

FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH – October 2023. Edition No. 106.



Hello I hope you are OK.

I have been very well since the day after FC Halifax Town won the FA Trophy some time ago. It is lovely not being anxious and ruminating all of the time. I think it is important that we are more open about our mental health as it is something that affects most people, at some time or other.

Anyone can contribute to this magazine in a non-homophobic, non-racist and non-sexist way/donate/advertise at the email address below.

This month we are launching a new photography competition and the theme is **people**. There are two prizes of £50 on offer and you should email us your photo by midnight GMT on December 31st, 2023 to: dean@fthm.org.uk. Please also remember that our website address is: www.fromthehorsesmouth.org.uk Best wishes, Dean.

[MY NOT VERY SERIOUS STARS](#)

[AN INTERVIEW WITH A HOMELESS PERSON IN HALIFAX](#)

[GRAHAM TOWNSEND'S BRITISH MUSIC QUIZ](#)

[THE JAM](#)

[BRENDA'S WILDLIFE CORNER](#)

[BIBLE TALK](#)

[JUNE'S WORLD](#)

[NETBALL](#)

[LETTERS PAGE](#)

[JUNE CHARLTON'S RECIPES](#)

[ANOTHER GREAT ARTICLE BY KRISHNA FRANCIS](#)

[AN INTERVIEW WITH DHARAMVEER SINGH](#)

[ANOTHER FUN QUIZ FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH](#)

MY NOT VERY SERIOUS STARS

Scorpio 24 Oct – 22 Nov

This month you may fancy yourself as a bit of a lothario, but be careful as your ego may be severely damaged as you face rejection after rejection – accept that you are nothing special and act accordingly. Your favourite team may be performing badly but will soon hit a purple patch and lift your blues. Take time out to relax and recharge your batteries as you work hard.

Sagittarius 23 Nov – 21 Dec

You may once again question your sexuality this week - but does it really matter? It is time you started cleaning your teeth on a regular basis as your breath smells foul. You also seem to worry what people think about you, but you're a special person and have little to worry about. Someone with a nice bottom will soon fall into your lap so stop arsing around and be serious.

Capricorn 22 Dec – 20 Jan

A good time to start to follow a high-fibre diet and watch what you eat. Maybe it is time to change where you shop as some places seem to be using high inflation as an excuse to profiteer. A woman with tight blue jeans may shower you with affection and make you feel wanted and loved once more. The man with the shopping bag will do you a big, big favour.

Aquarius 21 Jan – 19 Feb

A beautiful, but shallow person, may attract you in the near future, but will a bit of eye candy really satisfy you for long? On the other hand, do you really want to go out with that person at work who is so ugly they make you want to puke? Remember disaster is never far from success, so lay off your bets, and don't put all your eggs in one basket. Pick your nose often.

Pisces 20 Feb – 20 Mar

A royalist may sicken you with their sycophantic behaviour towards the royal family, but maybe it's all they've got to believe in. This month you will see your bank manager in a social context and realise he is nothing much away from his work. Love will fly into your life this week and you will naturally feel as high as a kite – but leave room for disappointment.

Aries 21 Mar – 20 Apr

You seem to be the sort of person who visits A&E with a broken finger nail so it is time you toughened up and stopped being such a baby. Celebrity is important to you even though you suspect it is a phoney world – get real and cherish those close to you. The loss of an item with great sentimental value will hit you hard but try and value what you've still got. Buy a car.

Taurus 21 Apr – 21 May

Money is in short supply again and few 'friends' will be there to help if it costs them financially. But don't throw in the towel as things will gradually improve for you. A woman with a short temper will show her softer side to you, so treat her with respect as she may help you a lot in the future. Remember we are all interlinked and need each other. Fry an egg.

Gemini 22 May – 21 Jun

It is time that you learned to embrace the art of skilful giving for then you will find joy in unexpected places – if you don't sow then you won't reap. You would like to be light as a feather but consuming 10 meals a day won't help matters, so don't be so heavy about it and accept that you might always be a fat bird. You may also find God under the stairs tomorrow.

Cancer 22 Jun – 23 Jul

If you're working hard for the future, don't forget to savour the present moment as then it's a win-win situation. A man with an enormous nose will offer to help you this month so don't hesitate to take advantage of his kindness. You may be very tired at the moment but you are capable of producing good work without getting out of second gear. Kiss someone's neck.

Leo 24 Jul – 23 Aug

You are consuming far too much alcohol at the moment and making a huge fool of yourself when drunk – maybe try and abstain for a while and see how you feel? You will have the chance to obtain a lot of money this week, but is money really your master? Take out a second mortgage if you have a dentist's appointment looming. Help someone in a small way.

Virgo 24 Aug – 23 Sep

You are existing in a depressing bubble and fail to realise that if you open up your doors help will come sooner than you expected. A person you thought was parasitic will prove to be otherwise and will teach you not to judge so quickly. A good-looking woman with tattoos will steal your heart but your happiness may be punctured if your love is unrequited. Buy shoes.

Libra 24 Sep – 23 Oct

A good time to go backpacking around Europe, but to be frank with you, what you use as currency may not be accepted by everyone. You will receive an email that will both shock and amuse you with its content. Your obsession with toilet paper may flush away any chance that you may have of happiness. It is time to express yourself through art if you are capable.

