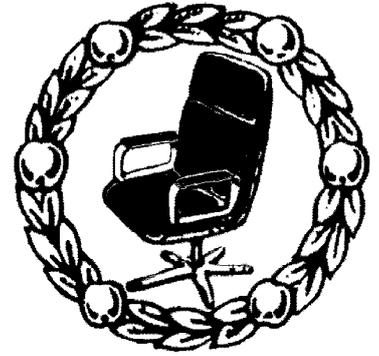


# pass



The Quarterly Magazine of the Mastermind Club

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At the Christmas party, Bob was very proud of the size of his balloon...

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# Nostalgia

Ken Emond, Editor

**C**an one be nostalgic for a time or place that one has not personally experienced? Or is there some other word expressing a longing to discover a real 'Time Machine' that could transport us at will to any point in the past? My thoughts have been sent running on such lines by a combination of the article in this issue from Paul Slater and a present I received while at my brother's house over Christmas. Paul writes about the Welsh 'Border Country' and a railway journey in particular, through the beauty of the landscape round Abergavenny. The present was a book of old photographs of the Waverley line, which ran between Carlisle and Edinburgh. Now I am too young to be able to remember trains running through the Scottish Borders personally. The last use of the line was in 1969, when I was only 6 years old. Seeing the magnificence of the steam engines as they climbed and swooped through the beautiful (Scottish) Border countryside made me rather sad that I would never see such sights for myself. Some parts of the line can, however, still be imagined in the mind's eye more readily than others. Melrose station, for instance, is still standing, though long since put to different use; and the stretch from Galashiels northwards towards Stow still has the track bed clearly defined running alongside the same basic route as the A7 road follows. There is still talk in the Border papers about the revival of part of the line, between Edinburgh and Galashiels, but I am not aware of any real progress on a definite timetable, so I am not holding my breath. Perhaps a special heritage outing on the equally spectacular Carlisle-Settle line is called for to sate these railway ruminations on my part!

I hope you will forgive a further editorial indulgence of also commenting on Wendy Forrester's recollections of the school curriculum of a convent school of the 1940s, by providing on page 10 a contrast with the curriculum I followed at High School in Paisley in the 1970s. That really can be described as nostalgia on my part. I enjoyed my schooldays, and can still bring to memory quite readily school buildings, teachers and fellow pupils, many of whom I have not now met for over 25 years. Perhaps seeing Club members again in the new setting of Norwich will be a more immediate cure for this current bout of nostalgia!

I look forward to seeing many of you again in Norwich, and please keep sending your thoughts and comments on any issue of interest. Shorter pieces can be readily accommodated in 'Letters, News and Views', while longer articles are also very welcome, especially if illustrated. Submission by e-mail is best to [kene@britac.ac.uk](mailto:kene@britac.ac.uk), but I am, of course, happy to hear from everyone in hard copy instead for those who don't use e-mail.

## Membership matters

Peter Chitty, Membership Secretary

**I**ts 2006, and in a few short weeks old and new friends will be meeting, this time in the beautiful city of Norwich. I am looking forward to it very much indeed. I have very fond memories of the city. I did my GPO (later BT) training there in 1962.

My thanks to all those members who pay their subscriptions by cheque, and who have paid so very promptly. There may be a delay in presentation for payment, due to the change over to our new treasurer, Susan Leng, who is replacing Paul Henderson, who is off to New Zealand. But I am glad to say that he is still retaining his membership.

It is very pleasing to welcome back Pauline Beighton into the Club. May she have many more years of membership.

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

561 Philip CLAYTON-GORE 21 Rope Walk, WELLINGTON, Somerset TA21 9RB. Tele: unchanged  
813 John BETTS 13 Thirlmere Avenue, NUNEATON CV1 (temporary address)

### REJOINED MEMBER

748 Pauline BEIGHTON, 2 Leafield Road, Cowley, OXFORD OX4 2PL. Tele: 01865 770794

# Letters, news and views

## More on Norwich

*From Geoff Thomas*

Further to the information in the last **pass**, I should like to add that Norwich also boasts an award-winning venue. In 2005, the Fat Cat was chosen as CAMRA's national Pub of the Year, as it had been in 1998. To win it twice is remarkable. It is situated at 49 West End Street, just off the Dereham road, and serves a wide choice of cask-conditioned ales as well as some 30 Belgian bottled beers (a treat in anyone's book).

