

FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH – April 2025. Edition No. 124



Hello! I hope you are well. I think this month's edition has something for everyone, and remember that anyone can submit items to be considered for publication. The magazine now comes out by the first of every month, unless there is a serious problem. Please feel free to send in your articles or photographs of interest to dean@fthm.org.uk It is, however, important that your submissions are not racist, sexist or homophobic in nature.

Please also note that our website address is: www.fromthehorsesmouth.org.uk Best wishes, Dean Charlton.

MY NOT VERY SERIOUS STARS



Scorpio 24 Oct – 22 Nov

You may finally snap this week at someone who never lifts up the toilet seat when he goes, but don't flush him out of your life as there is so much more to him. Also, a woman, who clearly doesn't wear a bra, will upset you when she gets something off her chest. One of your children is not academically gifted, but remember that you

were nothing special at school. Relax.

Sagittarius 23 Nov – 21 Dec

Turning a hobby into a job may seem an attractive idea, but think carefully before doing so as it might just lead to financial ruin and heartache. A transvestite may do you a big favour this week by lending you his best red, high-heeled shoes for a special night out. Your mobile phone may need replacing, so think carefully before signing a new contract. Visit a doctor.

Capricorn 22 Dec – 20 Jan

In the near future, someone incredibly special will come into your life, and you will bloom after many years in the wilderness. This week, a person will give you 1000 pounds, and then you will wake up! You always seem to crave more and more possessions, but you will realise that they don't lead to genuine contentedness. Stop flirting with everyone.

Aquarius 21 Jan – 19 Feb

Now that the weather is more clement, why not visit the seaside and gorge yourself on fish and chips? A woman in a new, red sports car will offer you a ride, but do you really want to go with someone with so many miles on the clock? You are not remotely attractive, but you will be okay as you have a good heart and lovely teeth. Maybe you should eat less donuts.

Pisces 20 Feb – 20 Mar

At work, a new member of staff may seem to be a threat to your job, but if you wait, you may find you become firm friends with them. Time may not be on your side, but there is life in the old dog yet. At last, fortune will smile on you after years of hard work with little to show for it. Stop thinking 'what if?' and just plough forward with surprising results. Make some toffee.

Aries 21 Mar – 20 Apr

You seem to be constantly mentally challenged, but everything will change for the better this month. Romantic love is just around the corner, so embrace and cherish it when it comes. Get a new pet if you are confident you can care for it properly. The gift of an old object may make you become quite nostalgic. A deaf person will make you see things in a new way. Chew.

Taurus 21 Apr -21 May

If you want to have a long life, now is the time to embark on a healthier diet. A stay in a kibbutz may not be a good idea, and you should consider going to Bognor Regis instead. You may have to let someone down gently who says they are in love with you this month. Soon you will bump into some old school friends who will make you realise you've really changed.

Gemini 22 May – 21 Jun

Life may be hard at the moment, but remember that everything is temporary and nothing stays the same. A gay woman will impress you with her social skills, and her actions will help dispel some old-fashioned myths. A well-done fried egg may make you very happy and set you up for a great day. Stop trying to fathom out what we are doing in space and just live.

Cancer 22 Jun – 23 Jul

This week a taxi driver will give you a very useful tip that will save you a lot of money in the future. Stop taking silly soaps so seriously. Someone may point out that you sing out-of-tune, but does this really matter if you enjoy the activity? Also, do stop neglecting your personal hygiene and accept that a shower won't kill you. However, you are a very special person.

Leo 24 Jul – 23 Aug

You may have been celibate for ages, but don't worry as someone nice will come along and prevent you from being left on the shelf. A person with a nice bum may smile at you, but it doesn't mean they love you. It is a good time to forget your image and dance like a fool as it will do you the world of good. You have been well and truly touched by the ugly stick. Tap.

Virgo 24 Aug – 23 Sep

A bald woman, who has had many hairy experiences in her life, will prove to be your saviour in times of trouble. A bride-to-be will shock you when she confides in you. Be careful this month as someone you have known for a long time will try a con you out of a large sum of money. You may find out that you are pre-diabetic, so take steps to rectify this situation.

Libra 24 Sep – 23 Oct

You may feel anxious at the moment, but don't fret and keep on churning out your wonderful melodies. A friend may learn that they were adopted at birth and need all your love and support to come to terms with things. A stray cat may appear in your life, so you will have to decide what is the best thing to do. A busy blond may offer to rock your world. Eat fish.

JUNE'S WORLD



Hello, everybody. I hope you are well.

I shall start this month's article by going back to when I was a very young child; I can remember back to when the Second World War started. I was actually at my grandparent's house, who lived two doors away from us. There was such a noise coming from the sky. The next thing we knew, there was an aeroplane just above the chimney pots. My grandma instructed us to get down in the cellar, but it was so close to us that we quickly got

under the table. I was very scared and what seemed like minutes could well have been only seconds. I was blessed with a good imagination, and the Germans I saw climbing over the roof pots, turned out to be local men in the Home Guard with sticks.

Horror tales abounded at this time, and in our little town of Castleford, we heard of people being vapourised in the big cities and being scraped up on a shovel! There were talk of gas masks being used and some soldiers returning from war with all the hair on their body gone. The government did issue gas masks for all the children. While the older kids looked like something out of Doctor Who, the younger ones had Micky Mouse masks, much to the envy of all the older kids.

Sirens went off from time to time, and although it was only a drill, we were convinced it was the German Luftwaffe about to blow us to pieces. When the all-clear siren went off, we were thankful to still be alive. Mrs Fryer's shop was actually hit by a bomb and people were evacuated from the area. Happily, the shop is still standing today.