AN INTERVIEW WITH A HOMELESS PERSON IN HALIFAX



Firstly, can you tell us a little bit about yourself? Yes. I'm 35 years old and I'm from Halifax. I'm currently looking for a flat and also looking for work.

So, where do you sleep at the moment? I sleep in the car park at Woolshops.

That must be very difficult? It is difficult, very difficult.

And how do you go on for money? I ask people for money.

Do you feel embarrassed asking people for money? I do. I feel ashamed and embarrassed.

Are you successful in getting money? Sometimes I am and sometimes I'm not.

Are people funny with you? They can be at times.

Do you have to bite your tongue? Sometimes I do.

Your life sounds very hard! It has become very hard. As a little boy, it was easy cos my father looked after me. I had a good childhood. I went to school. I had hobbies and activities. I was riding bikes. I'd play on a skateboard. I'd do drawing. I was good at art. Simple things like that.

What happened to your family? They passed away.

All of them? Yes. My mum passed away of pancreatic cancer and septicaemia. My dad died of oesophageal cancer and my brother died of liver failure.

How long ago was this? All in the space of a few years. I lost my mum when I was 19, my brother when I was 26 and my dad when I was 35.

It all sounds very sad? Yes it was very sad. I'm still saddened by it now.

Are you depressed? I'm not depressed, I'm sad and unhappy.

When you get up on a morning, do you wake up at Woolshops? Yes, I wake up at Woolshops.

So what happens first thing in a morning? The security guard kicks me off the car park because I'm not allowed there officially. Then I'll go round trying to get a cigarette from someone.

Do you need a cigarette to start your day? I need a cigarette more than I need food on a morning. After that I try to get money for a drink, maybe an energy drink or something. Then I try to get some money for some food.

Do you ever go to sleep with some money? No. I'm always skint when I go back to the car park on an evening. To be honest I only try to get a fiver to get a pizza.

Every morning? Every day. I just go around trying to get a fiver.

Do you care about what you eat or do you just get what you can? I just eat what I can. I don't like cold food. I'm not a fan of cold food so, if someone offers me a cold sandwich I'll reject it. I like something hot like a takeaway.

How much money do you feel like you need to get by for a day? Just a fiver.

What about drinks though? Well a couple of quid for a couple of cans of Pepsi.

Don't you drink alcohol? I don't drink any more. I used to drink quite a lot. A gallon a day. Eight cans when I lived with my dad.

What are you doing to try and get a flat? I'm looking with Customer First.

What about Smartmove? Smartmove as well and Citizens Advice too. Support workers are looking into benefits for me.

Do you get any benefits? No. They stopped them.

How long have you been on the streets? Since the end of January.

It must have been a big shock for you? It has been yes.

What do you do when it's freezing cold? I don't know. I haven't really been through that yet. January was quite cold but November and December will probably be colder. When I was cold, I had a jumper and a throwover.

Do you not have a sleeping bag? I was wrapped up in a sleeping bag when I was cold.

Where do you keep your things when you're walking around? I stash them away somewhere in the car park.

How do you cope when it comes to toileting? I use public toilets.

And nobody says anything to you? No not really.

If you managed to get a flat, how would your life change? I'd start by getting a job.

What kind of job would you like? Factory work. Somewhere like Nestle.

Do you need an address before you can get a job? Yes I do. But also, if I wear smart clothes I can't get them dirty. That's why I need a house. So, I can wash my clothes or uniform if I had one.

Why don't you get any benefits? Because I don't have an address.

They don't give you anything? Nothing.

Finally, do you have any hopes for the future? I hope to get a flat and a job. Get back to doing hobbies and activities. Doing a bit of artwork and stuff.

What kind of artwork? Fine art. Drawing. Pencil drawing, I was quite good at that back in the day.

How long ago is it since your dad died? My dad died in July 2022.

Do you believe you'll see him again? In the afterlife I do.

So, you believe in the afterlife? I believe there is something.

Do you believe in God? I'm not a strong believer but I think there is something or someone out there. I'm not a churchgoer.

Have you always lived in Halifax? Yes, I've always lived here.

And do you think you'll spend the rest of your life in Halifax? I think I probably will. But I'd like a flat in Brighouse or Todmorden.

Would you like a girlfriend? I wouldn't mind one in time. Once I've got myself on my feet and the time is right. I'd like a flat, a job and then eventually settle down.

Thanks for taking time to speak to me today! Thank you Dean.

GRAHAM TOWNSEND'S BRITISH MUSIC QUIZ



Questions:

