



# Cotgrave and District U3A

## Keeping in Touch 22

### Recollections on the Austin A7

A number of you commented favourably on Chris Soar's article in last week's Letter. In particular, Judy Lindsell tells me she learned to drive in an A7 at the tender age of 12! She and her elder sister were brought up on a farm and were both competent tractor drivers when her sister began learning to drive officially. They drove the A7 round several fields and Judy acquired the essential skill of 'double-de-clutching' at an age when most of us were still learning to tie shoe-laces.



My own experience with the A7 dates from the time when Joyce and I were first acquiring a mutual appreciation of the opposite sex. Her father owned one and, being a keen fisherman, he took me on a men's camping weekend in the Yorkshire Dales. His idea was that the fish were more likely to bite during the hours of darkness and I shall never forget the freezing experience of sitting up half the night on the bank of some tiny tributary of the Wharfe river, while

trying to control a distinctly wobbly fishing line. Needless to say, we neither of us had a single bite all night! But the drive home was indeed a pleasure! And, by the time I learned to drive, double-de-clutching was a thing of the past.

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### When did Gas and Electricity Come to Cotgrave?

We all take very much for-granted the reliable presence of piped water, gas and electricity in our modern homes but it is interesting to recall times when the people of Cotgrave managed remarkably well without such facilities. We noticed in an earlier Letter that stand-pipes were a feature of OS maps as late as 1950. As we commented then, the coming of the mine really stirred things up in the village – literally, as well as figuratively.



So, if piped water arrived only in the 1950s, what of gas and electricity? The former we do know about by way of a lengthy newspaper article written by William Lewin in 1938. In this he describes the layout of houses throughout the village in some detail, referring to a particular dwelling in Baker's Hollow which had been occupied by the person (un-named!) responsible for introducing the first gas supply to the village '64 years ago'. This implies that gas arrived in 1874, a conclusion consistent with a number of entries in local Trade Directories. Thus, in 1876 there is no mention of gas, while in 1879 we read: 'Gas supplied from Nottingham Corporation' and in 1885/6 'Village lighted by gas from Nottingham'. It apparently took about ten years for gas lighting to become a standard feature of village life.

To set this in context, we note that the first use of gas lighting appears to have been in 1792 when an engineer, William Murdoch, working for Mathew Boulton and James Watt installed gas lighting in his house in Cornwall. Then in 1798 he lit the Soho factory so that employees could see to work longer hours!. By about 1820 gas lighting had become widespread, including its use in theatres where gas footlights represented an exciting hazard to performers' clothing, particularly long skirts!



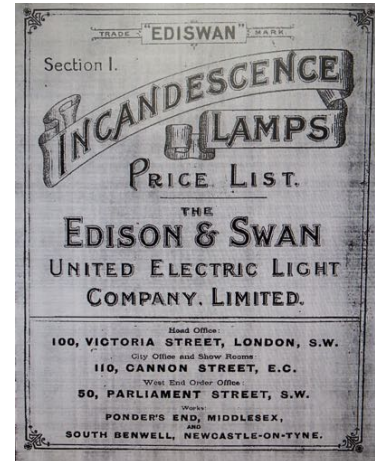
It must have made a tremendous improvement, the difference between the light provided by oil lamps and gas lamps being considerable. It meant much easier reading conditions, for instance, thus stimulating greater literacy, even in a rural village like Cotgrave. However, the really important breakthrough came in 1891 when an Austrian chemist, Carl Auer von Welsbach invented the gas mantle, a silken cloth impregnated with rare-earth oxides, which emitted intense white light when heated in a gas flame. I myself, can well remember this gas-mantle light which still illuminated the house where my mother grew up, near Huddersfield, though that was in the 1930/40s – I can't claim to remember very much about the 1890s!

With regard to electricity, we have rather less information. The Cotgrave entry in the Kelly Trade Directory for 1941 tells us that 'Gas and Electricity are available'. When it first happened we simply do not know! Can anyone help?

The history of electric lighting is, in itself, of interest. Members may remember that we enjoyed a talk by Colin Groves (way back in the days when talks were possible) on ‘William George Armstrong at Cragside’ which included a description of the first use of electric lighting. Newcastle-born, Armstrong made a fortune from his munitions factory, Armstrong-Whitworth (later Vickers-Armstrong) and built the house at Cragside in Northumberland where, in 1878, he built a hydro-electric system to power arc lamps. (The arc lamp was invented by Humphrey Davy in 1806).



