that you did take the silver plate from my house and I'm not saying that you didn't take it but the fact remains that it has been missing ever since you were here for dinner.

Love,

Your Son.

A few days later, he received an e-mail in reply from his mother, which read:

Dear Son,

I'm not saying that you do sleep with your roommate and I'm not saying that you don't sleep with her but the fact remains that, if she was sleeping in her OWN bed, she would have found the silver plate by now, under her pillow.

Love,

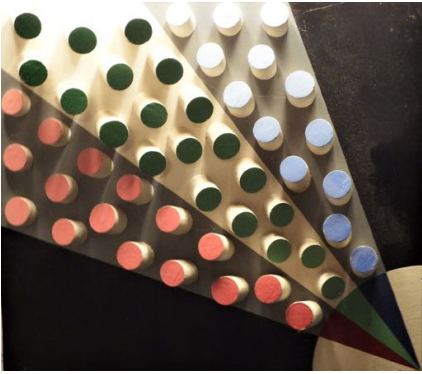
Mum

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The art of being a mother perfected? And, talking of Art, reminds me:

Art

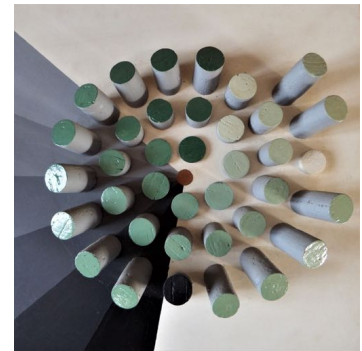
We are not blessed with examples of U3A artistry, this week so you must be prepared to put up with me again. Many years ago (and I can't for the life of me remember how it happened) I found myself in possession of a large quantity of wine-bottle corks! It seemed something of a shame just to throw them all away so I came to the conclusion that they could be put to artistic use – they could, indeed, be used to make 'cork pictures'. All that were needed were a few tins of brightly coloured enamel paint, a sharp knife (or fine hacksaw blade), a tube of glue and one or two reasonably flat boards on which to mount the emerging artistic wonders and, hey presto, Picasso watch out!.



You may be amused to know that I must have spent many (reasonably) happy hours perfecting my technique and producing corking good cork pictures and, what is more, persuading some good friends that these were ideal decoration for their ‘second home’ down in Devon. What is even more remarkable is the realisation that these friends are still good friends – they certainly showed unbelievable good taste in the art of personal relationship, while still retaining their undoubted good artistic taste. So far as I know, they no longer possess any of these remarkable essays in artistic bravura and even their

producer has to admit to owning no more than two, both of which are presently hanging in our small cellar, rather than featuring in any more demanding location. This, I should say, is the result of my wife, Joyce also having excellent artistic taste!

Anyway, I have taken the risk of photographing them both in order to fill a corner of this Weekly Letter, so here they are for you to drool over. I should, perhaps, explain that the second one is intended to represent one of those early circular RADAR scans and (as did happen in those early days) it has a couple of defects in it – the imperfection is not, I should emphasise, the result of my own incompetence in ‘cork technology’!



Finally, I might present you with yet another artistic challenge – think of a good use for the millions of screw caps which have now replaced the good old-fashioned cork!

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Creative Writing

And now we come to the ever-welcome Creative Writing Group contribution. Thanks once again to them for continuing support. This week it comprises a double challenge – to write an article containing the words: Kitten, Theft, Roller skates, Umbrella, while also including a mystery associated with the famous Belgian detective Hercule Poirot. This one is by Heather Lea.

TWO TALES

HEATHER LEA

So, my friends, you may be wondering where I, Hercule Poirot, am at this present moment. You may perhaps, be thinking I am on a luxury Cruise Liner or on the Orient Express.



Well, no, I am in Bolton, England. I have been here for two weeks visiting my aunt, Mrs Melanie Morgan. She was the wife of the brother of my mother. She came to live in Bolton when she married an absolute bounder of a man after my Uncle died. He owned, very bizarrely a Roller-Skating Rink. It is called The Nevada.

My aunt has made me very comfortable. I have enjoyed lots of ze local delicacies – I particularly like ze Bury Black pudding, ze Yorkshire pudding and ze Eccles cakes.

My aunt's bounder of a husband is called John. Monsieur John Morgan. Each evening before our evening meal he insists I join him for a small libation at a "pub" by the name of "The Boot and Shoe" (I know not why it has that name). I have become rather partial to a glass of "beer". I think my host orders "half a bitter" for me. Sometimes we have a packet of ze pork scratchings or a pickled egg from a big jar on the bar ... so strange.

