



Poynton News

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

poyntonu3a.org.uk

Issue 32-6

27th May 2020

Editorial

Welcome to the sixth edition of our new style newsletter. This issue continues the recent trend with a little bit of Poynton U3A news, no Information section and lots of interesting contributions from members.

Thank you to everybody who has contributed so far. If you feel you can contribute, please send text and pictures to news@poyntonu3a.org.uk, preferably text in Word format and pictures as jpgs.

Poynton U3A

Day Trips

Due to the ongoing situation with the Covid-19 Pandemic we have decided to cancel the trips, which had been planned for September, October and November. Originally these three trips would have been available to book from 1 July. The trips for May and July had already been cancelled and we will be contacting those people who have already made payment for either of these trips over the next few months. We hope that the programme, which had been planned for this year can be moved to dates in 2021. However, we will have to review the situation closer to the time.

Iris Neale

Contact Information

Again, if you know of any U3A member who is feeling isolated and not on email, please contact them to let them know that they can phone Jayne or Sandra to be added to our telephone list.

Remember the Town Council website still has lots of information on its website -

www.poyntontowncouncil.gov.uk and on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/poyntontowncouncil/>

The current list of local businesses who are able to deliver provisions, take-away meals and food to residents collated by the Town Council can be viewed or downloaded as a PDF at <https://bit.ly/2J8OWxL>. The list is being constantly updated so is worth another look.

Members' Contributions

The Sinking of The Lancastria

On 17th June it will be the 80th anniversary of the above wartime disaster. My father Joseph Charles Malham Sergeant R.A.S.C. was one of the few lucky ones to be a survivor. Dad was in the Regular Army, having joined up in 1934. He was in the expeditionary force in France.

After the Dunkirk evacuation had ended, Winston Churchill had informed the Nation that the British Expeditionary Force had been successfully evacuated. This was not so - around 150,000 British troops were left behind. Strung out across France for two weeks whilst German Dive Bombers swooped remorselessly, before they were finally given the order to head for the coast and evacuate.

They finally reached the last open harbour of St-Nazaire. They were hungry and dirty and very tired. Seeing the five-decked 16,243-ton liner out in the estuary of the River Loire they probably gave thanks to their own personal saviour and thought they were safe. The Lancastria was a Cunard Liner turned into a troop ship, the largest of the fleet sent to save thousands. Some thought it was as good as being home already, little did they know it turned out for many to be a death trap.

On 17th June 1940 the troops had to be ferried across to the Lancastria for boarding. As the water was shallow it lay nearly five miles out. Chaos reigned as they were being shelled, so many troops piled onto the ship, some of them climbing up ropes and nets which were hanging over the side to find the only bit of space available to rest their heads. A true count became impossible, after 5,000 they just lost count and so it is thought that approximately 7,000 including some civilians boarded. Some had been given life jackets as they boarded. Dad had been sent below deck and felt very lucky that he could now get something to eat and get his head down.

There was another large liner; the Oronsay next to the Lancastria which was hit by German bombers, the bridge was damaged but the ship didn't sink. Around 4pm the Lancastria was hit by three or four bombs, one going down the funnel which exploded in the engine room. One had gone through the hold and blew out part of the keel, hundreds of tons of fuel oil were gushing from its tanks. Within a few minutes the Lancastria started to list, men were jumping overboard and in doing so some broke their necks as the life jackets were not secured properly. Many of them couldn't swim and so stayed on board huddling on the deck accepting their fate. Some of the survivors said they could hear them singing as the ship went down, 'Roll Out the Barrel' and 'There'll Always Be an England'. One survivor said there were not many atheists that day. It took less than half an hour for her to sink.

Whilst in the water German aircraft flew over machine gunning into the oil which had spilled out in an attempt to set it alight. Dad was shot in the leg and was by now covered in oil and swallowed a lot of it. Some could not hold onto ropes hanging over the side of life boats because the oil wouldn't allow them a purchase on anything, they just gave up and

slipped into the water. There were several upturned lifeboats bobbing around, men were hanging onto pieces of wood, some were hanging onto oars, some sharing a life jacket holding onto anything or anyone to help them keep afloat. A group of men made a circle so that the few who had life jackets could hold up the few who didn't.