Serving no food besides rolls (just like pubs used to be), it is alluded to in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide : "...visitors to Norwich should not miss out on this ale drinkers' paradise".

If there are any other CAMRA members beside myself going to Norwich, or anyone who values the quality and flavour of proper beer ("real ale" having somehow acquired a pejorative connotation), then do give it a try. There is so much heavily-advertised tasteless rubbish swamping our hostelrys that I sometimes despair for the future of our country.

*From Ken Barr*

**pass** arrived here in New York on New Year's Eve. Much as I would like to join you in Norwich I'm afraid it just won't be possible. After reading Mary Gibson's description of the sights to see I thought it might interest the club to be reminded that the Sainsbury Centre at the University of East Anglia hosted the third and fourth semi-final heats of the 1991 series. I was in the third heat (first recorded) and missed the finals by one point.

I don't know if *Mastermind* taped any other heats in Norwich?

[*Ed.* But I am sure others will! It would be great to hear from anyone with reminiscences of past trips to Norwich, whether for *MM* or otherwise...]

## Erz ert jerst me?

*From Leo Stevenson*

Is it just me, or do other people think that the standards of spoken English are far worse now than they were only a generation ago? We all have pet-hates with spoken English, so for what it's worth, here is my biggest bugbear. I've noticed that most young people these days, particularly young women, are increasingly replacing most of their vowel sounds with 'er'. For example, they will say 'erz' (instead of 'is', 'as' and 'us'), 'ert' (instead of 'it' & 'at'), 'ernd' ('and'), 'erccount', 'cermputer', 'frem' (from), 'cerntinue', 'kern' (can), 'berk' (book), 'ercept' (accept), 'kerd' (could), 'bert' (but), 'fer' (for), 'bicerz' (because), 'perlice' (or just 'plice', grrrr!) and so on. This is a characteristic manner of speaking that has nothing to do with regional accents or class. I can't fathom the reason why any adult would want to speak this way, but I suspect that the main reason is laziness. Curiously, this is a characteristic of children, not adults.

Of course anyone can speak as they want to, but what really irks me is that far too many broadcasters on TV and radio speak this way. For example, the broadcaster Zoë Ball was asked in a recent interview if she would be going to see a certain film, and she replied that she "werd herv er lerk ert ert". I'm not sure what her talents are, but I guarantee that ventriloquism is not one of them. Other offenders that spring to mind are Natasha Kaplinsky, Sophie Raworth and, worst of all, Anthea Turner. At the risk of 'biting the hand that feeds me' by having another go at the BBC (re a previous *Pass* article on their Northern bias), they used to have certain standards that were a benchmark for other broadcasters, but this is no longer the case, and I'm dismayed that they have let standards slip so much. OK, there are worse things to worry about in life, but personally speaking I just want to punch the next news reader who talks about the 'Erlympics' coming to London in 2012.

Now of course I'm not advocating a return to 'received pronunciation', where some broadcasters spoke so posh that they made the queen sound common, not least because as those of you who know me will know that as an east London boy with a very ordinary education I can't pretend to have perfect diction myself. What I am advocating though, is a return to certain standards in the clarity of diction in broadcasting, whatever the speaker's origin or accent.

