



Cotgrave and District U3A

Keeping in Touch 25

Kittens

Today we celebrate our 'silver' production and how better to launch it than with this delightful photograph of Sally Bates' new kittens – aren't they gorgeous? They give us all a lift – which we certainly need in the present climate! Thank you very much, Sally – enjoy your kittens.

Rosie and Georgie

Lockdown has given all of us time to reflect on our lives. Having been pet free for many years we embarked on the journey of taking in a couple of kittens. Deciding to have rescue cats was easy, sourcing them was more problematic! However our son had been stationed in Germany and had links with a couple who were fostering for a charity Team Cat Rescue. We had to be approved and demonstrate suitable accommodation. We were advised to take two, rather than one kitten. Absolutely brilliant advice as they play and support each other so well! The fostering practice means the kittens were socialised in a family from a young age and came to us using a litter tray!

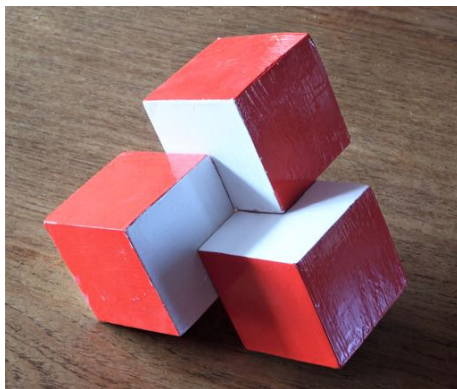
We commit to spaying and taking care of the little creatures. They are good fun and enjoy the company of humans who are able to spend time with them at home. We have had them for a few days; they eat, play, sleep and cuddle up next to us.

The charity makes a small charge but the commitment is lifelong.



The Nat West Logo

Coming down to earth again, I have to confess that I have been intrigued, ever since the final Test Match between England and Pakistan, by the Nat West logo! You may well ask why. It was the photograph of Jimmy Anderson celebrating his six hundredth Test wicket that sparked off my interest – we showed it at the end of our twenty-third Letter – revealing the fact that the English Test team are sponsored by Nat West and their logo therefore appears at large on Jimmy's sweater. Here, for your enlightenment, is a close-up photo of it. As you see, it represents a set of three cubes with white and red faces, mounted so that the three white faces are partially (actually 25%) hidden by an adjacent cube. It is, of course a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional object but our eyes have no difficulty in interpreting it thus. Just for confirmation, I went to the Nat West website and, yes, there can be no doubt about it, here is the very same logo.



Ever enthusiastic to meet a new challenge, I decided to fill in a bit of 'lockdown time' with an attempt to make a three-dimensional version of the logo so that I could see exactly what the 'real thing' would look like. It was straight-forward enough, though far from easy and, just the other day, I finally achieved my objective. Here, at last, was the 'real thing' and I was able to photograph it for you – once again a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional object but rather different from the Nat West original.

There are, of course numerous different angles from which one can photograph such an object but the one which most approximates the original is shown here and there are obvious similarities – however, when one looks carefully, there are also significant differences. The truth is that the original is a fake! It shows cube edges which are nicely lined up with one another, whereas the 'real thing' shows that, while they may be parallel, they actually lie in different planes. It is impossible to see the three white faces equally exposed to view with the lower edges aligned.

Not for a moment am I accusing Nat West of forgery – it is simply an example of the way in which our eyes and brains interpret a set of lines on a sheet of paper. Nat West are perfectly well allowed to draw an interesting shape on a piece of paper (or computer screen) – it is we who are the fakers, insisting on seeing their logo as a three-dimensional object, when it is just a set of lines on a flat plane. They may, of course, have intended that we should see it that way – I don't actually know who designed it, nor what she had in mind. At the end of the day, however, I now have an interesting three-dimensional object which looks good on our dining table – until Joyce sees it and puts it in the cellar, along with other artistic artifacts for which I have been responsible!