- (1) Which Scottish singer featured as main vocalist on the Mike Oldfield songs “To France” and “Moonlight Shadow”?
- (2) Which English rock band, founded in 1966 in Wolverhampton, had six UK number one hit singles between 1971 and 1973?
- (3) Steve Hogarth became lead vocalist with which English band in 1989?
- (4) Which roots reggae band from Birmingham had their only top 40 UK hit single in 1978 with “Prodigal Son”?
- (5) Which famous music venue can be found on Mathew Street, Liverpool?
- (6) Huddersfield born Julianne Regan had hits with songs like “In the Clouds” and “Martha’s Harbour” as lead vocalist with which band?
- (7) Which British band had the biggest selling UK singles in 1963, 1964 and 1968?
- (8) Welsh singer Gaynor Sullivan MBE is known professionally by what name?
- (9) Chris Blackwell founded which British record label in 1959 in Jamaica?
- (10) Who was Annie Lennox’s partner in Eurythmics?
- (11) Steve Winwood left the Spencer Davis Group in 1967 to form which other band?
- (12) William Broad is the real name of which British rock star?
- (13) “Getting Away With It” (1989) and “Disappointed” (1992) were which alternative dance supergroup’s biggest UK hit singles?
- (14) Reality TV star Millie Mackintosh was married to which English rapper between 2013 and 2016?
- (15) “Sticky Fingers” and “Exile on Main St” are albums by which legendary rock band?
- (16) Singers Cliff Richard and Gary Numan both have which real surname?
- (17) Eric Stewart, of 10cc, was one of the founders of which recording studio in Stockport, Greater Manchester?
- (18) Who is best known as the front man of English rock band Bloc Party?
- (19) With which band would you associate Mick Jones, Joe Strummer and Topper Headon?
- (20) Which singer, songwriter, producer and actress was born in Norwich, England on 25th March 1969?

Answers:

- (1) Maggie Reilly (2) Slade (3) Marillion (4) Steel Pulse (5) The Cavern Club (6) All About Eve (7) The Beatles (8) Bonnie Tyler (9) Island Records (10) Dave Stewart (11) Traffic (12) Billy Idol (13) Electronic (14) Professor Green (15) The Rolling Stones (16) Webb (17) Strawberry Studios (18) Kele Okereke (19) The Clash (20) Cathy Dennis

THE JAM



The Jam were a three-piece band formed in 1972 at Sheerwater Secondary School, Woking, Surrey, England. It consisted of Paul Weller (main songwriter, vocalist and guitarist), Bruce Foxton (backing vocals and powerful basslines) and Rick Buckler who was the very competent drummer. The band was managed by Weller's father John Weller who also managed his son's career until his death in 2009.

The band were hugely successful between 1977 (when they were signed by Polydor) until their split in December 1982. They released six studio albums, one live album as well as six different greatest hits albums. Paul Weller was determined that the band "finished at their peak".

It would be accurate to say that the Jam's style was English mod revival/new wave but it was clearly influenced at times by Motown, The Who, The Beatles and others. Many of Weller's lyrics concerned themselves with working class life and political themes like "The Eton Rifles" which was very successful in the UK and gave them a first chart entry in the US at 137 on the Billboard 200.

The Jam were hugely successful in the UK, with 18 consecutive top 40 singles there, and 4 No 1 hits. Unlike the punk bands of the time, they were well-attired in smartly tailored suits and were much more diverse in their musical styles. They came across visually as being very professional in much the way the Beatles had done under Brian Epstein. Also, they had a large, loyal fanbase. The single "Down in the Tube Station at Midnight" proved a great success and led to great acclaim for the band. Other notable songs of the Jam included "This is the Modern World", "Going Underground", "Beat Surrender" and "A Town Called Malice". Significantly, they had a No 1 album when they released their final album "The Gift" which also spent 16 weeks on the US Billboard Hot 100. Interestingly, their first 15 singles were re-released in the UK, when they had split up, and all made the top 100!

Unfortunately, the split in 1982 was acrimonious with Foxton not speaking to Weller for over 20 years – although they later reconciled. In early 1983, Weller formed the successful band The Style Council until that ended in 1989, with him then following a solo career. Foxton went on to join a reformed Stiff Little Fingers in 1990, then Casbah Club which released an album called Venustraphobia. Buckler formed a band called Time UK and, in 1986 he released a single with Foxton entitled "Entertain Me" under the name Sharp.

Looking back, I can still remember how students at my school waited for the new chart each week and also of news of The Jam, who were hugely popular. Even now I like many of their songs and would urge you to search for them if you are not already familiar with them.

* With some help from Wikipedia

BRENDA'S WILDLIFE CORNER



Osprey

The osprey is a bird of prey that is also called the river hawk, sea hawk or fish hawk. It is the second most populous raptor species (after the peregrine falcon). It is fish-eating and found on all continents with the exception of Antarctica, and is unusual in that it is a single living species found almost everywhere. It is definitely a large bird with a wingspan of 50-71 inches and it is

more than 24 inches in length and is quite easy to distinguish from other birds as it is brown on the upperparts, grey on the underparts and head with a black bill.

The osprey lives almost completely on a diet of fish (it is piscivorous) and, not surprisingly, it is very well-equipped to do so – the osprey and owls are the only raptors whose toe is reversible, thus enabling it to grasp their prey with two toes in front and two behind. This trait is particularly good for helping them grab slippery fish. But it does not usually scavenge dead or dying fish. It's true that the osprey possesses vision that enables it to detect underwater movement from the air and when it dives the whole body is often submerged. Sometimes prey is devoured near the kill on a ledge, but often it is transported for longer distances.