However, it was the invention of the filament lamp that really stimulated the wider application of electric lighting and Joseph Swan of Sunderland could probably claim precedence for this in 1879. Thomas Edison, the American inventor, tried to claim responsibility but had to admit Swan’s priority and together they formed the Edison and Swan Electric Light Company Company in 1883 to promulgate filament bulb lighting.



By about 1911 the filament bulb had been perfected and in 1926 the Electricity (Supply) Act was passed, leading to the establishment of the National Grid. It was presumably only after this that electricity could be distributed around villages such as Cotgrave but that still leaves a gap of fifteen years within which electricity could have been introduced into our village.

Finally, by way of a footnote, we are all too prone to see life in ‘Western’ terms, ignoring the contributions from the ‘East’. How many of us knew that a Russian engineer Pavel Yablochkov independently invented an arc lamp and demonstrated an impressive display of electric lighting at the Paris exhibition of 1878 – the very same year that Armstrong introduced the arc lamp to Cragside? (I have to be honest and admit that it was this week when I first made the discovery.)



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## **CoVID-19 – the latest news**

In an earlier Letter, we presented an account of the CoVID-19 virus by a Beeston friend, Bill Pavlidis, who has spent much of his working life studying viral infections. He is co-leader of the Beeston U3A Science Group and came to Cotgrave to talk to our Science Group about research into AIDS. He is a good friend of mine, so I know he will not object to my copying an article he recently wrote for the Beeston U3A Bulletin. Here it is:

### **CoVID-19 Is there a Second Wave on the Way?**

All the available evidence so far suggests that in some countries there is a second wave of the pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2. In some countries, such as the USA and Brazil, they are still experiencing the first wave. There are many reasons for experiencing both phenomena at the same time.

#### **The primary reasons for a second wave pandemic are:**

- (a) The virus mutates, that is part of the genetic code and/or the surface proteins (spikes) on the virus changes, which can make it more virulent, or less virulent. This virus has already undergone nearly 9,000 mutations, most of which have, so far, proved to be harmless, apart from one. A change in an important protein on the surface of the virus, which is responsible for the attachment of the virus to human cells, has enabled the virus to be more easily transmittable between people. This new mutant is now responsible for more than 97% of all the global infections.
- (b) People become complacent and, after a long period of lockdown, throw caution to the wind and do not follow the social distancing necessary. We all saw the crowded beaches around the country this summer! We are also beginning to see the ‘generation gap’ arguments, young people expressing dismay at having to obey social distancing rules, when the danger to them from the virus is almost negligible.
- (c) There is no effective vaccine or other medicines to stop the spread of the virus. The vaccine announced by Russia on August 11<sup>th</sup> has not been tried on enough people to yield meaningful data yet. The only two drug therapies so far, Dexamethasone (anti-inflammatory) and Remdesivir (reductions in severe symptoms by a few days) are not stopping the spread of the virus.

#### **So what is likely to happen this winter?**

- (a) As the seasons change, the environmental changes have a large impact on the virus. Scientists know that viruses prefer cold, humid environments in order to thrive, 4<sup>o</sup>C (40<sup>o</sup>F) is their preferred temperature range.
- (b) There is far less UV (ultra-violet) light in the winter, which normally deactivates the virus.
- (c) Humans gather indoors, giving the virus more opportunities to spread. We also keep the windows in our houses shut, hence less ventilation to disperse the virus. Scientists estimate that the R number (the number of people each infected person passes the virus onto) could rise up to 1.7, from its current value of about 1.0.

**What might happen when SARS-CoV-2 comes into contact with all the other flu viruses in circulation in the winter?**

- (a) The big fear is that we might be hit by a double whammy of a really bad flu season and a second wave of corona virus. Interestingly though, some studies have shown that one viral infection can prevent another one from getting spread in a population. For example, a large influenza rhinovirus outbreak may well have delayed the 2009 swine flu pandemic in Europe. The general immune response to one infection might prevent the next one from getting in. Studies have shown that the general influenza virus is very rarely seen in mixed infections, so there might not be much SARS-CoV-2 and influenza co-infection.

**So the advice scientists can give us for the next few months is:**

- (a) Make certain that we get the normal flu vaccine which will be offered to us in the autumn. The Health Authorities are planning a massive increase in vaccination, anyone over fifty will be offered the vaccine.
- (b) We should be prepared for a second wave of the viral infections in the winter. We should not let up in terms of social distancing, mask wearing and hand hygiene.
- (c) At the first sign of symptoms (high temperature sore throat, cough) seek medical advice. All the other corona viruses in the mix of seasonal flu share similar symptoms with SARS-CoV-2. Hopefully, by the time winter arrives, diagnostic tests to distinguish between the different corona viruses in circulation will be in place, and genuine cases of SARS-CoV-2 could be identified.