But there is more! My daughter drew my attention to a website which describes the history of the Nat West logo from the bank's inception in 1968 to its latest version in 2016. It is intriguing to follow the development. Nat West was formed from the amalgamation of three earlier banks, National Provincial, Westminster and District, in 1968 – hence the emphasis on THREE cubes. Originally the logo was formed from three black-and-white cubes but then it became just three black shapes, then the shapes became red, then, finally, they reverted to three red-and-white cubes. It is interesting to compare the 2014 and 2016 versions which we show in our figure. The left one is quite clearly just three red shapes, while the right one is equally clearly three cubes. In fact, the red portions in the two logos are identical – only by the addition of a few faint edges have the designers changed our comprehension to that of three cubes. Just look at it for a minute or so and you will appreciate the subtleties.



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Miles Kington

Last week, I warned you to expect an exciting piece of Limerick humour. I had just re-discovered a book by Miles Kington titled 'Best by Miles' which is a collection of a great many of Miles' short essays that had appeared in various magazines (such as 'Punch' and 'The Oldie') back in the 1980s (Miles died of cancer in 2008). He was, without doubt, a truly great humourist and Joanna Lumley was not backward in writing a forward. I was delighted to see that he did, at one point, include the limerick in his amazingly wide repertoire. More of that in a moment, but first an example of another of his favourites, Franglais:



Un Morceau Pour le Group Francais de Cotgrave U3A

(That's my bit – the rest is Miles better)

ELEGIE COMPOSEE DANS UN RURAL CHURCHYARD

PAR THOMAS GRAY

Le curfew sonne le knell du jour partant,
Un gang de vaches va homewards a la farm,
Le ploughman rentre a high tea, lentement,
Et laisse le monde a moi tranquille et calme.

La derniere trace de sunshine disparaît,
Et maintenant le soir est un peu froid,
Le weather n'est pas excellent pour May;
Je voudrais avoir un thick jersey avec moi.

Ici dans le churchyard tout est dark;
Et j'ai perdu mon dernier pencil stub.
Je ne peux plus écrire – Oh sod ca pour un lark!
Je vais immediatement au village pub.

Miles Kington 1986

Limericks by Miles

Now we come to the bit you have been waiting for. Miles wrote a brief article about a fictitious Edward Lear and an equally fictitious band of English poets including such characters as Will Wordsworth, Alf Tennyson, Kid Swinburn, Matt Arnold, Bill Thackeray and Gerry Hopkins. There was much argument between them as to whether, for instance, one could rhyme 'corral' with 'chorale' – "I can" said Lear! – but, here, we can do no more than quote a couple of limericks which figured in their discussions.

A singer from out of El Paso
Got caught up one day in a lasso.
When he finally got loose
From that darned pesky noose,
He was no longer profundo basso.

There was another argument concerning the rhyming of 'El Paso' with 'lasso'.

Then there was further discussion as to whether Lear could really write a Chinese limerick, so he came up with the following (remember that the Chinese do things backwards when they write!):

In China the limerick's wrong.
A kind of back-to-front song.
And this is the worst,
The last line came first,
So there was a young man from Hong Kong.

Lear was intent upon going even further with this promising offering:

Edward Lear jumped into his bed
Along with a dashing redhead.
He had drunk so much whisky,
That he felt rather frisky

But was called to a halt by his editor! Any offers for a final line will be cheerfully accepted and MAY even be published.



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The Art Group

Once again we can enjoy a pair of Art Group paintings, one by Desna Haskell and one by Carol Harris.



This week, I'm adding a photograph of one of my favourites from the world of art in general. This is a print of a pair of Welch miners done by a Polish artist Josef Herman. He was born in Warsaw in 1911 but left Poland in 1938 to escape anti-semitism and finally settled in England. He spent eleven years in Ystradgynlais (I presume he knew how to pronounce it!), in South Wales, where he produced many similar paintings – in fact, much of his work was concerned with working men and was regarded as having a distinctly 'political' flavour. I just love it! His first exhibition was held in 1943, in London, together with L S Lowry.