Dad was one of the lucky ones who were picked up and taken to safety, this surprises me because from what I can remember he wasn't a strong swimmer. Because he didn't go into great detail, I really don't know how he got back to England. The rescue boats consisted of French tugs and fishing boats, as well as the British ships still in the Estuary. The rescue was made difficult as they were having to manoeuvre through the oil slick, which had poured from the Lancastria. At the same time they were still being machine gunned. It has been calculated that anything between 3,000 and 5,000 troops were drowned that day. However, with no proper records this is not clear.

The injured were taken to hospitals and were told they must not speak of the incident. Of course, they didn't for many years. An American newspaper printed the story. In Britain in July 1940 just a column in The Daily Mirror was printed with the figures seemingly played down.

For some time bodies were found on the French beaches, local French people took them to local or makeshift cemeteries in and around St-Nazaire, and buried them with dignity, some without coffins. Bodies were being washed up for many months, until only bones and bits of uniform washed up. The local residents tried to find anything that would identify them, that is, wallets or letters that were still legible, so as to inform the British. Each year a contingency of survivors' descendants make the pilgrimage to St-Nazaire for a service. The Lancastria still lies at the bottom of the Estuary.

After Lancastria was sunk with such a dreadful death toll, Churchill ordered the disaster not to be covered by the press. However, later on he explained that he only intended to shelve the news for a short while, but then forgot about it! His government had been in office for such a short time. They were inundated, with bad news after bad news. Churchill felt with the fall of France and the evacuation of Dunkirk he could not give the public any more bad news, it was already a calamitous time for Europe. This being the case, I feel that it was more an oversight to lift the 'D' notice rather than a cover up, but indeed the Lancastria really is Britain's forgotten tragedy.

The first thing my family knew of this disaster, was during the 1950s. Dad received an invitation to a reunion from a survivor who had started The HMT Lancastria Association. I believe initially it was called The Lancastria Survivors Association, but then changed its name. Dad reluctantly accepted. They were meeting at Horse Guards Parade. Mum took me, and my brother and sister to see the parade. Dad was reunited with several of his pals, together with a young French girl Jacqueline Tillyard who at the age of two was on the ship with her parents, they all survived. I remember him calling some of them by their nicknames as they greeted one another, I distinctly remember 'Peter the Painter'.

Anyway, after a march with bands playing, they were taken for a meal and a trip along the Thames, because I was quite young this bit becomes a little foggy. I'm not sure if they had a meal on the boat or if they were taken somewhere else. I am sure there would also have been a service of some kind. We left the survivors and mum took us home and awaited dad's arrival. It seemed they had a wonderful reunion and probably a tearful one as they toasted absent friends. Needless to say, he was more than a little worse for drink when he returned. His ribbon of medals was dangling vertically from his lapel and I really don't know how he got home.

Even after this, he rarely spoke of the disaster. When he did, it was never in great detail. What's more he never attended another reunion. We, his family, feel it may have just been too much to contemplate all over again. His sense of humour was such that he would make us laugh at anything and didn't want to dwell on unhappy things that happened in his past. He could always see the funny side of things, and was a very funny man. He felt the past was exactly that - the past! Apart from that, he would have felt it unnecessary to burden his family with such horror.

The long term effect was that in 1942, on boarding a boat to take him to West Africa he was told to go below deck. From what he told the family, he panicked and lashed out at an officer. This incident would have gone on his record, which meant he would never go higher in rank. He loved the army and intended to make it his life but, knowing there was no future, after twelve years he returned to civilian life. In Burma he was in what was known as 'The Forgotten Army'. Somewhat ironic me thinks!

I joined The Lancastria Association after my dad died, in the hope I could be of service. The survivors were getting less each year and the hope was to keep the Association going with the help of their descendants, but it turned out, as I had by then moved to Cheshire and working full time, I couldn't fit it round my family life.

In February of this year a young man Daniel Foster and his father Robert appeared on BBC1 'Inside Out'. They were arranging an 80th Anniversary Commemoration of the sinking, to be held in Liverpool, from where the ship made her final voyage. Robert's Grandfather had been on the Lancastria when it sank. Due to the secrecy of the disaster, they looked into it and found lots of information. Much of it being survivor accounts.

Daniel made the sinking a school project as did my own grandson whose birthday falls on the anniversary. Unfortunately he never knew his great grandfather, hopefully both young men who are now in their mid-twenties will participate in opening the service.