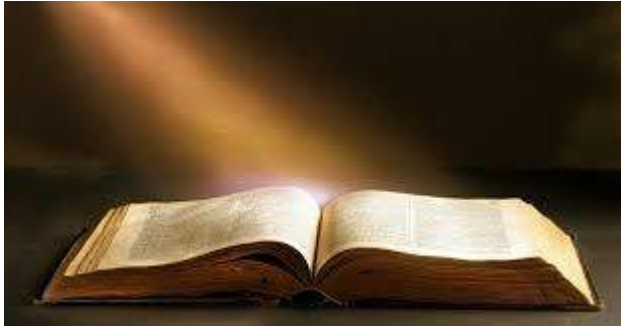
Males and females are similar although the male tends to have a slimmer body and narrower wings. It is, in fact, quite easy to distinguish the sexes of a breeding pair but more difficult to do so with individual birds. When an osprey is in flight, it has a call of a series of sharp whistles and when there is activity near their nest this can become very loud.

Usually, the osprey breeds near rivers or freshwater lakes and builds a nest composed of sticks, driftwood and other suitable debris. They tend to breed at the age of three or four, and mate for life. The female lays two to four eggs and they are incubated for roughly 35-43 days before hatching. Although the chicks are initially very light, they fledge in 8-10 weeks. Unfortunately, when food is scarce, it is the first-hatched that tend to survive. An osprey usually lives for 7-10 years, though examples of individuals living 20-25 years have been found.

There was a definite decline in the osprey population in the 1950s and 1960s which seemed to be because of the use of insecticides like DDT, which affected reproduction and which meant the osprey's eggs were easily broken or infertile. But arguably, the banning of DDT in many countries resulted in a recovery of birds of prey like the osprey. It is worth mentioning that egg collectors and the hunting of birds of prey in the late 19th and early 20th century also added to their initial decline.

Ref. Wikipedia

BIBLE TALK



Sent by Peter Smith

The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

(Romans 13:9, NKJV)

It is interesting that the reason we should not commit adultery, steal, and so on, is that these hurt another person. They are the opposite of being loving to a person close to us, a 'neighbour'. It is not a question of abstract morals.

JUNE'S WORLD



Hello everybody. I hope you are all well.

When I was a young girl growing up in the Potteries, in Castleford, there were lots of things to see and do. Every bonfire night we always had a big bonfire, we used to collect wood and my grandad (who lived next door) would always be in charge of everything concerning the fire.

He would make sure it was safe for everyone involved, and would start off the fire by putting

coal around bits of wood and work upwards until the secure logs and strips of wood were alight – he always had lots of wood in his yard.

My grandad was well known down the Potteries and his yard was called Horner's yard. He always beat off competition from other streets to host the biggest bonfire around. Bonfire night was a huge occasion for everyone with chairs set out around the fire for older people – it was great entertainment. Everybody put money into a kitty to buy pie, peas and chips from a mobile van owned by the local fish shop and it was a great treat for everyone. The bonfire itself, lasted until midnight when it was getting smaller and everyone had enjoyed the interesting fireworks – one rocket went high up in the sky and landed in next door's garden, but no one was hurt as they were at the bonfire. Everyone had a great time and it was all repeated the next year. My grandad had stables near to the location of the bonfire, so before he went home, he made sure everything was safe and secure.

My grandad had three horses and a cart which he used daily to collect scraps and rags to earn money. There were two scrap yards for him to choose from, but unlike his sons he preferred to use a horse and cart to a van. His horses were his pride and joy. I still think of him often as we were very close; I used to take bets for him to the bookies although someone else had to

place the actual bet as I was too young to do so. My grandma also liked a flutter and if they won, they would give me a bit of money.

When I think back, they were good times and I wouldn't change a thing.

Anyway, that's it for now. Love June. X

NETBALL



Netball is typically a women's sport although male teams exist in Australia, Canada, Fiji, Jamaica, Kenya, the United States and Pakistan. It is played on indoor and outdoor courts in the Commonwealth of Nations and also in countries including Switzerland, Thailand, Argentina and the US. In all, it is played by more than 20 million people in more than 80 countries although it is yet to become an Olympic sport.

The sport is played on a rectangular court and a team is composed of 7 players who each have their own responsibility in the game. The ball is usually made of leather or rubber and the aim of the game is to shoot it through your opponent's hoop – each goal ring is mounted on a goal post at each end of the court and is 10 feet high with the hoop being 15 inch in diameter.

The sport resulted from a misinterpretation of the Basketball rule book in 1895 by American sports teacher Clara Gregory Baer, but by 1960 international playing rules had been standardised for the game – later named World Netball which was formed by the sport's international governing body.

Netball differs from basketball as there is no dribbling, bouncing and running while you have possession of the ball. Only the centre can move anywhere on the court with the exception of the shooting circle. In addition, there is an absence of backboards from the hoop and less physical contact. Netball involves more accurate passing and positioning than basketball.

A game of netball last 60 minutes (4 quarters) and different versions of the game exist like indoor netball which involves playing on a court surrounded on each side and above by a net which results in a faster game.

* With help from various sources

LETTERS PAGE



Dear Editor

I am quite aware that many people (including myself) are struggling to make ends meet, but the incessant request from people for “small change” has done my head in so much that I no longer even acknowledge them. It seems to me that people who genuinely need help are vastly outnumbered by people who want money for drugs/alcohol – some even turn down the offer

for food.

Patricia Newton, London

Dear Editor

Like a past contributor to this magazine, I am sick and tired of having amplified music imposed upon me as I do my shopping, minding my own business. Local councils do nothing about this form of noise pollution and continue to allow the music of buskers to boom out all around.

I am all for people making money from their skills, but I do think they should respect other people.