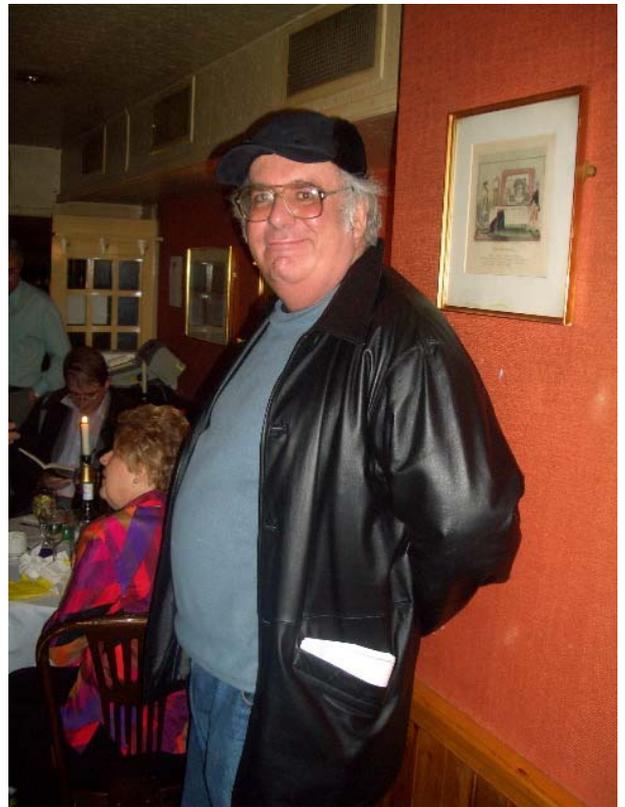
Does it matter? There might be some who would argue that language changes all the time, and this is just a natural part of linguistic evolution. However, leaving aside the sheer pace of change, which I feel is untenable, the fact is that the quality of someone's speech is still very important for effective communication. It cannot be a good thing when, for example, words such as 'is', 'as' and 'us' all sound the same. Although it's true that we can still understand these words when they're spoken because of their context within a sentence, is there anyone out there who will say that our language is somehow richer as result of this daft trait? If so, I'd like ter hear frem them.

# Christmas Party memories

*Michael Davison shares some photographs of the London gang's Christmas shenanigans*



Charly raises a glass, Patricia and Leslie tuck in, while new Treasurer Susan hides behind husband Robert's party hat.



An Egghead is for life, not just for Christmas...



As featured on the front cover, Bob puts some puff into it...



Left: The photographer photographed... Ray sees things through the eye of a lens, while Paul and Trevor seem distracted by events elsewhere.

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2006

Notice is hereby given that the twenty-eighth Annual General Meeting of the Mastermind Club will be held at the Maids Head Hotel, Norwich, on Sunday 2nd April 2006 at 10.45am.

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of 27<sup>th</sup> AGM, Gateshead, 3 April 2005 (published in **pass**, 2005:2)
3. Matters arising
4. Annual Accounts and Treasurer's Report
5. **pass**
6. Election of Club Charity for 2006-2007
7. President's Report
8. Membership Secretary's Report
9. Insignia
10. Annual Functions 2006, 2007 and 2008
11. Election of Club Committee for 2006–2008\*
12. Magnum Competition
13. Mugnum Competition
14. Any other business

**\*Note to Item 11:** All Committee posts fall due for re-election at this AGM. Committee members are elected to serve for a period of two years. Any Club member in good standing is welcome to nominate him or herself and may do so in writing to the Secretary. Proposers and seconders are not required. The last date for receipt of nominations is Wednesday 22nd March 2006.

Craig Scott, President  
Gavin Fuller, Secretary

6th January 2006

# MASTER QUIZ 2006

## Gavin Fuller introduces the Round 2 questions

Dredged up from my deranged mind come the next 100 questions to sort out who'll be taking part in this year's Magnum competition. As usual there is no theme to my set, just a variety of questions which I hope will engage you enough to have a go. The more the merrier as far as I'm concerned – thinking these up is great fun!

### Instructions

Round 2, as usual, has two entries. Head your first paper 'U' for **UNSEEN**, and answer the questions in your own time. When you have finished, please sign the entry as being your own unaided work, but of course should you by chance come across any other answers, please feel free to add them. Head another sheet 'R' for **REFERENCE** and check, alter or expand your 'U' answers should it be necessary, quoting your sources if you wish.