They have arranged a reunion on 14th June starting with a service at Our Lady and St Nicholas Church, near the Pier Head. The Lord Mayor of Liverpool will be attending and hopefully some representatives from St-Nazaire. They have had a lot of interest. I noticed fourteen of one family intend to go and approximately ten of mine. It seems there will be many more families hoping to be there. It should be very well attended. However, due to Coronavirus it is on hold!

The story of the sinking of the *Lancastria* has been documented in the book *The Sinking of the Lancastria – Britain's Greatest Maritime Disaster and Churchill's Cover-Up* by Jonathan Fenby.

Kay Dacey

Sewing Scrubs during the lockdown

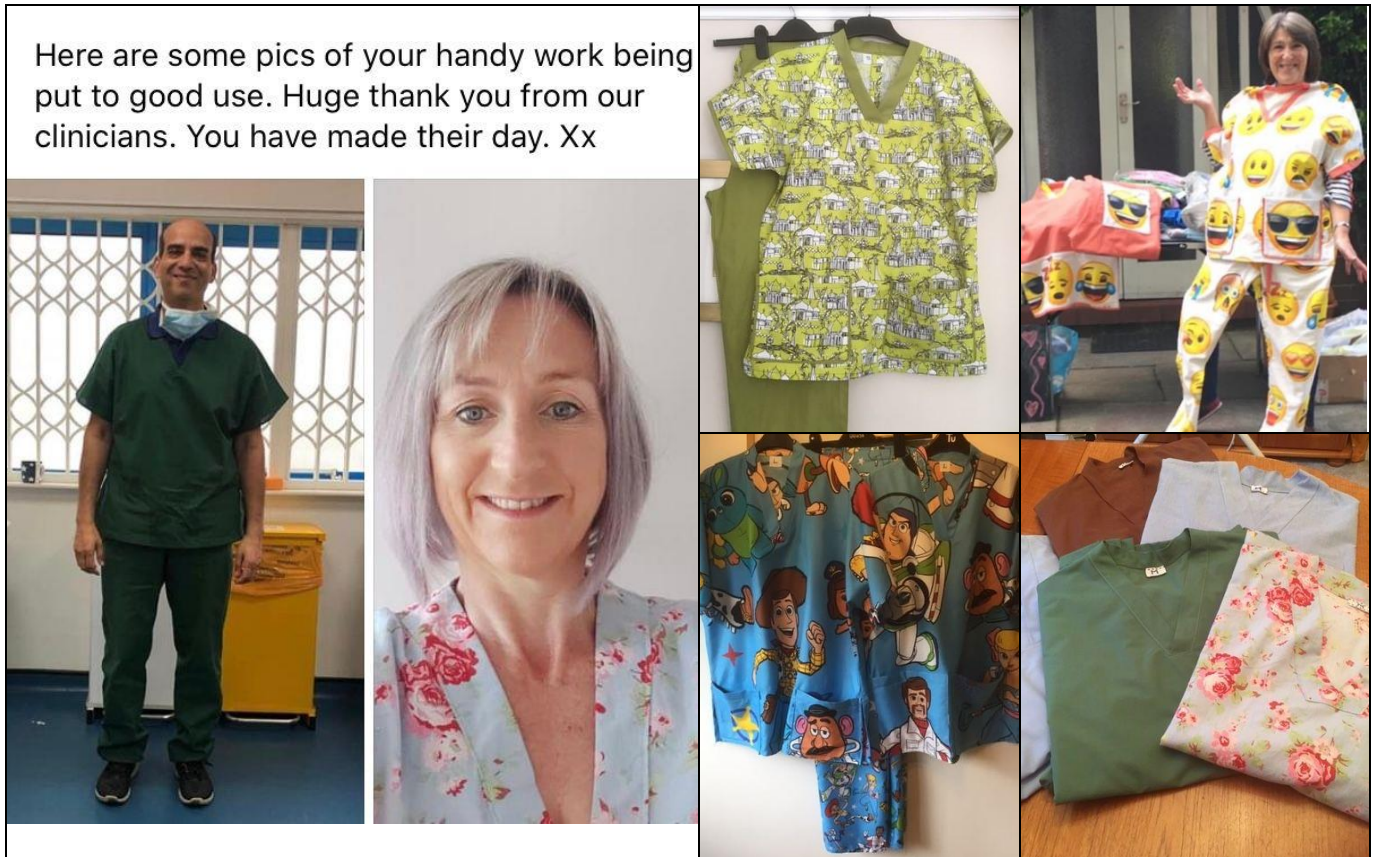
After identifying a shortage in the supply of scrubs to frontline NHS staff during the current COVID -19 epidemic a lady named Ashleigh Lindsell set up a Face book group in Cambridgeshire to enable people to contribute towards supplying local hospitals. The story was widely publicised in the national press and the idea swept across the country with many local hubs being formed. I searched for my local group and joined 'For the Love of Scrubs Stockport and Cheshire'. The group started in early April with a small team including a Bramhall lady, Abi Jenkins, who began by asking local GP surgeries, NHS community staff and care workers to complete an online request form and the requests flooded in! As well as accepting donations, sourcing new fabric and suitable patterns and organising the growing team of volunteers, Abi also set up a group of area coordinators to help fulfil the increasing demand. I became the coordinator for the local Poynton area and the work began!