Jo Walsh, Blackburn

Dear Editor

Whilst it is obvious that we can't all be the same, it does seem that a tangible effort should be made to drastically reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. This British government has increased disparity, whilst it's likely that a future Labour government would make only cosmetic changes.

Britain is in a mess and lots of right-wing people have made money out of others' misfortunes. There is little hope for the man on the street.

Dave Blackmore, Manchester

Dear Editor

I think the question why we are on Earth is a fascinating one. On the one hand, there are people who believe a supernatural being is responsible, whilst others are convinced that there is absolutely no reason for us being on this planet, in this universe.

I am of the opinion that it doesn't really matter why we are here as **we just are**. Surely, it's enough to lead a good life and care about others.

Madge Oldroyd, Bristol

Dear Editor

Homo sapiens are by nature selfish and self-centred, as well as being ruthless – this is why the species has survived. But in all honesty, we do not seem to have evolved very much when we are still eating other beings and fighting wars – started by a minority it's true.

I can't tell other people what they should think and do, but it is clear to me that we need to take better care of this planet and those on it.

Mary Wilson, Leeds

Dear Editor

Recently, India successfully landed a spacecraft on the South Pole of the moon. This was indeed a great technical achievement but I can't help thinking that this money would have been better used to alleviate the poverty of millions of its people?

Janice Moorcroft, Aldershot

Dear Editor

At the risk of sounding racist, I don't think it is right when dysfunctional white men go to a poverty-stricken country to find a wife. Often you see an odd English man with a much younger, pretty foreign woman who would probably not give him the time of day if circumstances were different.

Harry Woodburn, Bolton

JUNE CHARLTON'S RECIPES



Oven Pancakes

Ingredients:

3 oz of self-raising flour
Pinch of salt
2 oz of margarine
2 oz of caster sugar
1 egg
¼ pint of milk
Few drops of lemon essence or juice
Jam

Method:

Sieve the flour and salt together. Cream the margarine and sugar together and beat in the egg yolk. Add the flour, milk and essence and fold in the stiffly beaten egg white. Grease four or five saucers and put a little jam in the bottom of each. Divide the mixture between them and bake in a moderately hot oven (400 F or gas mark 6) for about 15 minutes.

Spanish Tomato Soup



Ingredients:

4 tablespoons of olive oil
3 garlic cloves, crushed
1 green pepper, chopped
½ teaspoon of chilli powder
1lb of tomatoes, chopped
1 onion, chopped
8 oz of French or Italian bread, cubed
1 ½ pints of vegetable stock

Garlic Bread

4 slices of ciabatta or French bread
4 tablespoons of olive oil
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 oz cup of grated vegetarian cheddar
Chilli powder to garnish

Method:

Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan and add the prepared onion, garlic and pepper. Sauté the vegetables for 2-3 minutes or until the onion has softened.

Add the chilli powder and tomatoes and cook over a medium heat until the mixture has thickened.

Stir in the breadcrumbs and stock and cook for 10-15 minutes until the soup is thick and fairly smooth.

To make the garlic bread: toast the bread slices under a medium grill. Drizzle the oil over the top of the bread, rub with the garlic, sprinkle with the cheese and return to the grill for 2-3 minutes until the cheese has melted. Sprinkle with chilli powder and serve with the soup.



Ginger Nuts

Ingredients:

4 oz of self-raising flour
2 level teaspoons of ground ginger
1 level teaspoon of ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda
2 oz of margarine
2 tablespoons of golden syrup

Sieve the dry ingredients. Melt the margarine and syrup, cool slightly and mix with the other ingredients. Roll walnut-sized pieces into balls between the palms of the hands, and place well apart on a greased baking sheet or tray. Flatten slightly and bake in a moderate oven (375 F or gas mark 4) for about 45 minutes. Cut into fingers while still warm.

ANOTHER GREAT ARTICLE BY KRISHNA FRANCIS



Now here I am again. But what to talk about? I've just eaten some banana bread. It was very, very delicious. I made it using some bananas that were beginning to seep. I didn't so much peel them as unleash them. I then had to wipe up the sideboard where they had almost cemented themselves as a result of the goo that was oozing from them. Added to these were some pears that were also on the turn and some blueberries that were several days past their sell by date. I mixed all of these into a batter with some butter and eggs and cooked it all up in an oven for about thirty minutes. I've had slices of it over the last two days and I'm clearly not dead so it just goes to show that some use can be made of things that would to all appearances seem defunct.

I feel there's a metaphor to be derived from that. I'll leave it up to you to do the deriving. I shall simply relish the aftertaste of the blueberry and pear overtones. Really, pear and banana go so well together. Mmmmm...

And what else? I'm feeling as though I might perhaps go on some more travels. I need to do something with my time and energy. If I don't it will all go on lattes and cake. Not even home-made cake at that. This instinct to get out of myself is opening up my world. I recently thought about an old friend I haven't thought of in ages. He lives in the South of France or did so at my last recollection. Thinking that I might return there, I got in touch with his daughter with whom I haven't spoken in seventeen years. She was seven I think when we last spoke. Now she's twenty-four and the first words she wrote were Hello, hello! It was so enchanting and endearing to be greeted thus. It showed a sense of familiarity that meant much to me. I'm now in touch with her dad, my friend Fabrice. He is living in the Ardeche in France and has plans to open up a record shop in October. I plan to go and see him soon. If possible, I'd also like to do some more writing whilst I'm away.