Please put your name and membership number on each sheet of paper, and on the first sheet add your full address.

80% of the possible marks are awarded for the 'U' entry and 20% on the 'R', with the latter, as ever, not obligatory.

*N.B. Please note that all decisions made by Phillida and myself are final and that no correspondence shall be entered into by either of us about the questions and answers.*

### Address for Round 2 entries:

**Gavin Fuller, 50 Dollis Park, Finchley, LONDON, N3 1BS**

**Tel: 020 8349 1087 (home)/07875 384778 (mobile)**

**E-mail: [gavin\\_fuller@hotmail.com](mailto:gavin_fuller@hotmail.com)**

**Closing date: 25 March 2006**

I look forward to receiving your entries, and testing the top 9 again in Norwich. Just wait till you see what I have in store for you there...

1. Who wrote "Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet"?
2. Which was the second of Jane Austen's major novels to be published, in 1813?
3. Which famous greyhound can be seen in the Walter Rothschild Zoological Museum in Tring?
4. Which board game received a 2005 update with a "Here and Now" edition?
5. What is the sobriquet of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat major?
6. Which common element is number 6 in the Periodic Table?
7. What was the name of the King of East Anglia martyred in 870 by the Vikings?
8. *June is Busting Out All Over* is a song from which musical?
9. What is the full name (Forename and Surname) of Billie Piper's character in the wonderful revival of *Doctor Who*?
10. Which sport is played by the London Towers, Newcastle Eagles and Scottish Rocks?
11. Who is buried in St Michael's churchyard, East Coker, Somerset?
12. Where is the loyal toast given to "The Queen, Duke of Normandy"?
13. What is the common name for trees of the Hippocastanaceae family?
14. Which country's national anthem was originally the first verse of a poem by August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben, but is now the third?
15. What is the name of the Hindu goddess of destruction?
16. Two characters from the first episode of the first series of *Last of the Summer Wine* are still appearing in it today. Norman Clegg, played by Peter Sallis is one. Who is the other?
17. Which Turner painting won a BBC poll to find the Nation's favourite painting in 2005?
18. Who wrote the Orange Prize-winning novel *We Need to Talk About Kevin*?
19. In what field of employment is the ACCA a professional body?