Life during the war went on pretty much as normal with everyone basically happy but living in poverty. The Eagle pub was still full every night, and we could hear people singing from our bedroom as we snuggled under our army blankets.

As time has elapsed, I think with great affection of this era. Although, lots of the places still remain, most of the people I knew are gone. Occasionally, when I am out shopping, I spot

someone from my childhood and there is still a bond between us. In this changing world, our memories are very important and act like an anchor to our past lives.

Bye for now, June. X

INTERVIEW WITH A BRADFORD MAN ABOUT HIS BACKGROUND IN KARATE



Please can you start by telling us a little bit about yourself? Yes. I'm retired from various jobs. I've always worked in factories and warehouses and other manual jobs. I was never the athletic type, however I took up karate and found that I wasn't too bad at it.

What was it that made you decide to take up karate in the first place? Was it something that you had thought about long and hard?

Yes. Like a lot of young people in the 1970s, I'd been watching the Bruce Lee films and many of us wanted to be like him.

Did you also watch the TV series Kung Fu with David Carradine? Yes, I did. I used to watch it with my dad.

So, going back to the reason for starting karate... I found myself working in an engineering factory, and in that era, many such workplaces had social clubs. This particular company had a karate club as part of their social club setup. Somebody I worked with just asked me whether I fancied coming down and giving it a try, so I did.

Was this in the late 1970s, then? It was November 1979.

Did you take to it straight away? At first, despite enjoying the training, I found it difficult to remember things, possibly due to a lack of self-confidence, and I had to work extra hard to overcome this.

What does a white belt mean? It's the beginner's belt and the first one you get. At first, they didn't think I was good enough to go for the next grade up. I was very upset about it at the time. As a result, I started training like mad. I remember someone who had seen me training saying "that young guy will go all the way". Just hearing those words really helped me. At the next grading, I double-graded due to the training I had done and the encouraging words I had heard.

What colour belt did you have at this stage? Different clubs have different gradings. The next step up from white is white with a red tab. However, I jumped straight up to the next level which was white with two red tabs. I then started training seven days a week.

Were you single at this point? Yes. I trained with three different clubs. I had a motorcycle to help me get around. I started entering competitions; I was only a junior at yellow belt. There was no internet back then, so the competitions were advertised in magazines such as Fighters

and Combat. I'd see them, get on my motorcycle and travel to Sheffield, Liverpool, Newcastle and the like.

Could you buy these magazines in newsagents and, if yes, were they expensive? Yes, you could, and I can't remember how much they cost. It's probably comparable to today's magazine prices.

Did you have any success as a junior? Very minor.

What kind of prizes were there for these competitions? Mainly trophies rather than cash prizes.

Were the competitions long and drawn out? You would sometimes be waiting around for a couple of hours or so before your bout.

Did you get downhearted at the lack of initial success? No. I just really enjoyed competing.

Were you fighting against other people of a similar age? No. They were all different age groups, just people with similar levels of ability or grade, such as yellow belt versus yellow belt. Those with brown belts, purple belts and black belts were all in their own separate pools.

Can you tell me what all the different belts are? I can tell you the belting system where I took part. However, over the years there have been many changes to how it all works. When I started you would be a white belt first of all. This was followed by white with one red tab after three months, then white with two tabs, then yellow and green. At this point, you would be graded every six months. Then, you had purple, purple and white, brown, brown and white, brown and two whites, then 1st Dan black belt.

And can you tell us your current level? I'm a 1st Dan black belt (known as Shodan).

Are there different categories of black belt? Yes, there are. Eventually, you become a Master. From what I can remember, it takes a few years between gradings when you get to those levels.

When you were doing these activities, was it reflected in your diet? No, not at all. I was very much in shape and trim at that point in my life. I was very flexible; I could do the splits and everything.

What was the biggest competition you ever won? My best achievement was reaching the semi-finals of the Yorkshire Open competition at the Richard Dunn Centre in Bradford. It involved fighting in lots of different styles with one set of rules for it.

Have you found that being good at karate has helped you in life generally? Yes.

In what ways? Many people see karate just from the physical aspect. But martial arts are a way of life. They are a discipline. They can help you to face life's challenges. They help you to dig deeper inside yourself and find the resources to move on with things, and also to respect everyone. Anyone can hit someone, but you learn that you don't always need to do this. You learn that there is no shame in walking away from a fight or confrontation. You always respect the person you are training.

Have you ever been forced to use your skills in everyday life? Unfortunately, yes. I was the victim of three mugging attacks in the 1980s.

So, you used your karate skills to defend yourself on these occasions? Yes. I didn't have a choice.

Did it deter your attackers? Yes, it did. I knocked one of them down and it frightened him off. It's not something I really want to go into more detail about as my life was in danger at the time.

Would you recommend karate to young people? Yes, I would.

Why? Because of the discipline and the confidence it will give them. It can help them with things like their homework. This is the self-discipline that they gain from it. They are taught that the hardest thing to do can be the easiest thing to do. Don't procrastinate. Get your head down and do things.

Is it an expensive sport to take part in? It is nowadays, but back when I was training, it was only something like fifty pence to go along.

Does the equipment or the outfits cost a lot to buy? I think I paid £8 for my outfit. I know someone who got a well-known make for £12. This was over forty years ago now, though. I suppose they were quite expensive back then. The outfit is actually called a GI. It is extremely hard wearing; they last well.