**Dr Bill Pavlidis 12-08-2020**

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**Puzzle Corner**

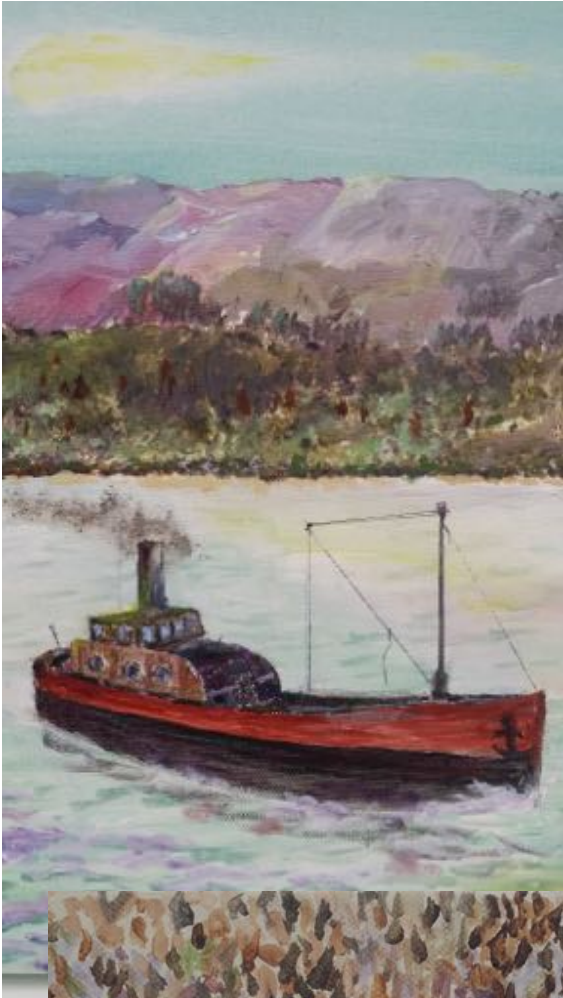
Thanks to Peter Shreyhane for these questions – happy questing!

1. Which is the largest cat?
2. What is the national flower of Wales?
3. What is the most expensive property on the Monopoly Board?
4. Which is the only mammal that can fly?
5. Which soft drink is often associated with Scotland?
6. Which year was the Chernobyl disaster?
7. Which of Snowwhite’s dwarfs doesn’t have a beard?
8. Who was leader of the Labour Party before Jeremy Corbyn?
9. Who is older Tony Blair or Theresa May?
10. In which UK city was the Animals Pop Group formed?

*Answers in next week’s Newsletter*

## The Art Group

My thanks go to Sue Tunnicliffe for stimulating her Group to flood me with examples of their work – I am now in a position to be choosy and these are my choices for this week, two from Carol Harris and two from Mike Smith – enjoy them.



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## **Eco News and Trust U3A**

Once again we are happy to oblige Brenda Ainsley by publishing the following bits of news:

### **Plastic Free Cotgrave**

The website is now live: <https://www.plasticfreecotgrave.org.uk/>

Find out more about how to reduce single-use plastics.

There are now 698 plastic free communities in the UK - and rising. Cotgrave is one of them!

All of them are as worried as we are that 8,000,000 pieces of plastic pollution find their way into the oceans every day and that there are around 5,000 pieces of marine plastic per MILE of beach in the UK.

It isn't about completely removing all plastic from our lives - some of us found out just how impossible that is, during 'Plastic Free July!' It's about kicking our addiction to avoidable, single-use plastic and changing the system that produces it.

### **Trust U3A – online groups and activities for existing members and people who have joined Trust U3A**

Most of the groups have spaces available.

For full details of all the groups visit: <https://u3asites.org.uk/trustu3a/groups>

There are all sorts of groups, including Art Appreciation, Shakespeare, Spanish and Fun with Maths

There are talks:

Law for Fun: A series of monthly talks (via Zoom) by John Dilworth:

*Tuesday August 25th at 10am:* John will take us through the principal articles of the European Convention on Human Rights and will attempt to put right some common misconceptions".

*September Tuesday 22nd at 10am:* 'Undercover Policing', a two hour session (with break). This talk will explore the law as it governs such policing".