20. The model Sophie Dahl has two illustrious grandfathers. The writer Roald Dahl is one, which actor and music hall entertainer is the other?
21. *Lost Child in Foggy City* was the Chinese title for which film adaptation of a Dickens novel?
22. Where in a castle would you find a Merlon?
23. "Where are you? Where are you? Let's be having you. Come on!" Who said this in 2005, and where?
24. Weighing up to 5lb, what is the second largest organ in the human body?
25. Count Almaviva, Doctor Bartolo and Don Basilio are characters in which Rossini opera?
26. Which cocktail, amixture of 2 parts whisky, 1 part sweet vermouth and 1 dash of angostura bitters over ice, takes its name from a Scottish hero?
27. Which concept was elucidated by Alfred Watkins in his 1925 book *The Old Straight Track*?
28. To which family of animals does the Western Polecat belong?
29. Which company developed the Chinook helicopter?
30. What does a Cryptozoologist study?
31. What were Spider, Snoopy, Eagle, Intrepid, Aquarius, Antares, Falcon, Orion and Challenger?
32. Eugene III, Pope from 1145–53, was the first member of which monastic order to hold the office?
33. What is the name of the character played on film by Fay Wray in 1933 and by Naomi Watts in 2005?
34. Carrantuohill, at 3414 feet, is the highest peak in which country?
35. Which song topped the voting at a special concert last October to find the best song in 50 years of the Eurovision Song Contest?
36. What A road connects Norwich to London?
37. What does the notation 0-0-0 signify in Chess?
38. The Perfecti were the most spiritually advanced members of which medieval religion?
39. Who in 2005 became the first British winner of the Indianapolis 500 since Graham Hill in 1966?
40. From which country does Absolut vodka come?
41. Which War Artist painted *Totes Meer (Dead Sea)* and *The Battle of Britain*, both completed in 1941?
42. What is the SI unit of radiation activity?
43. Which part of the British Isles has a flag containing a white Scandinavian cross on a blue background?
44. Which band had a Top Twenty hit in 1973 with the somewhat eccentric instrumental *Hocus Pocus*?
45. With 9 seats, which is the fourth biggest party in the House of Commons?
46. What is the name of the Court Jester in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*?
47. In health and safety terms, what is COSHH?
48. Who composed *In the Fen Country* (1904) and *Norfolk Rhapsodies* (1906)?
49. What are Bellowhead and Whapweasel?
50. Who is the President of North Korea?
51. The following Haiku is an interpretation of which 18th century novel:  
 "A naïve young man  
 learns that bad things do happen  
 to smug *philosophes*"?
52. How many masts does a Brigantine have?
53. Drenthe, Flevoland and Gelderland are provinces of which European country?
54. With 51,112 casualties, which was the bloodiest battle of the American Civil War?
55. Robert Taylor played the title role in which 1955 film, based on a novel by Sir Walter Scott?
56. Which charity, founded in 1956, has the abbreviation NCT?
57. Now used by another establishment, what was the former name of the Gielgud Theatre in London?
58. Hot Saw, Underhand Chop and Standing Block Chop are all events in which profession's Annual World Championships?
59. What is the significance of the Godolphin Arabian, Darley Arabian and Byerly Turk?
60. The restaurant at Glasgow Rangers FC removed which dish from its menu in 2005 on the grounds some of its clientele might now find it offensive?

61. What did Little Jackie Paper love?
62. At which prison did Norman Stanley Fletcher do his Porridge?
63. Which birds are of the family Sternidae?
64. How is the musician Eithne Ní Bhraonáin better known?
65. Which National Trail runs for 108 miles from Helmsley to Filey, skirting the North York Moors in the process?
66. Who became the first recipient of the Victoria Cross for 23 years in 2005?
67. If you ask the question “Do you know the Bishop of Norwich?” to someone at the dinner table, what are you really requesting them to do?
68. Which medium, whose followers included Ronnie Kray, Margaret Thatcher and Derek Jameson, was known as the “Gracie Fields of the psychic world”?
69. Which Loch, an inlet of the Firth of Clyde, has given its name to a chain of Fish Restaurants?
70. Giles Winterbourne and Grace Melbury are the central characters of which Thomas Hardy novel?
71. Willie Walsh replaced Sir Rod Eddington as Chief Executive of which company in 2005?
72. What was banned from Football League grounds from 1921–1971?
73. Edward Oxford, John Francis, John William Bean, William Hamilton, Robert Pate and Roderick McLean all attempted to assassinate which monarch?
74. Where in Britain was there a byelaw permitting the shooting of any Welsh people, as long as it was on a Sunday and a longbow was used in the Cathedral Close to do so at a distance of 12 yards?
75. From which area of Europe does the singular percussion instrument, the txalaparta, come from?
76. Which Pacific Island state has a name which translates as “Behold the Coconut”?
77. If an animal is merdivorous, on what does it feed?
78. What is the correct form of address for the younger son of a Marquess?
79. Who invented the Spinning Mule, a cross between the Water Frame and Spinning Jenny, in 1779?
80. Which painter of the Norwich School was known as “the Norfolk Hobbema”?
81. Which name is a Welsh variant of Claudia?
82. The 22,022ft high Mount Kailash is the sacred mountain of which country?
83. Harold Adrian Russell were the real forenames of which spy?
84. Which British football league team finished the 2004–05 season with a goal difference of +101?
85. And which British team accrued 101 league points in 2005?
86. Which country was considered by some 18th century landscape commentators to be “the Derbyshire of Europe”?
87. In Arthurian legend, who was the only knight to return successfully from the Grail Quest?
88. What is the alternative name for the perennial plant *Prunella*?
89. What did the acronym NORWICH stand for?
90. On which huge-selling album is Piltown Man credited?
91. What was the title of the 1970s series created by Terry Nation, dealing with the after-effects of a virulent worldwide disease?
92. Which composer died after being run over by a trolley in 1890?
93. The 1893 Robert Louis Stevenson novel, *Catriona*, was a sequel to which of his earlier works?
94. Which type of rock can be sub-divided into Clastic, Organic and Chemical?
95. In the Book of Revelation, what was riding the Pale Horse?
96. Which Gloucestershire cheese has gained popularity due to its appearance in the film, *Wallace and Gromit: Curse of the Were-Rabbit*?
97. The Cor Anglais is a variety of which musical instrument?
98. Emily Simpson was the first of many murder victims in which TV detective series?
99. Who wrote the autobiography *Good-Bye to All That*?
100. In which two countries is there a Cape Farewell, one of which lies at the southernmost point of an island, and the other at the Northernmost?