Initially I hoped to contribute by making a few sets of scrubs and involving other willing sewers. The focus for the group was providing scrubs but we were also asked for laundry bags of various sizes, and headbands with large buttons or knitted mask extenders to hook mask straps onto to prevent painful ears when wearing them all day long. There was also a request for small hearts that could fit into the palm of a hand, these were made in pairs so frontline staff could give one to the patient and the other to the family as a link to ease the heartbreak of not being able to be with a sick relative.

I have spent the last 5 weeks of intense activity working with an amazing team of local people who have been helping by donating polycotton fabric and used bedding, washing and dyeing fabric, drawing and cutting patterns, sewing, delivering and collecting makes from Poynton and also Woodford, Adlington, Bollington, Prestbury, and Macclesfield. I have made more than thirty sets of scrubs, some plain, some patterned or floral and some humorous character ones that proved very popular!

As a group we have produced approximately 600 sets of scrubs, more than 4000 laundry bags and thousands of headbands, mask extenders and hearts- too many to count! These have all been distributed and we have received many lovely messages of thanks. I am very proud to have been part of this achievement and will definitely keep sewing with renewed enthusiasm. For me, this is now a good time to step down as area coordinator as it has been an extremely hectic five weeks. I have really enjoyed meeting lots of lovely people, sewing and feeling I have made a valuable, albeit small contribution. For the Love of Scrubs Stockport and Cheshire now has over 800 members and fulfilled the majority of scrubs

requests to date. I have used all my scraps of scrubs fabric to make a sewing apron as a permanent reminder of this time. Although the need for scrubs appears to be reducing, other items are still needed and the group is continuing and now also making non clinical face coverings.



Once we are able to return to some normality I would like to see if there are any other enthusiastic sewers that would join me in a U3A sewing group and so we can continue identifying good causes to sew for.

Diane Jackson

Emerging from lockdown in New Zealand

Today New Zealand went down to Level 2 as there have been no new cases of Covid-19 for several consecutive days. This means that most businesses, shops, cafes, restaurants, cinemas, gyms and hairdressers can re-open providing they operate a system for socially distancing customers and have a registration book to record contacting details of customers. This creates queues outside shops but nobody is complaining! Schools reopened on May 18th. Gatherings of more than ten people are banned this includes families, weddings, funerals and sporting events.

To celebrate we did a walk, partly in native bush, partly in forest. As it is autumn here the ground was speckled with bright scarlet Fly Agaric fungi. En route we stopped to admire a giant Kauri tree named 'Tane Moana' roughly translated means Father of the Sea. It has a

circumference of 11 Metres. After the walk we were able to sit in a cafe on the coast at Tutukaka for lunch the first time for seven weeks!

We decided not to go into town to the shops, we could imagine the crowds and queues and after so long without shopping we couldn't think of anything we desperately needed! We have since been into town and found our fears were justified!