*Friday 11th September:* Ancient Egypt: A series of monthly (Zoom) talks by Neil Stevenson at 2pm: Burial Practices 1 - Pyramids

Courses and additional activities: Drawing Workshop (via Zoom) - Tutor: David Byrne

The David Livingstone Birthplace Project - a free online talk.

At the same time, Peter Shreyhane has drawn our attention to an important announcement from the West Bridgford authorities responsible for the WB Recycling Centre. If any readers make use of this particular facility, please note the new arrangements.

*Message from County Councillor Gordon Wheeler relating to the West Bridgford Recycling centre.*

The West Bridgford recycling centre will be accepting pre booked vehicles only from 1 September 2020. Pre booked 15-minute time slots will start at 8:15am and run until 7:45pm every day during the summer opening hours, with five vehicles allowed on site at any one time. Signage advising users of the West Bridgford Recycling Centre will soon be displayed by the entrance to the site to give everyone advance notice of the changes. It is essential that Rushcliffe residents who have not registered a vehicle, do so as soon as possible, through the Nottinghamshire County Council web site (use the search facility by entering 'registering a vehicle for recycling sites').

Residents must already be registered to use Nottinghamshire County Council's recycling centres, booking a slot will be easy through the Councils online portal using your existing details. Slots will be bookable two weeks in advance, but we request residents do not make multiple bookings, and use other sites where they need to visit more than once in any two-week period.

Only the West Bridgford recycling centre will need to be pre booked, and residents can carry on using any of the Council's 11 other sites without an appointment. Those sites are currently open 8.00am to 8.00pm seven days a week.

Slots at West Bridgford must be booked 24 hours in advance, so no same day slots will be available. Without an electronic or paper copy of your emailed booking receipt you will not be allowed access to site.

The difficulties caused for local residents around the West Bridgford Recycling Centre is unacceptable. I have been working alongside Nottinghamshire County Council officers and elected County Councillors to bring in a booking system with the need for pre registration of vehicles. It has taken a while to get there, for which I apologise. My thanks and appreciation to the residents who have contacted me on this issue. And I must acknowledge the co-operation from local elected Councillors of all political parties.

Kind Regards

County Councillor Gordon Wheeler

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## Creative Writing Group

And now the bit that you have all been waiting for – yet another contribution from our creative writers. This time it's from Sue Hillyard but once more on the theme of the Poirot mystery.

### A Poirot Story (apologies to Agatha Christie)

Susan Hillyard : 27 July 2020

Hercule Poirot adjusted his bow tie and, with one final and critical look in the mirror and an almost military nod of approval, left his room and went down to dinner.

He had been delighted when, back in November, he had received the invitation to spend the new year at Brookhouse Hall with Lord and Lady Dawbury. His pleasure was further enhanced when he learnt that his good friend, Captain Hastings, was also to be there.

Poirot descended the sweeping stairs as smoothly as a swan gliding to halt on a becalmed lake and was guided into the drawing room by Wilson, the rather obsequious but nevertheless highly efficient butler.

The party had started to assemble. Lady Dawbury looked resplendent in a highly decorative and bejewelled gown and it was she who beckoned Poirot over.

"Monsieur Poirot," she said in her cut glass accent, "Do come and meet our daughter."

She took Poirot's arm and led him across the room to a rather attractive late-twenties beauty who was deep in conversation with a handsome and dashing army officer.

"Amelia, darling, this is Monsieur Hercule Poirot, the very clever and famous detective I was telling you about. Monsieur Poirot, this is my daughter, Amelia, and her husband, Major Charles Hawksworth."

The usual pleasantries followed, including a brief interlude regarding the imminent birth of their first child and, as was generally the case, Poirot explaining his Belgian, not French, heritage. They were mid conversation when Captain Hastings joined them and the chat rather quickly turned to various aspects of army life. This gave Poirot the opportunity to quietly scan the finely furnished room in slightly more detail than when he had first entered.

There were 10 people altogether and Poirot studied each one as they were called in to dinner and seated at an immaculate table laid with the highest quality silver, crockery and glassware.

There was Lord and Lady Dawbury, their daughter and son-in-law who had travelled across country from Colchester, Hastings and himself, and Chief Inspector Peter Hartley, who headed up the Oxfordshire Police, and his brother, The Reverend Arthur Hartley. Both seemed to be upright and amiable fellows, very relaxed and happy to be spending New Year's Eve 1935 with the jovial and welcoming company. The final couple were Lady Dawbury's sister, Margaret, and her husband James Holroyd - Arch Chancellor of Oxford University just 6 miles away.