The thing is that, in my day-to-day ramblings in the world around me, I pick up associations like picking up dog hairs in a dog owner's car. I set out to do a simple job in town and end up taking three hours when it should only take twenty minutes because I bump into people and get talking. I love that quality to my life but it doesn't reflect the sense of obligation or purpose that I feel. There are stories I want and need to get out into the world. If I'm not careful I shall let them drown without trace. Perhaps the best way to tell stories is to live them. This is perhaps why I am seeking out adventures. Even at my late stage of adult life, there is a latent but powerful hope of renewal and rebirth. My favourite bus driver is called Brian. He used to be a carer until at the age of fifty-three he retrained as a bus driver. I love that sense of drive and hope I can use it as a guide to get me moving into new spheres of being. Like the bananas that are currently being turned into energy inside me, I too look forward to having a second life as something just as surprising and delicious.



AN INTERVIEW WITH DHARAMVEER SINGH

Firstly, it has been about ten years since we recorded those two albums that are on my website so, can you tell me a little bit about what you have been up to since then? Yes of course. I've now got three children. Oliver who is 13, Lily who is 5 and Evan who is 2. I am married to a lady called Alice. Lily and Evan are the two children we have together.

How did you meet Alice? I was busking in Halifax playing some songs from one of my favourite bands called Sublime. Sublime play reggae and ska music, but are not that well known, but Alice also liked Sublime and approached me and spoke to me out of a mutual enjoyment of the band and we found we got on really well together and have been together since then.

Where do you live nowadays? I live in Illingworth in Halifax.

I can see that you are now a Sikh, how did that come about? Earlier this year, I had really bad back pain so, I went to see my GP. They thought it was sciatica at first but the pain got worse so, they sent me for an x-ray and they found a fracture caused by a condition called anteriolithesis. This is a condition where a vertebra slips forward out of position and, in my

case, has led to compression on my nerves. It was worse down my right side and it made my right leg and toes numb sometimes. This made my mobility deteriorate massively. I was used to walking my two dogs every day but it was that bad, I had to use an electric wheelchair to get around! It was a no-win situation as I was in discomfort when I was walking and also when I was sitting down. This affected my mental health really badly as well. I couldn't play with my kids and I was on strong painkillers that wiped me out and they didn't even kill the pain that much. At the worst times I was just praying to God saying "if you're there can you bring me healing"

Initially, were you praying to a Christian god then? No. Just a creator. I'd never really thought of a god belonging to a particular religion at that stage.

But you have now? Yes. Basically, Sikh believers pray to a creator that people of other religions essentially call God. Sikhs believe that we all come from this one universal source. That was what I was praying to. I thought if there is a creator out there who put us on this earth then, "please bring me healing". I put my hands on myself where the pain was.

You do Reiki, don't you? Yeah. So, it was like doing Reiki and channelling it through a creator. Anyway, I fell asleep on the sofa and when I woke up, I felt lighter and a lot more positive and from that moment on, things started getting better.

Better in what way? Both physically and mentally.

Were you depressed before this point? Yes. Massively. My granddad had scoliosis, he was diagnosed at 45 and his mobility just deteriorated, and my mum had problems with her knees before she had an operation so, I'd seen it all before and so I prayed and it set me on the right path.

So, how did you get into Sikhism? Basically, after praying for help for my spine issue, I was guided in various ways to Sikhism. One of the main guidances I received came in the form of looking online for help with an unrelated a problem. I came across a web page about dealing with negative people which led to me buying a book called "The Four Agreements". Reading that got me started in looking at other forms of spiritual help and from there I found out about Sikhism. And as I started to discover what Sikhism was all about, I realised the core beliefs were things that I'd been doing all my life. Things like believing in a universal creator, fighting injustice and equality amongst all people.

And how do they view animals or other beings? They believe in not hurting them or killing them. And that fits in with my vegan ideology as well. And I thought that's a beautiful way of life. It really puts your mind-set into the here and now. One of the key concepts of Sikhism is selfless service. You do good things for other people.

You did that anyway, didn't you? Exactly. When I said I had been living those ideals I realised that the creator had already been guiding me along the way.

When you say the creator, where do think the creator is? In everything!

In the entire universe? Yes.

And, like Christians believe, do you believe a he/she/it has always existed? Yeah, pretty much. The creator created everything, is immortal, has always existed and from the creator everything in existence appeared.

A lot of our readers are Christians, how would you say that Sikhism differs from Christianity? A lot of the things are the same, such as belief in one God/creator, living a moral and righteous life, and doing daily prayers and reflection. I guess the main differences are that Sikhs don't believe in Jesus as Sikhism doesn't believe in bringing back people from the dead.

Do they believe in reincarnation though? Yes. It's similar in concept to Buddhism in that respect. Sikhs believe in the Dharma, the path of righteousness, and the path of Karma, which is the consequence of our actions.

Did you always believe in Karma? Yes, I did. I studied Buddhism for a while so, I looked into the concept of karma and believe that our actions have consequences which ripple out from the moment they are done.