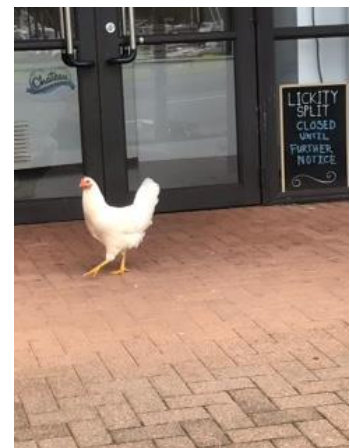
We have been given several masks to use on our flight home at the end of May. Although we will be flying out of a country with little infection, we have to change in Los Angeles where we will have a five hour wait for our connection.

There have been no directives here advising people to wear masks and most people don't. Generally, we all feel safe now when out and about. There has been very little infection in the country outside the main cities and two care homes. A total of twenty-one deaths. All travellers arriving in the country, of which there are very few, have to be quarantined for two weeks. This has been in place since early in lockdown.

We learned from the British High Commission in Wellington that there were well over ten thousand British nationals stranded in New Zealand, many of them young, seasonal workers who had lost their jobs due to the lockdown and had no income. They were being supported by the Salvation Army with food parcels. Others were tourists, like ourselves, but who, due to having their flights cancelled, were running out of money and/or medication. Unlike us they had no family support. The British Government have stepped in by offering loans. Many have now been able to get repatriation or commercial flights home. As we have found, most airlines have ceased flying into New Zealand and with the Asian airports closed to transit flights, it leaves few options for getting home except via America.

We have enjoyed our extended stay here, spending more time with family and enjoying the fine weather but we've missed the English Spring, my favourite season! Green hedges, blossom, bluebells, wild garlic and fluffy lambs! When we get home, I shall have to adapt to a new routine without my regular activities. I have been keeping in touch with groups of friends in Zoom meetings and this will be so for some time to come. Thank goodness we had an iPhone and iPad with which to keep in touch with family and friends at home, otherwise we would have felt even more isolated!

During lockdown with no humans around the birdlife was quite prolific!



Written on May 14th

Kate Marsham

A Cheesy Smile

Looking through the old family photo albums, I see some loved ones who are no longer with us. But in the pictures, they are there, and smiling.

Look, this is Auntie's wedding. How radiant she looked. I'm in this one, too, because I was a bridesmaid, pretty in my little blue frock. They had trouble getting me to smile; the responsibilities of Bridesmaid-Hood weighed greatly upon me, and I had already trod on the Bride's train and dropped my bouquet.

The photographer posed us all and told us to watch the birdie; and if I am frowning it is because I could not see any such avian creature. He tried again.

"Say "Cheese!" Yes, you, the little girl at the front."

Grandad did; but unfortunately, with age, his teeth had moved forwards and he looks like one of the elderly nags he bet on to win in the 2.30 at Doncaster Racecourse.

Since then, I have wondered why they request you to say Cheese. Presumably it causes you to stretch your lips in a pretence of happiness, but the smile does not always reach the eyes of the depicted.

My idea is this: try saying "Gorgonzola". Your mouth makes interesting shapes when you do this. Go on, get a hand mirror. Try "Brie", and you will look as if you are about to up-chuck.

"Edam" causes you to seem as if you have excruciating toothache. A mouth enunciating "Caerphilly" suggests extreme indigestion and suppressing a belch.

Saying "Double Gloucester" makes it appear that you are about to deliver a solemn sermon, while "Red Leicester" is definitely Shakespearian.

A good expression to wear at a funeral, if one should be needed, is formed by using "Emmental", while "Stilton" makes you look shifty.

Passion can be expressed by whispering "Philadelphia". Don't do "Dorset Blue Vinny" or you look like a right chatterbox. "Paneer" seems to indicate "I've got something stuck under my top set of dentures" while "Wensleydale" seems to say "I've just put a chocolate finger biscuit *sideways* in my mouth".

I wouldn't choose to say "Stinking Bishop" unless you wish to appear disapproving.

Be careful though, with "Danish Blue" as it might seem you are puckering up for a kiss, unless of course that it what you want.....

No, you stick to saying "Cheshire". This seems best in all ways.

And, oh yes, it *was* me you saw standing in front of Waitrose's excellent cheese counter yesterday; the elderly lady, gazing at the display and muttering "Cheddar! Oh, Cheddar!" in despairing, tragic tones.

Ruth Howard

"Jump!"

"Jump!" the girls shouted.

Another little girl was going through a rite of passage - learning to skip.