The only problem with going to the "pub" is the rain – it has rained every day in Bolton since I arrived and I have to take my umbrella everywhere with me.

Captain Hastings has also joined me in Bolton now. He was on a Clay Pigeon Shooting holiday in Yorkshire so dropped in to see me for a few days on his way back home.

Anyway, mon ami, I digress.

I am here to tell you about what happened ze other day when my Aunt's husband took me to his Roller Skating Rink. Mr Morgan suggested that I might like to have, as you say, "a spin around the rink". He produced a set of roller skates and tried to get me to put them on. For me, this was not something I was going to do. Luckily, Captain Hastings had joined us at the Roller Rink and he was happy to have a trip on the skating rink.

For myself, I went upstairs to ze Bar where I could observe Mr Hastings making "a fool" of himself on the roller skates. I sat down with a gin and tonic and was relaxing when Mr Morgan came in to the bar shouting, as you say, "Blue Murder". I could not understand what he was saying - he has the strong Bolton accent - it is a bit "ruff". Aha my ears detected a word "THEFT". "What has been stolen?" I asked.

Mr Morgan began to speak more slowly and, at last, I could understand him “It is a kitten, a little black kitten” he said. It belongs to Miss Kitty Forbes, she is a dancer at the Music Hall next door to here.

“What was the kitten that is belonging to Mademoiselle Forbes doing in the Roller Skating Rink” I asked.

At this Mr Morgan looked very, what is the word, “shifty”. “I have no idea” he said “I was working in my office and I was waiting for my dear wife to arrive to take me for lunch. Kitty, I mean... Miss Forbes! telephoned me to say her kitten had been stolen and the thief had run into the Roller Skating Rink. So I told my wife to wait in her car and came running out to find the thief”.

By this time my dear Aunt, wondering what the delay was, had come into the Rink and was listening to her husband’s explanation of what was happening. My aunt asked me if I could help with this issue and see if I could uncover the thief.

Now, certainment, my little grey cells were working. I remembered the roller skate attendant telling me that Mr Morgan had a visitor that morning - a lady.

“I think I can help my dear Aunt, but first I have to retrieve Captain Hastings from the Roller Rink.”.

Captain Hastings looked rather dishevelled although he said “that was jolly good fun”.

“Now” I said “We do not have to look much further, I think we will find the thief and the kitten very soon. Follow me”.

I took Mr and Mrs Morgan and Captain Hastings to a bin at the edge of the skating rink .. it was quite a big bin. Captain Hastings went straight to lift the lid on the bin.

“No, No, No” I said “Please leave this for me” I said. “What I am going to reveal may surprise and even shock you. It may occur to you that I am eccentric, perhaps a little mad when I say I am going to reveal not one kitten but two – one kitten is much bigger than the other and one kitten is the thief of the other. You may say the little Belgian detective has, how you say, “gone off his rocker”.. But “eh voila” I said as I lifted the lid on the bin “here we have it. One little black kitty and another big kitty.... Miss Kitty Forbes”.

“As you can see, my beloved Aunt, there has been no theft. Miss Forbes was in your husband’s office with her kitten. It would appear she was in a rush and a state of undress when she fled from the office, as you arrived, taking the kitten with her and found refuge in this bin. I noticed the bin was moving when I was watching Captain Hastings on the roller rink”.

“ I surmise Mr Morgan and Miss Forbes have been, as you say “having it away” and I have “killed the two birds with the same stone” or uncovered the two kitties. I am so sorry my beautiful Aunt”.

So now, some days have passed and Mr Morgan has run off with Miss Forbes and her kitten!

Myself and Captain Hastings are staying in Bolton with my Aunt to help her recover and take control of the Roller Skating Rink as she now owns it.

I am continuing to enjoy the local delicacies Bolton has to offer while Captain Hastings is continuing to learn how to Roller Skate.

Finally

Did you hear the one about the Buddhist who refused Novocaine during a root canal? His goal: 'Transcendental medication'.

Enjoy the warm weather but keep safe. See you next week

John

PS It would surely be a serious mistake to reach our twenty-first edition without including a limerick, so here it is – straight from the editor's mouth:

It's easy enough to be twenty
An age reached by people a-plenty
But one digit more
Is a bit of a bore
For one loses one's youth, innocently.