How does it actually differ from Buddhism? There are a lot of the same things in there, but Buddhism has beliefs in many different aspects of God whereas Sikhism believes in one creator or power. All the gods, demons and entities are created from that one creator, which in Sikhism is referred to by many different names, such as Waheguru (wondrous enlightener), Ik Onkaar (one creator), or Akaal Purakh (The Immortal Being).

Do you believe in demons? Yes.

What do you actually mean by demons? The negative aspects of existence personified either in human form or spirit form. The things that tempt us or exist to try cause us harm. If you think of the right way of living as a straight and narrow path, demons tempt you to stray from it.

Things like alcohol and drugs for example? Any intoxicant would be considered a temptation and is forbidden in Sikhism. I personally consider these things as the tools used by demons or negative entities in order to try distract us from the path of good, righteous living.

How long have you been a Sikh for and, how has it changed you? I have been Sikh a few months now. I feel lighter in myself and a lot happier as it has brought a lot of stability to my mind. Whereas before my mind might have wandered, whether it was about something good or bad, there are no distractions and I am focused on my path. I believe that we have a pre-ordained destiny from the creator and this means we have a choice of following that path, or not. If we follow our destiny then our life will feel positive and fulfilling because there is no resistance to our destiny. If we start interfering with our destiny or the creator's plan, that's when bad things can start happening. Being self-willed, or interfering with our destiny, is called "manmukh" in Sikhism and is the root cause of our personal suffering.

Do you think that before you became a Sikh, you weren't living the right lifestyle? In some respects, yes.

Like what? Just getting distracted by the trivialities of life, or being easily led to negative paths by other people. I always strived to live a good life and help people, but sometimes others might have taken advantage of this nature and I might have thought "oh I'm not going to help them out this time".

But you can't let people do that to you, can you? No, you can't and it's petty. But that's the discernment aspect of it all. You've got to try and educate those people who take advantage

of you and set boundaries so they don't take advantage. Explain that it is an unacceptable way to behave but, say "if you need the help, I can help you in these ways". We should always try to help other people, but, sometimes, this means helping them to help themselves.

Do you mean helping people in a non-materialistic way? Yes. Emotionally and spiritually. When you become more focused on your path of destiny, you feel more in tune with other people. Even if someone doesn't express their needs, you can sense that they do need something.

Where is the nearest temple to Halifax? I go to one in Bradford. It's called Gurdwara Amrit Parchar Dharmik Diwan.

What does that name mean? The name came from a Sikh saint called Sant Baba Gian Singh ji who was asked to name the new Gurdwaras. He said "The congregation is religious and the discourses inspire the Sikhs to seek the nectar of the two-edged sword. It would be proper to name such a congregation as 'Amrit Parchar Dharmik Diwan'".

Amrit is referred to as the ambrosial nectar and is a sacred liquid made in the Sikh baptism ceremony. Parchar means "to propagate" in Punjabi, so in the context of the Gurdwara it means to spread the messages of Sikhism. Dharmik means "religious" or "faith" and Diwan means "religious event or gathering", so the name could be interpreted to mean "a place where the baptism of Sikhs and spreading the message of Sikhism takes place".

Do you have to pay to go the temple? No, you don't.

And do they have a collection plate? Not as such but, you can make a donation if you wish. There is no pressure to do so though. If you wish to make a gift but have no money then you can stand with a metal plate and the gurdwara will put folded cloth on the plate for you to offer in place of money.

How is it all funded then? It is funded by those who do choose to make a donation. Also, Sikh people help run the gurdwara for free as it is a part of a Sikh's duty to provide selfless service to the entire world, so providing your service at gurdwara is considered a sacred duty and honour.

Are there some wealthy people who go there? Yes, there are. It's a mixture of people who go, however, there is no distinction between wealthy and poor, and we all sit together as equals.

Have you been made welcome? Very welcome, yes. In Sikhism, everyone is equal before God irrespective of colour, creed, religion or gender. As long as you go there and you're respectful of the values for example, when we go there, we cover our heads when entering the darbar (prayer hall where the Sikh holy scriptures called "Guru Granth Sahib" are kept and recited from).

Why do you cover your head? It's seen as a sign of respect for God when you're praying.

Do you cover your head all the time or just when you're at the temple? I choose to cover my hair by wearing a dastar (turban). One of the central tenets of Sikhism is known as the "five kakkars", or articles of faith. One of those kakkars is not cutting your hair (kesh). Wearing a dastar helps keep your hair clean and prevents one suffering from the vanity of

focusing on how one's hair looks. Vanity, or ego-related acts, are considered sinful in Sikhism.

So, you're continually growing your hair? Yes.

But you tie it up? Yes. I was always growing my hair before this, as you probably know!

So, you'll be growing it for the rest of your life now? Yes. God intended our hair to grow without being cut, so that is the path I will follow.

You can't cut it off at all? No. None of your body hair can be removed.

Have you had time to learn about the history of Sikhism? I have yes.

How did it start? Was it in India? Sikhism started in the Punjab region in India.

Were they warriors? Guru Nanak was the person who started Sikhism and was from a clan of warriors in India. The warrior spirit was within Sikhism from its foundations, and became more formalised over time, with the formation of a formal army, the Khalsa, by the 10th Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh.

It was a kind of epiphany then? Yes, Guru Nanak had a spiritual awakening where he spontaneously connected with God and he realised there was one creator, and the name of that creator is Truth, i.e., the fundamental aspect of all existence.