Do you think there should be more coverage of karate in the mainstream media? Yes, I do.

Is there any currently? Not that I am aware of. The only real coverage you see is in the Olympic Games. Taekwondo is the martial art that seems to get the most coverage these days. Every country has their own martial art. For example, in the UK, boxing is the primary martial art.

Are you a boxing fan? I can take it or leave it. When there is a big name fighting, I am more interested I suppose.

Have you ever boxed? No. Never.

Which countries do you think practice martial arts the most? I would still say China and Japan, but the rest of the world is not far behind these days. It has spread via practitioners from other shores. Also, there were troops coming back from the occupation of Japan after World War Two, particularly British troops who were in China before the Japanese invaded. They were also in Hong Kong. They started bringing their knowledge back, and it started to grow. It also started to grow rapidly in the USA after their troops returned home as well.

Does this apply specifically to karate or martial arts in general? That's a difficult question to answer as I only know about karate. My guess is that it was mainly karate. In the occupation of Japan, martial arts were banned. However, they allowed karate as they thought it was harmless Chinese shadow boxing. It went underground, but some American troops took to it. They also gained knowledge because the Japanese were attacking the American troops on the streets.

Do you think that you may have gone down a different route if the club at the engineering company had been for a different martial art? Yes.

So, it was just because that was the one that was available that you chose karate? Yes

Brilliant. Thanks for the insight and your time today! No problem, thank you.

GRAHAM TOWNSEND'S MONTHLY QUIZ

Questions:



- (1) Dan Reynolds is the lead vocalist with which US rock band?
- (2) What is the largest organ in the human body (it constitutes around 15% of body weight)?
- (3) "The Fireman" was the original title of which Ray Bradbury novel?
- (4) In Greek mythology, who was the only Gorgon sister who was mortal?
- (5) Which island is home to 887 head statues?
- (6) Which African country has the most pyramids?
- (7) Who did LeBron James overtake as the all-time leading point scorer in the NBA?
- (8) Raspberries are a member of which flower family?
- (9) The Pieta is the only signed piece of work by which artist?
- (10) According to a South Korean study, what type of music makes plants grow quicker?
- (11) Thimphu is the capital of which country?
- (12) Kathryn Janeway was the main character in which Sci-Fi TV series?
- (13) The Zimmermann Telegram led to US involvement in which war?
- (14) What is the filling made of in Milk Duds?
- (15) What is the longest word you can type using only the keys on the top row of a keyboard?
- (16) Will Hughes has deputised as captain for which Premier League team in 2024/25?
- (17) What is a chef's hat called?
- (18) The film characters Chewbacca and Indiana Jones were inspired by whose dog?
- (19) Which female British monarch was a trained mechanic?
- (20) Cenosisophobia is the fear of what?

Answers:

- (1) Imagine Dragons (2) The Skin (3) Fahrenheit 451 (4) Medusa (5) Easter Island (6) Sudan (7) Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (8) Roses (9) Michelangelo (10) Classical (11) Bhutan (12) Star Trek: Voyager (13) World War I (14) Caramel (15) Typewriter (16) Crystal Palace (17) Toque (18) George Lucas (19) Queen Elizabeth II (20) An empty glass while drinking

A HIKE IN BRADFORD BY ANONYMOUS AUTIST

You know things are bad when the City of Culture reveals itself to be run by vultures.

Who have picked clean the carcass of this once rich city, and left a bland, pedestrianised mess: so pretty.

Today, they have rolled out the red carpet or, rather, pink arches. I wonder how much this cost? Don't get me started.

The waste of money on Bradford Live, while the rest of the city is a Bradford Dive.

The money pit that is Darley Street Market, and countless other projects which should not have been started.

Social services outsourced, costing residents millions, all because of the failures of Hinchcliffe and her minions.

But now the council have been hit with hard facts: we simply can't afford to pay more Council Tax.

So, when the bailiffs come to collect and they knock on your door. Tell them you'll pay what Starmer said: not a penny more.

ALICE'S THING OF THE MONTH



Hello and welcome back to Alice's Thing of The Month!

This month we are going to be talking about Robbie Williams.

Robbie Williams is a British artist from Stoke on Trent, born 13th February 1974. He became famous from being a member in the boy band Take That at just 15 years old. Eventually, he would become one of the UK's biggest solo artists ever.

I've never really had an interest in Robbie Williams, or rated his music either. My sister adored Robbie growing up, and I have fond memories of his music as a child, always seeing him on the TV. "Angels" was his biggest hit, and this was played constantly. To this day, it is his most famous song, and ultimately, it saved his career too. I later learnt there is some controversy with this song as it was co-written by a man named Ray

Heffernan. Both men claim to have written the original. We may never know who the song actually belongs to, but Robbie Williams is more famous than ever because of this song.

I recently watched the film *Better Man*. I had seen the trailer at the cinema and thought 'this looks terrible'. I forgot about it, but then kept seeing it on Letterboxd and thought I may as well give it a go; after seeing some of the reviews, it sounded quite interesting. To my surprise, I really enjoyed the film. Robbie Williams is portrayed as a CGI Monkey in the film. I know it sounds ridiculous and looks it from the trailer, but you soon get used to it in the film and forget he is a monkey due to the human emotions on his face and how all the other 'humans' interact with him.

At times, it made me cringe, and I almost stopped watching when the first song "Feel" started and the monkey starts performing, singing and dancing. I thought I wouldn't get through it, but again, you get used to the singing and dancing throughout the film. It is a musical/biopic after all. Some of the musical scenes were spectacular. I looked up who directed it – it was Michael Gracey who had directed *The Greatest Showman*. Everything made sense now and that's why it was so dazzling. I am not a fan of *The Greatest Showman*, but I enjoyed the Robbie Williams musical.