The conversation flowed around the table as freely as the excellent food and wine - their hosts being generous with both their time and their hospitality. The good natured chatter ebbed and flowed between various parties until, inevitably, the usual call went out.

"Poirot, we all know you have an international reputation. Be a good fellow and give us an account of one of your amazing detections." This came from Lord Dawbury.

"Oh no, no, no, I couldn't possibly," demurred Poirot, his soft Belgian accent apparent. He curled one end of his immaculate moustache and raised an eyebrow across the table to Hastings. "So much of my work it is far too distressing for ze delicate ears of ze ladies at ze table."

Margaret Holroyd blushed a little but Lady Amelia laughed and said, "I can assure you, Monsieur Poirot, that, despite my condition, I have the constitution of a horse!" There was general and polite laughter around the table which was interrupted by Chief Inspector Peter Hartley

"Oh, come on, Poirot. We'd all love to hear about one of your exploits. It might be a good opportunity for you to test my own powers of deduction." There was no ill intent or ego in his encouragement, simply one professional recognising the other.

"Very well, mes amis," said Poirot, taking centre stage. "Of course I cannot share many of ze highly confidential cases with which I am entrusted. However (he held up a perfectly manicured right index finger), perhaps if I tell you of a recent incident you, yourselves, might like to turn detective for ze evening."

A buzz of excitement hummed around the table and Poirot caught snatches of the conversations. "What can he mean?", "I do hope this won't be gruesome." "What a sport - good man!"

Poirot stood up and waited until his fellow diners focused their attention back onto him. He then laid out some rules.

"My fellow detectives" he started, and there again was the buzz of excitement, "Ze event I am about to tell you it is true. Once I have finished speaking you cannot to ask me for more information. You can, however, ask my good friend, Hastings."

Hastings looked rather startled as Poirot carried on speaking slowly and precisely.

"You can each to ask Hastings just one question - no more zan zat. Please to consider your question very carefully before you ask it. Also, for ze purposes of zis little exercise, I am afraid zat Captain Hastings' vocabulary is limited only to ze two words, 'Oui' et 'non', 'Yes' and 'no'. Do you agree with my terms?"

Poirot smiled congenially as everyone promised their commitment to his demands.

"Very well. This is the incident of which I will relate...please do not to ask me to speak again until after you have all questioned Hastings."

"Last Thursday evening at 8.15 precisely," Poirot began, emphasising each word, "Hastings and I witnessed an event ze like of which we have never seen before. I will advise again that you remember to choose your questions very carefully when you interrogate Hastings. Alors, here we are zen, I will tell you now of ze peculiar incident. We witnessed a man slowly pushing along his car. He finally stopped outside a small hotel.

Ze owner of ze hotel spoke to him and ze man with the car handed over some money. Zen, we both saw this, ze man with the car waited for two minutes exactly then he quietly pushed ze car away while the owner of ze hotel watched him. You, my fellow detectives, have to discover ze purpose of, or reason for, zis incident....I, Hercule Poirot, shall say no more."

Poirot sat back down and watched as his hosts and fellow guests started to consider their questions.

"Can't we have more than one question each, dear Monsieur Poirot?" Amelia reached across and touched his sleeve. Poirot gave her an enigmatic smile but said nothing.

Amelia turned to Captain Hastings, "Will you allow me two questions?" she asked.

Hastings looked her in the eye and said "No," and held up the thumb on his right hand.

"Oh, bad luck, darling, I think that's your question over and done with rather quickly," said her husband, giving her hand a gentle squeeze.

"I have a question for you, Hastings." Lord Dawbury tapped his glass for attention. "Was the car very, very old?"

Hastings replied, "No, in fact it was bran.... oh, sorry Poirot....erm... the answer to your question, sir, is 'No'." He held up the index finger of his right hand.

The hubbub around the table started again until, rather abruptly, James Holroyd said, "Tell me Hastings, was the blasted fellow drunk?"

Hastings replied "No!" and raised the middle finger of his right hand.

"We must be more careful now," said Chief Inspector Hartley urgently. "We only have 5 questions left."

"Where were you at the time?" This was asked in a quiet voice by the inspector's brother, Arthur.

Hastings did not reply but merely raised an eyebrow.

"Oh, I see....let me re-phrase the question. Were you in London at the time?"

"Yes," came the reply with a fourth digit being raised.