When did this happen? It was back in the fifteenth century.

So, it's quite a young religion then? A very young religion compared to the Abrahamic religions. However, it is believed that Sikhism expresses the fundamental nature of everything that all religions are founded upon, and has essentially existed from the moment that all creation existed, i.e., it is God's blueprint.

What do they call the creator? There are various names for the creator, with the most common in modern times being "Waheguru" (wondrous enlightener). Other common names for the creator are Ik Onkaar (One Creator), Akaal Purakh (Immortal Being) or Satnaam (true name). In Sikhism, the Immortal Truth, i.e., the true nature of all creation and reality, is synonymous with the creator.

How do you pray? By closing my eyes, saying God's name and speaking to God directly. I pray for the good of humanity and for harmony and truth to prevail.

How do you address the creator? Usually, I refer to the creator as Waheguru. Which means 'wondrous enlightener/teacher'. I put my hands together, like a normal prayer position, and say something like "Waheguru, please bring us blessings" or "Waheguru, let us live harmoniously and bring positivity to everyone we meet".

Why do you wear an ornamental sword as part of your Sikh outfit? It's a part of the full, formal Sikh attire and is known as kirpan. The last guru, Guru Gobind Singh, created what is known as Khalsa. It's a movement which aims to protect people against injustices. It's like a Sikh army but, as opposed to going round using violence, it's there to protect the rights of all humanity against oppression and corruption. In Sikh history there has been a lot of persecution, particularly in India, and Sikhs had to train as warriors to prevent themselves being killed, and to be able to effectively fight oppressive forces.

They were great warriors, weren't they? They were fearless and were blessed by the creator for fighting for righteousness. They had some outstanding victories despite being vastly outnumbered, all because they stood against oppression and fulfilled the creator's destiny.

What I don't understand, is why did it take until the fifteenth century for Sikhism to be born. What was the creator doing before that? I think the creator had spoken to people before that but, they either chose to ignore it or express it in a different way maybe through different religions such as Christianity or Judaism for example.

Do you believe in Adam and Eve? I believe there must have been a way of creating the first people, but I don't believe in the Christian story of Adam and Eve.

But you don't believe in evolution? No. I believe that what people term as evolution is a kind of upgrade. As an example, when the software on a phone is out-dated the manufacturer produces an upgraded model. In similar fashion, in terms of people, the creator updates our genetics or DNA over time in response to changing environments.

Do you meditate a lot? Yes, I do.

How do you meditate and, why? I meditate to clear my mind and to be in touch with the creator. One of the main meditations we have is called the Naam Jaap which literally means "chanting the name of God". I have mala beads (prayer beads) which have 27 beads on a string, and four sets of 27 make 108, which is a spiritually significant number in Sikhism and represents spiritual perfection.

This is fascinating, isn't it? Yes, there is a lot of depth to Sikhism.

How many Sikhs do you think there are in Britain? Half a million I believe. It's the fourth largest religion in the UK. Most of the Sikhs in the world live in India, Indonesia and Canada. There is a lot of the Sangat (Sikh community) all around the world. They don't push their religion on to people, they just try to lead by example.

On a separate note, do you still do your music? You did a fantastic job on the two albums you did with us! Yes, I do and maybe we can work together again the future!

Thanks for your time today, Dharamveer! Thanks Dean it has been nice to speak with you again.

ANOTHER FUN QUIZ FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH



Questions:

- (1) Who first used glass?
- (2) What is the currency of Sardinia?
- (3) What is the nationality of ex-footballer Zinedine Zidane?
- (4) Who invented ice cream?
- (5) What is the French word for 'knee'?
- (6) Where is Torremolinos to be found?
- (7) What nationality was Isaac Newton?

- (8) What was the name of the first NASA space shuttle?
- (9) What is the Spanish word for 'chicken'?
- (10) What is Green Belt land?
- (11) What is a monocle eyeglass?
- (12) What is the capital of the Basque Country?
- (13) What is a 'mouchoir' in English?
- (14) What meat is used in a Shepherd's Pie?
- (15) Which country makes the most bicycles?
- (16) What are the ingredients of a Sex on the Beach cocktail?
- (17) Who is the current leader of Afghanistan?
- (18) How many molar teeth do we have?
- (19) What is a Bobbin?
- (20) Who first realised salt could be used to preserve food?

Answers:

(1) 4,000 years ago in Mesopotamia, craftsmen first combined sand, soda and lime to make glass (2) Euro (3) French (4) The Tang Dynasty 618 – 907 AD had a kind of flavoured ice product (5) Genou (6) Spain (7) English (8) Enterprise (9) Pollo (10) A buffer between towns, and between town and countryside (11) A type of corrective lens used to correct or enhance the visual perception in one eye only (12) Vitoria-Gasteiz (13) Handkerchief (14) Lamb mince (15) China (16) Vodka, peach schnapps, orange juice and cranberry juice (17) Hibatullah Akhundzada (18) 12 (19) The tiny spool of thread that sits in the bottom of a sewing machine (20) The ancient Egyptians

Editor's Final Word: Once again, thank you for taking the time and trouble to read this e-magazine. If you want to get involved with us, please contact us at: dean@fthm.org.uk Best wishes, Dean, Brenda, Robert and Graham.