Two older girls held the long rope; someone's mother's old washing line. It had many knots where it had broken and been re-joined. Until, exasperated by her clean laundry being dumped on the back garden, and sometimes having to be washed all over again, the housewife was forced to search for her purse and count coins carefully to see if there was enough for a new washing line from Charnock's the Hardware shop.

Yes, there was, but it meant bread-and-jam for tea again. There was an egg and a rasher of bacon, and some cold potatoes she could fry up; that would make a tea for her husband when he came home. The mother sighed and added more hot water to the well-stewed brew in her teapot. The kids would be pleased; a new skipping rope! And they loved jam for tea, but she'd have to keep an eye on their Colin, because he loaded his slice too thickly with marg and heaped on the jam, and the pot had to last 'til Friday payday.

Meanwhile the skippers continued, turning the rope in slow, wide arcs and calling out to the young one. Soon she was enthusiastically following the rhythm of jump, land, bounce up again as the rope came round. Eventually she tired and lost the rhythm so the rope whipped her small legs. They stung, but, as she ruefully rubbed them, she reflected that it was worth it, for now she was a skipping graduate and could join the Sisterhood of Skippers. She would learn the songs and skipping rhymes, be taught the finer points of double skipping, learn to run in and out again...over the moon and under the stars, it was called.

She might get a rope of her own; not a fancy one with wooden handles, like the rich kids had, but a piece with frayed ends left when even the long rope would no longer hold together.

And she'd get to laugh at the lads who could not skip, and never seemed able to learn. Because skipping was a girl's game, and any lad who tried it was jeered at by his pals.

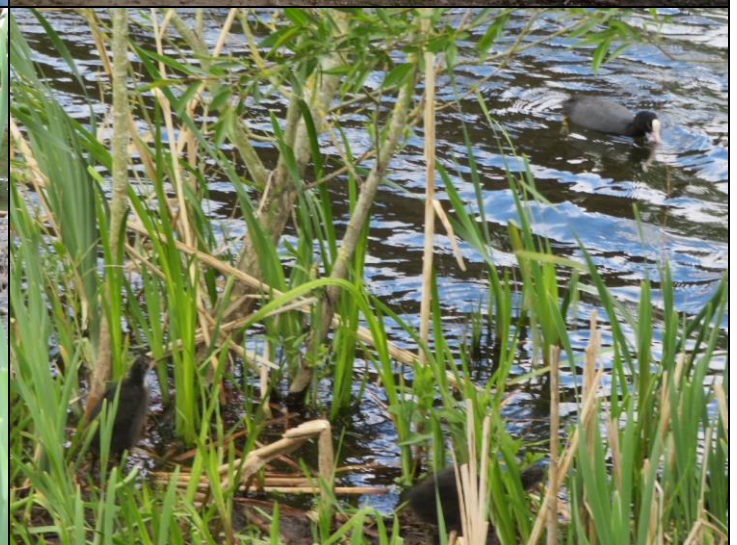
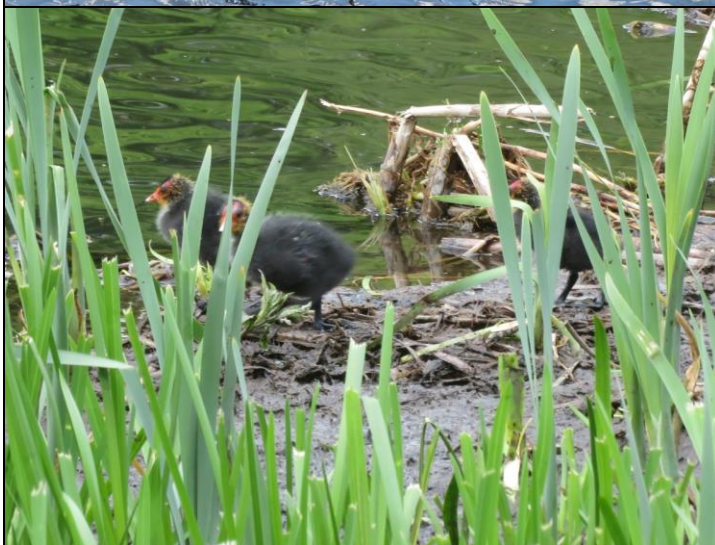
The drawback was this; as the newest recruit, she would have to take a turn - a long turn - on one end of the rope. And it made your arms ache until you got used to it.