"Let's re-cap on what we know," said Lady Dawbury. "The car was new (sorry, Hastings, you did rather let the cat out of the bag!), they were in London, and the man wasn't drunk. We must find out more than that! Captain Hastings, had the man ever been to the hotel before, or stayed there? Oh, sorry, that's two questions, please do excuse me."

Hastings shook his head twice and said, "No, and no." Then he whispered conspiratorially, "I will give you the second question as this port of yours is so excellent." He raised the little finger on his right hand then replaced his hand onto the table.

He lifted his left hand with three fingers raised to represent the three remaining questions.

Margaret Holroyd was next to ask her question. "Did the two men have any sort of conversation?"

Hastings lowered one finger. "Yes," he answered.

The Major and the Chief Inspector were the only two with their questions yet to be asked. Poirot wasn't the least surprised when the Chief Inspector turned to him.

"You, sir, are withholding vital evidence. We need to know what was said between the two gentlemen. Surely, it would only be right for you to tell us what was said?" Again, there was no malice - the game was being played in good spirits.

"Very well, I will tell you what was spoken." Poirot cast his eyes around the table.

"Ze hotel owner rubbed his hands together, comme ce, and demanded ze money. Ze other gentlemen said 'You scoundrel, you have almost bankrupted me. I shall get my own back.'"

"This is preposterous," exclaimed Major Hawksworth turning quickly towards Hastings. "Did you actually see the money?"

Another finger was lowered accompanied by the single word, "Yes." Only the thumb remained.

All eyes turned to the Chief Inspector who gave Poirot a long hard stare before forming the final question.

"Captain Hastings, I have listened carefully to the questions and to your answers. I can offer two explanations to solve this incident. First, the car was paid as part of a gambling debt of some sort and it's new owner couldn't drive or, second, the driver's car had broken down or had run out of petrol and he was being charged an extortionate rate to leave the car in the garage of the hotel until it could be fixed. He did, after all, call him was a scoundrel.

Here is my question....indeed, the final question. Was was car broken in some way?"

With a resigned look Hastings lowered his thumb and picked up his glass of port, raising it in turn to everyone around the table. He gave his final answer, "No!"

The table buzzed yet again. "So it must have been a gambling debt," "Why did he want to win a car he couldn't drive?" "Why wasn't he driving if it wasn't broken?" "That sort of thing wouldn't happen in Oxford I'm sure."

Poirot tapped his glass and stood up.

"My very good friends, it is not easy to be ze detective. Chief Inspector, you were wise to leave your question to ze end because you were able to use ze evidence collected by ze others. And, you were ze only one with ze determination to find out more information from me. On zat you are to be congratulated."

The Chief Inspector's chin rose imperceptibly at the praise from this distinguished detective.

"However," Poirot continued slowly as he looked around the table, "You all fell into ze trap of letting me limit you to only ze one question and, also, you let me to get away with allowing Hastings only 'yes' or 'no' replies."

He continued, "Before ze clock strikes midnight and 1935 comes to an end, I will now ask Hastings to give you all a full explanation of exactly what took place zat night." He sat down.

"As you may or may not know, Poirot and I have played Bridge as regular partners for several years. This year, for Christmas, I gave Poirot a present," said Hastings.

"Something new and very different. This year, 1935, an original and very addictive game has been developed....it is a new board game called Monopoly. The players take turns to buy London properties on which they can place small houses and hotels. Poirot had an hotel on Park Lane and my playing piece was a tiny toy car which, when I rolled the die, I pushed onto his property. He demanded the relevant price for landing on his square, which I paid him. And then, of course, when it was my next turn to play, I pushed the little car away. I berated him as a scoundrel but he insisted on taking virtually all of my money."

His audience noisily burst forth with applause and more questions and observations. Poirot's intelligent eyes twinkled as he quietly and enigmatically smiled and twirled the ends of his precisely combed, waxed and curled moustache.

Eventually he stood up once again and he gained the attention of the others.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said. "Let us all raise a glass to our wonderful hosts, Lord and Lady Dawbury, also to ze new year of 1936, and finally, to ze lesson we have all learned here tonight.....never, ever to play games with Hercule Poirot."

*Susan Hillyard : July 2020*

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Bear in mind what Bill Pavlidis has said – look after yourselves.

See you next week,

**John**

PS. I notice that we haven't enjoyed any light-hearted verse this week, so here is a little bit to brighten the serious nature of our discourse.

#### WHOLLY MATRIMONY

He was rich and old and she  
Was thirty-two or thirty-three.  
She gave him fifteen years to live -  
The only thing she meant to give.