It takes us through his life from being a child and being inspired by his father to be a performer. It would show us how much he admired his dad and 'the greats' as he called them, such as Frank Sinatra. Not so long later, Williams' dad abandons him and his mum, leaving him feeling emotionally destroyed, leading to the decline of his mental health.

We get to see the start of Take That and the rise and fall of Robbie in the band he eventually got kicked out due to "differences". If Robbie had never left Take That, he wouldn't be the man and star he is today. The film then shows us his relationship with Nicole Appleton, the good and bad side of it, as well as Williams' drug habits throughout his career. He ended up in rehab a few times.

The end of the film shows us that he has made friends with his demons and invites his father on stage to perform "My Way" with him as a nod to Frank Sinatra and Williams' childhood.

After finishing this, I did more of a deep dive into Robbie's life and found a Netflix documentary about him released in 2023. The documentary starts at Robbie's mansion where he now lives with his wife and four children. The documentary involves Robbie rewatching his whole life back on a laptop and him talking about it. Throughout his career, he was filmed nearly every day, so we get to see the very private life of Williams and get taken through his rise and falls of his career.

One thing that stood out to me in the documentary was how horrible the British press was – and still are – about him. Even TV shows were horrible and joked about him. People think this doesn't harm others, but it does and can lead to suicide. It's mainly papers like The Sun and The Daily Star who cause a lot of problems for people, especially those in the public eye.

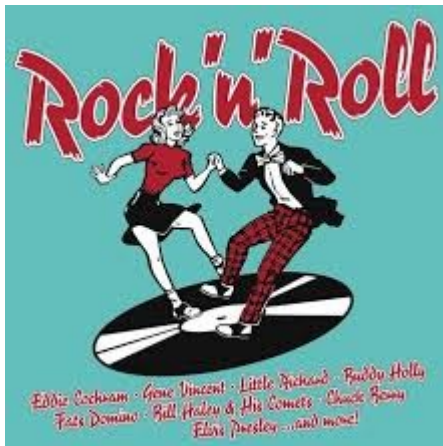
I found the documentary inspiring, and even though he had so much trouble in his life, he has come through it and says there is a happy ending. I loved this. Another thing I praise Williams for is being open about his mental health and advocating for ADHD. People are still stigmatised by mental health conditions, so to see more famous people talk about it helps others open up too and feel better about themselves.

Robbie Williams is touring again this year including the UK. I think he is brave to come back and do another tour here despite the hate from the press, but it shows he can overcome anything and it doesn't matter what others think of you.

People think he is overrated and his songs aren't great, but you can't deny everyone at least knows one song by him, in the UK at least. Robbie isn't very well known in the US, but since the release of *Better Man* more people are starting to discover him. I feel 2025 is the year of Robbie Williams, and I am happy to see his comeback is appreciated.

Thanks for reading.

ROCK AND ROLL MUSIC



Written by Graham Townsend

What exactly is rock and roll music? Can it be defined, and who do you associate with the genre?

Many people associate rock and roll music with electric guitars. They became prominent from the mid-1950s onwards. Fender was the first company to mass produce the instrument which played such a pivotal role in the music industry.

When you ask someone to name an artist or act you would associate with rock and roll, Elvis Presley, Bill

Haley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly and Chuck Berry would likely be among the first names to crop up. Some of these singers, especially the white singers, would be classed as rockabilly. Early rock and roll was also most certainly influenced by rhythm and blues music. There are so many variations of rock and roll. We've already mentioned rockabilly, but other subgenres include classic rock, punk rock, heavy rock, glam rock, funk rock, prog rock, indie rock and even synth-pop or new wave music.

After the initial boom, which created the aforementioned stars, the '60s saw the advent of bands such as The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Animals, The Doors and The Jimi Hendrix Experience. All these artists had guitars at the forefront of their performances. The type of rock and roll was diversifying somewhat by this stage. Hendrix's music was seen as experimental; his guitar techniques were seen as revolutionary. The way he used feedback and his mastery of the wah-wah pedal were among some of the things that people were wowed by. Other bands such as Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin and Fleetwood Mac, the latter in their initial incarnation as a blues rock band, were starting to emerge.

In the mid-1970s, we had the Stones proclaiming "It's Only Rock n' Roll (But I like it)". Much rock in this period was a very different type of music though. Progressive rock was dominant. Genesis, with Peter Gabriel as their original frontman, were heavily involved in the scene. Their album "Selling England by the Pound" is considered one of the best progressive rock albums of all time. Other big name acts from this scene included Yes, King Crimson, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Camel, Focus and Jethro Tull. More mainstream rock acts from the 1970s included Queen, Status Quo and Thin Lizzy. We were starting to move

more towards heavy metal by the end of the decade after a brief foray into punk rock in the mid to late part of the '70s.

The 1980s saw Britain play more of a role in the heavy rock scene. Acts such as Deep Purple and Black Sabbath had paved the way for bands such as Motorhead, Saxon, Iron Maiden and Judas Priest. They were starting to challenge the big hitters of the rock world such as AC/DC, Aerosmith, Kiss and Van Halen. America had quite a lot of soft rock bands such as Foreigner, REO Speedwagon, Toto and Chicago. Their music was much more melodic. They gave way to hair metal bands like Poison, Motley Crue and Skid Row. Other commercially successful rock bands in the mid to late '80s included Def Leppard, Bon Jovi and Guns 'n' Roses. Many of the bands in the '80s were driven by their fashion as much as their musical style. This should not detract from the many talented guitarists who were an integral part of this era. Metallica were also around at this time. They were more of a thrash metal band initially known for their fast tempo and aggressive raw vocals.