She sighed. But soon, she knew, another little girl would want to be taught, and she would pass on the duties of turning to that child, while she herself joined the elite queueing to run in to skip to the song "Raspberry, strawberry, apple jam-tart, tell me the name of your sweetheart; is it A,B,C or "I'm a little Girl Guide dressed in blue, these are the things that I can do....."

But now there was an empty street, and a long summer holiday to learn and practice the art of skipping. And bread-and-jam for tea.

Ruth Howard

Pictures from our Perambulations



All the pictures were taken at Poynton Pool. With the Coots it is a case of "Spot the Chick"

Counting and Hours

We have all been to school. But that was not always the case. In the 1850s only half the population of the UK could read and write and even then only at a very basic level. My grandfather was the first member of my family who had by law to go to school in order to learn how to read and write and that was towards the end of the 19th century. However, arithmetic, or at least the basic ability to count, has been universal well before the time that written history began. Tally sticks with marks denoting counting have been discovered going back 40,000 years. And of course we carry around with us the most basic terms for calculation – fingers, or digits as we sometimes call them (*digitus* is the Latin word for finger). We have 10 of them but if we need a few more things to count on we also have 10 toes. Why we have evolved with five such things on each hand and foot is not known but it is also true of the dinosaurs who had disappeared from the earth millions of years before creatures like humans had appeared.

So it is natural for us to count in tens. But we exist in a world in which there are 12 signs of the Zodiac, 12 appearances of the moon in a given year and the cycles of that moon are close to 30 days long. So it is perhaps not surprising that the Babylonians who developed our early astronomy counted in 60s. And if you are dividing things up, 60 is an excellent number as it's the smallest number under 100 which can be divided by 10 other numbers, 2 of which of course are 12 and 30. 12 is a number which was very common in England. There were 12 pence in a shilling, 12 inches in a foot and this had been the case for hundreds of years. We have a special word "dozen" to describe 12. And we also have a special word "gross" for 12 dozen.

Knowing the time is very important for us. We are aware of timetables for buses, trains and planes. Our lives, both working and in retirement, are controlled by time. Not so our ancestors. Until the industrial revolution for many people the advent of dawn and dusk and when they felt hungry were the dominant features of a day. The Egyptians were the first to divide a day into two 12 hour sections. Of course the day and night sections were of unequal length except at the 2 equinoxes around 20th March and 23rd September. And the further north you go (nobody went very far south in those days) the greater the discrepancy at some times in the year. The division of the working day into sections provided some way of approximating time and of course the invention of mechanical clocks around the beginning of the 14th century provided more positive clarity. The word clock comes to us from the old Celtic word for bell. You heard public bells to know the time whereas now you watch your "watch" (or more recently your 'phone). Public clocks which chimed the 24 hours were not so helpful and were eventually replaced by 2x12 hour versions. The chance of a listener counting and getting 18 chimes correct for 6 o'clock in the evening were quite low!

The Christian world accepted the Babylonian counting system in 60s for astronomy which covered both time and angles. When a subdivision of an hour was needed (one sixtieth) it

was called *pars minuta prima* – the first small part. So we got minutes. Our English minute was a minute part of 60 and we pronounce this word in two separate ways to highlight the difference. When a second division was needed the pieces were called *partes minutae secundae*.. The second division of the original 60 *minutae* is our “seconds”!

David Sewart

What were those significant buildings?



The answer to this seemingly simple question is not as straightforward as anticipated. The considered answer will be in a subsequent edition!

Things to Do

Sudoku No 6

	5	2		1				
4		6				3		
			4		7			
	6		3			8		
3	1	8			2		6	
				4		5		
2		3					8	
					8	2		
	4		5					

Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9

Below is the solution to No 5

1	8	9	2	6	5	4	7	3
6	7	5	4	8	3	9	1	2
3	2	4	7	9	1	8	6	5
5	1	7	9	3	2	6	8	4
4	3	6	8	5	7	2	9	1
8	9	2	6	1	4	5	3	7
9	4	3	1	2	6	7	5	8
7	5	8	3	4	9	1	2	6
2	6	1	5	7	8	3	4	9