Chess Group

Yvonne Harriss sent us this update on the goings-on of the Chess Group – thanks, Yvonne.

This week the Chess Club reconvened, after a short break in August. We two were joined by a third member, who later alerted us to a badger in the garden. As you know, badgers are nocturnal so sighting one at 3-30 pm was unusual. We have never seen badgers before (but we don't keep watch at night) in all the time we have lived in our house. Living next door to the school campus on Owthorpe Road, perhaps they have moved in while the children have been absent? Chess is played outside when fine, however this week it started to rain at 3 pm. Intrepid players that we are, we carried on under the tree and umbrella. After the excitement of seeing the badger, a large pear dropped onto the centre of the board, making all three of us jump in surprise. It was, you might say, an afternoon to remember. After two games we ended our rather wet, but interesting session. In former times none of us would have played chess in the pouring rain. Times have changed, indeed.

Puzzle Corner

This week we are indebted to Peter Shreyhane for this collection of nicknames, can you work out who they refer to:

1. Tricky Dicky
2. The Little Tramp
3. The Swedish Nightingale
4. The Louisville Lip
5. The Beast of Bolsover
6. The Little Sparrow
7. Winnie
8. The Desert Fox
9. Tarzan
10. La Devina (The Devine One)

Answers next week..

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Creative Writing Group

The Creative Writing Group project this week was to write a poem, together with a short story with limerick attached (is the limerick beginning to catch on at last?). This is Elsie Warby's take – fascinating, if I'm allowed to comment.

The beach, a short story

(Acknowledgement to Michael Morpurgo for the ending.

“Teddy get off!” I cried trying my best to push the solid canine lump, which was my Staffordshire bull terrier, away from me. He was busy slobbering all over my face. I managed to sit up and look around. I was at the bottom of a cliff on a rocky beach. Where was I, how did I end up here? As I started to gather my thoughts I began to remember. I'd been walking along the beach with Teddy chasing his ball into the sea, then nothing. I could see lots of rocks lying around me. Had they slipped down the cliff hitting me and knocking me unconscious? My head hurt but there was no blood. I wondered how long I'd been lying there.

I gingerly got to my feet and found that apart from my head the rest of me was fortunately intact. I always carried my mobile phone with me, but it must have fallen out of my pocket and was smashed. So, I had no chance of phoning Rod, my husband, to let him know what had happened. He wouldn't have been very pleased as he'd constantly warned me about walking too near the cliffs because of the danger of rock falls. Teddy and I scrambled over what I could now see had been a substantial rock fall. We managed to reach the safer part of the beach and then I headed home, Teddy as usual leading the way. I felt extremely lucky that I wasn't badly injured.

Our house was fairly near the beach, so we soon arrived at our cul de sac. I was surprised to see my parent's car and a police car parked outside our house. I started to panic wondering if someone in the family had been taken ill or had an accident. I hurried into the house; the door was wide open.

“Hi everyone. I’m back. Is there a problem Rod, Mum, Dad?” They were all sitting around the kitchen table with two police officers. No one answered, they didn’t even look round. Hadn’t they heard me?

I moved closer and tried again “Is everything all right. Why is nobody answering me?”

It was then that I saw Mum wiping tears from her face. Rod and my dad looked distraught. The policeman was saying

“I’m so sorry. She must have been killed instantly by the rocks”

“I’ve warned her so many times to be careful walking near those cliffs but would she listen! Teddy must have tried to revive her and then come looking for us,” Rod said with a catch in his voice.

It was then that I saw Teddy in the corner, lying on his bed and I knew then that they were talking about me.

The beach, a poem

Waves crashing on the shore
Seagulls calling
Wind blowing
Boulders falling
Down cliff face
Nowhere to run
Silence.

The beach, a limerick

I was asked to write a limerick
But it made me feel a bit sick.
My story was sad
Which was too bad.
For fun to stick.

Thank you, Elsie and, indeed, the Group.

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Keep safe,

See you next week

John

PS Have you heard the one about the frequency of 1 Hertz?

It’s known as a second wave.