The 1990s saw grunge rock appear on the scene. Bands such as Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden and Alice in Chains. Grunge is basically a fusion of punk rock and heavy metal. Indie rock started to have an influence later in the decade. One of the main exponents of this type of music were, and technically still are, Oasis. You can clearly hear the influence of the Beatles in their guitar work. Other bands associated with this subgenre include Radiohead and Muse. Elements of punk music were also prevalent again. Green Day, Offspring, Sum 41 and Blink 182 would all probably fit under the description of pop-punk bands. They were among the artists bringing us kicking and screaming into the 21st century. Acts such as Red Hot Chili Peppers blended funk, rock and punk together in their music.

Rock and roll is still alive and well today. When I went to see The Killers last year, they described themselves as “a rock and roll band from Las Vegas”. Their material is very commercial but certainly includes various elements of rock music going right back to its roots.

I hope you have enjoyed this look at a very popular musical concept.

HOLIDAY HEAVEN

Written by S. Bee

The images online look lovely: a tanned, attractive young couple happily beam at each other while they stroll along holding hands on a sandy, soft beach alongside a deep blue sea. Added to this is a typical glorious background of hot sun with brilliant blue sky. It's the picture of holiday perfection. Tempted by this, my hubby says, “Let's go abroad! We can depend on good weather.” Hmm...

I remind him of the time when we went on holiday to the Algarve. It absolutely lashed it down with rain. It was non-stop for four days and nights – and we'd booked a week. It was hard trying to pass the time in a lazy, outdoors kind of place when we couldn't go and laze outdoors. Facilities at the small hotel were limited, so it was really difficult to find something to do to help pass the time. Naturally, the teeny indoor pool and jacuzzi were fully occupied, and we didn't feel like squashing up and sharing. It felt quite claustrophobic. We'd stumped up over a grand for this!

In the bar, some holiday makers played cards, some read the papers, some did crosswords, some chatted to the holiday reps as they wallowed in reliving their golden summer memories. Some plucky souls even adorned cagoules, clutching brollies while wearing sandals, and braved the elements, simply for a breath of fresh air! Eventually, most of the guests – including me and my hubby – crammed in the tiny TV lounge. As we drank endless cups of tea, the reps hoped an old black and white Sherlock Holmes film would raise our flagging spirits. It didn't, and the 'They've sent us the rain to make us feel at home' line was still doing the rounds next day at evening meal!

We didn't fare any better when, a few years later, we flew to Menorca. When we'd unpacked at the hotel, my hubby and I eagerly scrambled into our newly bought shorts, sandals and t-shirts. We quickly stuffed a bag with beach towels, sun protection cream, books, bottles of water, sunglasses and hats. Then, we headed off to the vast sandy beach. Well, this was clearly the wrong thing to do.

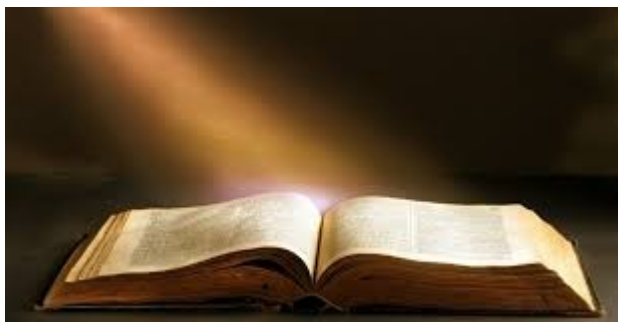
Sadly, we discovered that we lacked the one holiday essential: warm sun and a blue sky. In fact, it was cloudy and chilly. We should have been sensibly kitted out in jeans, socks, shoes and jumpers. This was, of course, what the locals wore. I could sense what they thought of us, as we scurried back to the hotel, 'Silly English people! They think this is a warm country!'

Later in the week, it rained. For hours and hours, it bounced down in a torrential, crashing cascade. We'd ventured out without wellies or an umbrella. *Who brings wellies to a sun-soaked paradise?* We got completely wet through to the skin. It took days to dry out our sopping, soaked clothes.

To make matters worse, back at the hotel, when we hogged a computer to catch the news online, we discovered that an unexpected heatwave had broken out back in Blighty! So, I've now decided to cross Spain, Portugal and anywhere abroad off my “desirable destinations” holiday list.

My idea of holiday heaven? It's spending time at the UK coast in a cosy B&B. Yes, the weather might be unreliable – it's unreliable abroad, too – but there's lot of museums, art galleries, exhibitions, shops, bowling alleys and cinemas to keep us occupied. We can easily dive indoors if the weather's bad. Nice nosh, lots to see and do, and friendly folk to boot. You can't beat it!

BIBLE TALK



Sent by Peter Smith

Jesus: The Light of the world, our Hope for the future.

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to everyone according to his work."

I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright and morning Star."

And the Spirit and the Bride say "Come".
And let him who hears say "Come".
And let him who thirsts come.
Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

(Revelation 22:12,16,17: NKJV)

BRENDA'S WILDLIFE CORNER



Grey Parrot

This species is not the most colourful of birds – both sexes appear similar – being grey and mainly black-billed, although its red tail feathers add a bit of colour to it. It is an African parrot, and it is native to countries including Angola, the Congo, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Uganda, Ghana and Kenya.