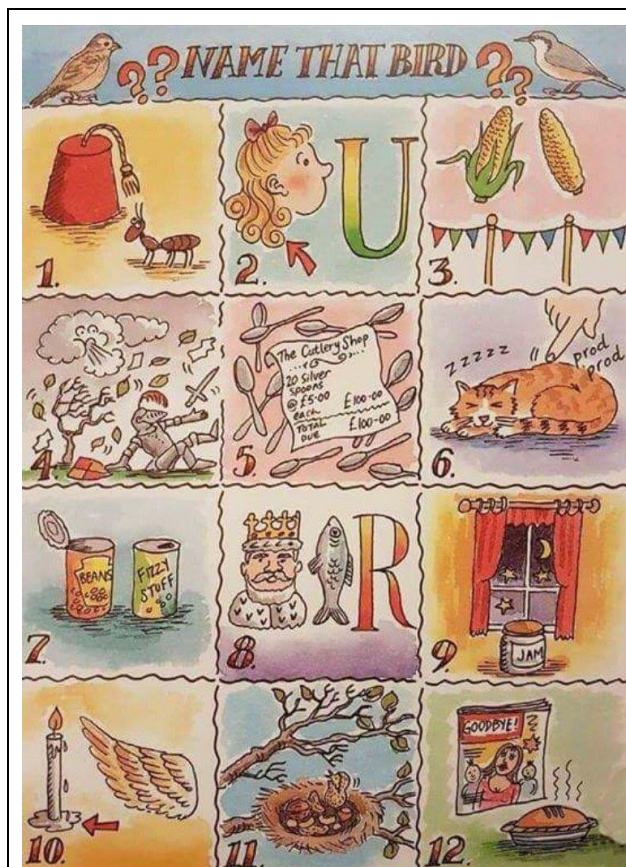
More quiz questions from Hooha.

1. What is the name of the midlands city once known as the Detroit of England?
2. What was the trade of a fletcher?
3. What was the original purpose of Lyme Cage?
4. Who in The Lords defeated Lord Vernon in his aim to build a canal through Poynton to carry his coal to Stockport, and Macclesfield and Knutsford?
5. What did Mr McGregor do with Peter Rabbit's little blue coat after Peter lost it while being chased in the garden?

Answers to the quiz in the previous edition

1. What is the name of the farm on which Poynton High School was built?
Yew Tree Farm
2. Where was Poynton's original cinema?
At the junction of Clumber Road and Bulkeley Road, in building which is now St Paul's Catholic Church
3. What was the colloquial name given to Lyndhurst Kindergarten School on Chester Road, Poynton?
Miss Frith's – after the lady who started and ran the school at 62 Chester Road
4. When was the row of cottages at Worth Clough built?
1815
5. When did post-war food rationing stop in the UK?
4 July 1954 – nine years after the end of the second World War

Bird quiz – Answers



1. Pheasant
2. Curlew
3. Corn Bunting
4. Nightingale
5. Spoon Bill
6. Kittiwake
7. Toucan
8. Kingfisher
9. Nightjar
10. Waxwing
11. Nuthatch
12. Magpie

Internet Culture

Epiphany

Several of Epiphany live on Ivy Road and on VE Day they invited all the households in their road to a special VE Day celebration and mini concert. They encouraged everyone to come into their front gardens or to the edge of their road to have tea and scones (or whatever they had available!) as they performed wartime favourites such as 'We'll Meet Again', 'It's a Long way to Tipperary', 'White Cliffs of Dover' and 'Land of Hope and Glory'. They ended their concert with 'Amazing Grace'. You can watch highlights video of the mini concert by clicking [here](#).

If you want to know more about Epiphany, their website is www.epiphanymusic.org.uk, and if you want to be added to the mailing list for the their newsletter <http://eepurl.com/dr8B9X>

The National Theatre

Finishing at 7pm on May 28th - A Streetcar Named Desire, starring Gillian Anderson

Starting at 7pm on May 28th - James Graham's This House

Starting at 7pm on June 4th - Coriolanus, starring Tom Hiddleston

Hay Festival

The Hay Festival is happening this year as a digital event with lots of items. It is on from Friday May 22nd to Sunday May 31st. You can register to be involved with the sessions in real time. Subsequently they should be available on the Hay Player!

For any of the above, simply go to your favourite Search Engine and enter the relevant theatre or visit.