In the wild, this parrot is a ground-feeder and its diet consists of nuts, seeds, oil palm fruit, and occasionally insects, snails and even tree bark. Interestingly, the grey parrot is a monogamous breeder and each pair nests in its own tree. The hen usually lays between 3 and 5 eggs which she incubates for 30 days while food is provided by her mate. Parents look after their chicks until they are 4–5 weeks old and fledged. It is 12 weeks before the chicks leave the nest. It must be noted that grey parrots can be quite aggressive when defending their nesting sites.

There is an uncertainty regarding the current population of the grey parrot as many are taken as pets, especially in the eastern part of the Congo. Furthermore, it can be difficult to distinguish if it is a grey parrot nearby as it has the ability to imitate other wild birds' songs.

The grey parrot's main predator is humans; we pose a serious threat to their population. Some are hunted for their meat, and their body parts are used in traditional medicine. Also, they are heavily traded on the international market, and many die in transit. People like to keep grey parrots as pets as their mimicry of human speech is appreciated by many. They are a bird that needs a lot of stimulation as they are highly intelligent. Feather plucking is usually a sign of distress. The longevity of the grey parrot depends on whether it spends its life in captivity (40 – 60 years) or in the wild (approximately 23 years).

ARE PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES GOOD ROLE MODELS?



Written by Graham Townsend

Professional sportspeople are looked up to by so many others across the globe. Because many of them are very well paid,

their lives are scrutinised to the nth degree. It is not surprising then, that when such an athlete is involved in a controversial incident that we start asking the question, are they a good role model?

The question can be divided into two – we can look at their behaviour whilst competing but also away from their profession. People such as Lance Armstrong, Ben Johnson, Tonya Harding and Diego Maradona have raised the ire of the public by becoming embroiled in events involving their actual participation. Much of this has involved the breaking of the rules of their chosen sport. Others such as O J Simpson, Oscar Pistorius, Dennis Rodman and Mike Tyson have attained infamy for events away from their sports. These indiscretions range in severity. Some people will see off-field controversies as being much more serious. The reason for this being the risk to others lives having come into the equation in some instances.

The obvious place to start, from a British perspective, is with professional football players. Much of the focus on them is down to the relatively large amounts of money they are paid. It is somewhat expected that the players will be squeaky clean in terms of their behaviour because of the media spotlight they have on themselves due to television coverage and sponsorship deals. The aforementioned Maradona has admitted to cheating. He retrospectively acknowledged that he had used his hand to score a goal against England in the 1986 World Cup in Mexico. He was a fantastic footballer, however this incident certainly tainted his legacy in the eyes of many, especially here in England.

Many incidents in recent times involving footballers playing in the Premier League here in England have revolved around off-field incidents. Many of the top players are followed around by the paparazzi. They seem to prey on them in the hope of metaphorically catching them with their pants down. Whilst in many cases the players are caught acting in a way which would be seen as morally reprehensibly, they are not putting other people's lives at risk unless they are involved in something like a road traffic incident which may be viewed with more gravity.

In the world of sports entertainment, specifically professional wrestling, Hulk Hogan is a household name, especially in the United States. He is primarily known for his run as an all-conquering good guy. He was described as a "Real American" and encouraged kids to "eat their vitamins". In the years since his retirement, many stories have emerged surrounding his behaviour away from the squared circle. Most of these stories have suggested he is perhaps not the nicest of people. This is very ironic considering the role he played out for many years in front of millions of people. Again, this is a situation where his morals might be questioned. When we compare this to the events surrounding O J Simpson, Oscar Pistorius or even Aaron Hernandez, an NFL player convicted of murder, Hogan's misdemeanours could be viewed as minor.

At the end of the day, no matter how good someone is at their particular discipline, we need to acknowledge they are human just like the rest of us are. However, there are lines that no one should cross, irrespective of their standing in the sporting world.

SOME MORE INCREDIBLE RECIPES FROM JUNE CHARLTON



Braised red cabbage

Ingredients:

2 oz of butter
1 medium onion, sliced
1 clove of garlic, crushed
1lb of red cabbage, shredded
1 cooking apple, peeled, cored and sliced
3 tablespoons of vinegar
3 tablespoons of water
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method:

Melt the butter in a large pan. Add the onion and garlic and cook on a medium heat until softened. Add the cabbage and apple and cook on a medium heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Transfer the mixture to a casserole dish. Combine the vinegar and water, add the sugar and pour over the cabbage. Season and cover the casserole tightly. Cook until tender.



Creole Rabbit Pie

Ingredients:

6 oz of ruff puff or flaky pastry
1 rabbit
2 oz of minced bacon
2 cooking apples, peeled and sliced
2 tablespoons of flour
1 dessertspoon of curry powder
Salt and pepper
Pinch of mixed spice
½ pint of stock

1 teaspoon of Worcester sauce
1 dessertspoon of lemon juice
2 cloves
1 dessertspoon of chopped parsley
1 onion, peeled and sliced

Method:

Wash the rabbit and cut into portions. Soak for ½ an hour in salted, hot water. Place in a saucepan and cover with hot water. Bring to the boil and add salt, cloves, spice and herbs. Simmer gently for 1 ½ hours and remove to cool. Roll the rabbit in flour mixed with curry powder, place in the bottom of a greased pie dish and cover with layers of onion and apple. Top with minced bacon and chopped parsley and pour over the stock and lemon juice. Roll the pastry to a ¼ thickness. Cover pie with pastry and trim edges, decorate if desired and

glaze with milk. Bake in a hot oven gas mark 8/450 F for 10 minutes, reduce heat to gas mark 5/375 F and cook for a further 40–50 minutes.



Mock Roast

Ingredients:

1lb of sausage meat
4 – 6 oz of left-over cooked meat, minced
1 small onion, grated
1 teaspoon of mixed dried herbs
2 oz of breadcrumbs
1 egg
Melted dripping

Coating Cream:

1 dessertspoon of flour
1 dessertspoon of gravy powder
½ teaspoon of dry mustard
(blend to thick cream with cold water)

Method:

Mix the sausage meat together with the cooked meat, onion, herbs and breadcrumbs and bind with the beaten egg. Mould to joint shaped with floured hands and place in a baking tin with melted dripping. Brush over with coating cream. Place in a moderate oven gas mark 5/375 F for 20 minutes. Baste with fat, then repeat with coating cream and repeat at intervals until the joint is done, for approximately 1 hour. Serve hot with vegetables in season or cold with salad.



Wacky Cake

Ingredients:

4 oz sugar
3 oz of plain flour
¼ teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda
1 teaspoon of vanilla essence
½ cup of cooking oil
¼ pint of cold water
1 tablespoon of vinegar

Method:

Sift together all the dry ingredients. Add oil, water, vinegar and vanilla essence and stir mixture until smooth. Turn into an ungreased tin (approximately 9 x 13 x 2 inches) and bake for 30–35 minutes at gas mark 4/350 F. This cake can be eaten hot or cold.

A PERFECT BLEND

“Penny!” I spun round to see my old school friend, Hazel. I recognised her straight away. We'd recently reconnected on social media and had arranged to meet in town. We were now both retired.

I smiled. “You look just the same!”

“You do, too. You haven't changed a bit! It's great to see you again. Shall we go for a cuppa?”

I nodded. “Sounds good.”

We found a newly opened cafe, grabbed a tray and joined the long queue. Finally, we reached the cash desk.

“What can I get you, ladies?” The assistant asked.

“Tea, please,” we chorused.

I approved of Hazel's choice. With the endless range of coffees on offer these days, we'd be here until next week deciding what to have!

“We have a variety of fruit teas. Lemon and ginger, cranberry and orange, nettle and peppermint, cherry and cinnamon, apple and pear, plus we have green tea, de-caffeinated tea, Earl grey and English traditional.”

My mind spun. Crikey. This was just like the coffee scenario!

“English traditional please and we'd like milk with it,” Hazel replied. She shot me a glance to say 'Is this ok?' and I nodded.

“Skimmed, semi-skimmed or full fat? Or we have soya milk,” the assistant went on.

“Full fat please,” I answered. Hazel flashed me a thumbs up.

“Mugs, or a teapot and cups?” The assistant chirped.

“Mugs,” Hazel answered.

“Small, medium or large?”

“Medium,” I said.

I cast my eyes up to the ceiling. This was getting ridiculous! Behind us, the queue was getting longer. It wasn't surprising, I thought, if the customers have to go through this palaver every time they ordered a simple hot drink.

As the assistant busied herself, Hazel muttered, “I'm half expecting to be asked how many grains of sugar I want.”

I chuckled. “That's the way it is nowadays. Anyway, the sugars and sweeteners are over there with the teaspoons in little sachets.”

I mulled this over. Customers clearly demanded choice. Yet, I found these modern options bewildering and, judging by her comment, it seemed that Hazel felt the same way.

We found a table, but the café décor was so bright and zany, it hurt our eyes. Who actually found lime green and neon pink stripes soothing? The loud music, hip-hop rap, was hardly relaxing, plus the chairs were hard.

“Remember Joe's Café, Penny?” Hazel began. She almost had to shout above the racket.

“Of course. It was our 1970's teenage hang out,” I said.

“Tea was just tea back then, wasn't it?” she mused.

I nodded. “As for coffee, there were two options – with milk, or without.”

Hazel laughed. “We spent many a happy hour in there, gazing at Joe's son behind the counter. He looked like Marc Bolan.”

“There was red leather seating and a jukebox, too. You were a big David Bowie fan,” I stated.

“I still am. And you liked The Bay City Rollers,” Hazel recalled.

I smiled. “Yes. I even wore my tartan outfit to school.”

We chatted about the good old days and what we'd done since school. Our marriages had stood the test of time, and we happily showed each other mobile photos of our children and grandchildren. Then, it was time to bid farewell.

“Let's meet up again soon,” I said.

Hazel hesitated. “Pardon the pun Penny, but that place wasn't my cup of tea.”

“But, they're all like that now. Cafes like Joe's are long gone. Perhaps the art gallery cafe would suit us better? It's calm with a cream décor, and it's quite classy too.”

We swapped numbers and promised to stay in touch.

“Remember last time we met, and that awful cafe? Well, I've found an alternative. It suits us golden oldies perfectly,” Hazel began, when we met again.

“Is it the art gallery cafe?” I asked.

“No. I found this place online,” she replied. We passed the trendy cafe where the queue was building up once again.

“I hope it has comfy seats,” I remarked.

“I think it'll have comfy seats. There's music and no silly colour schemes,” Hazel soothed. I smiled. “Good.”

When Hazel led me down an alleyway, I stopped in my tracks. “It's Joe's cafe!” I breathed.

“Not quite,” Hazel said. “Look again.” With its vintage exterior and furniture, it certainly looked like Joe's cafe – yet it was different. It was called Revival.

I peered through the window. “There are young people here, as well as customers our age. And there's Marc Bolan behind the counter!”

“That's Joe's grandson,” Hazel explained.

As we stepped in, it was just like going back in time. The jukebox in the corner played 1970's songs and the plush red leather seats were exactly as we remembered them. As we approached the counter, I wondered if Revival would pass the tea/coffee test.

“Good morning, ladies,” Joe's grandson greeted us. “We only have traditional tea here, but we have a wide range of coffees. We have cappuccino, espresso, a flat white, a latte, decaffeinated...” My heart sank. Not this faffing about again! Yet, now we were prepared.

“A traditional tea would be lovely, please,” I said.

“We'd like medium-sized mugs, not cups, with full fat milk,” Hazel added.

“Take a seat. I'll bring it over.”

We did that, just as “In the Summertime” by Mungo Jerry began playing on the jukebox.

“This is memory lane heaven!” I cried. “Thank you, Hazel, for finding this amazing cafe.”

She smiled. “No problem. Here's our tea, brought by us by a dishy Marc Bolan look-a-like. You can't get better than that!”

ADVENTURES OF A MAN SITTING DOWN 28



When you get a really good idea, sometimes it just won't let go. I really wish it would.

The problem with good ideas is that they are usually perspective-based. Classically put, one person's meat is another person's poison. An idea is only good when viewed from a perspective in which it is seen as having value. It reminds me of this interaction from *Blackadder II*:

Nursie

That was another good idea! You are so clever today, you better be careful your foot doesn't fall off.

Queen Elizabeth

Does that happen, when you have lots of brilliant ideas? Your foot falls off?

Nursie

Certainly does. My brother, he had this brilliant idea of cutting his toenails with a scythe, and his foot fell off.

On re-reading, that interaction suggests that some ideas, in fact, have dubious value to all but the haver of the idea, and even then, in the final analysis, not very much. Does an idea have a haver? Is haver the word that I want it to be? Shouldn't I rather say the source of the idea. Or perhaps the possessor. Well, I'm sticking with haver. I like it. And the whole debate, even if it's one I'm having with myself on the page, uses up a few more words of my word count which, at the time of writing this, is a crucial quality.

What good idea is driving me to write this? There are potentially three. One is a book I've written that's got funding to create actual copies for sale to a waiting world. Except I don't know how much of the world is waiting, and I have to do a lot of work to make the thing look presentable to a public that gives not a fig for the niceties and complexities of editing and proofreading until they encounter multiple instances of its failings in a book they've just paid for with their hard-earned money. That's one idea. The next idea is making a film. Again, a lot of hard work. And that is a weird lot of work. Even before you get to the public, there's a whole range of people waiting for guidance to create the vision of the thing you have got in your head. Using the example Nursie gives above, you have to give someone else the scythe and guide them in the best way to use it to cut your toenails. Yikes! However, it's none of those ideas.

The thing that I am currently considering is buying up a whole lot of cheap Playmobil figures and creating film tie-ins for films that would never have a Playmobil tie-in, like, say, *Apocalypse Now*. This is because, of late, I've got strangely invested in seeking out interesting Playmobil sets. For example, I recently bought a *Back to the Future* (BTTF) Advent calendar. But BTTF is a huge globally known franchise. It's no surprise that they would have a Playmobil tie in. What about a tie-in for *Rain Man*, *A Bout de Souffle*, or *Good Will Hunting*? Just standard figures organised in a way and presented in a box that suggests a

toy manufacturer has decided there's money in them thar hills. See? It's the equivalent of Nursie's podiatry plan. Who would buy such a thing? Would it even work? How realistic would it need to be to make people step over the boundary of indolence and spend money on the endeavour? Well, I'll keep it on low boil. Now that I've shared it with you perhaps that good idea will stay as just that. Let's see.

ANOTHER FUN QUIZ FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH



Questions:

- (1) What is the French word for makeup?
- (2) What is the capital of Tanzania?
- (3) Who played Dirty Den in Eastenders?
- (4) What is the currency of Peru?
- (5) What is the Spanish word for bride?
- (6) Which country produces the most nylon in the world?
- (7) Who played Mark Gordon in the series

Highway to Heaven?

- (8) Who were the original members of the boy band Take That?
- (9) Where do Blackburn Rovers FC play their home games?
- (10) Where was the entrepreneur Elon Musk born?
- (11) Which country consumes the most lager in the world?
- (12) Who has won the most gold medals at one Olympic games?
- (13) Who played the faithful butler in the Arthur films?
- (14) Where is the most gold mined?
- (15) What nationality is the actor Ursula Andress?
- (16) Where would you wear a cravate?
- (17) Who invented British Sign Language?
- (18) What is the word for moustache in German?
- (19) Where was the first sliced loaf produced?
- (20) Who was the first million-pound footballer?

Answers:

- (1) Le maquillage (2) Dodoma (3) Leslie Grantham (4) Sol (5) Novia (6) China (7) Victor French (8) Gary Barlow, Howard Donald, Mark Owen, Jason Orange and Robbie Williams (9) Ewood Park (10) Pretoria, South Africa (11) Czech Republic (12) Michael Phelps (13) John Gielgud (14) China (15) Swiss (16) The neck (17) Developed naturally over time (18) Schnurrbart (19) In Chillicothe, Missouri using the machine invented by Otto Rohwedder (20) Trevor Francis

Editor's Final Word: Thank you for taking the time and the trouble to read this e-magazine. If you like it, you may want to consider submitting something for publication to: dean@fthm.org.uk Best wishes, Dean, Brenda, Graham, Willow and Hari.