# A Convent School in the 1940s

Wendy Forrester recalls how schooldays used to be...

Some time ago I amused myself by writing a brief memoir of my schooldays, in the hope of amusing one or two of my old schoolmates. Since those days are probably now long enough ago to count as history I thought I might write here about the curriculum of a convent boarding-school in the second half of the 1940s. I went there just before the end of the war, when we were occasionally woken up in the night to go into the air raid shelter, and I have a clear memory of being dug in the back one morning as we lined up for chapel, and someone whispering, "Hitler and Goebbels are dead, pass it on".

We did not study Information Technology, of course, computers still being in the future. More surprisingly we did not learn chemistry or physics. Our only science was biology, which I think was well-taught, by a mistress said to live at:

Hydra House,  
Amoeba Avenue,  
Spirogyra,  
H<sub>2</sub>O

I recall that in the School Certificate year the circulation, digestion and skeleton structure of the rabbit were dealt with in detail, but – just as we had expected – we whizzed through the creature's reproductive system remarkably quickly.

Maths was my worst subject, not counting games, and I remember one horrid sum in which one had to calculate the number of tiles needed to cover a particular wall. I kept getting the answer as seventy-two and a half tiles, and went home for the week-end with the threat of dreadful consequences if I did not get it right. On Saturday morning I came down with German measles. Whoopee! By the time I had recovered and was out of quarantine the sum had been forgotten.

We all studied needlework with a jolly French nun called Sister Armelle. In the winter we knitted (it was striped tea-cosies in Lower III) and in the summer we did embroidery, while the rest of the time we sewed aprons, blouses, or, if really talented, dresses. While we worked people took turns at reading aloud. Oddly, we never seemed to finish our books, starting a new one with a new term, and I didn't find out how *Rebecca* ended until I was grown up. It is hardly surprising that this unsuitably racy work disappeared, but I don't think we finished the improving and dull *Three Daughters of the United Kingdom* either. In our School Certificate year the headmistress appeared and presented us with a copy of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, so that we could combine needlework with literature. Unfortunately most of us very much disliked the book, and somehow we managed to get rid of it, although I can't remember what replaced it. Perhaps Sister Armelle didn't care for it much either. One day I must read it and see if I like it any better now.

English, my favourite subject, was imaginatively taught. When I was eleven or twelve we had one of the White Sisters temporarily with us, possibly recovering from a spell in the mission field, who set fascinating homework, such as writing an extra verse for "How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix", and a scene between Shylock and Antonio after the close of *The Merchant of Venice*. I am still rather proud of my attempt at the latter, in which Antonio behaves in the most creditable and charitable way, inviting Shylock to dinner, and Shylock stalks off muttering, so to speak, "Bah, humbug!", leaving Antonio sadly shaking his head. Exercises such as these caused me to forgive her when she corrected my "Day in the Life of a Fox", crossing out my sophisticated reference to "pink" coats and replacing it with "red". I suppose she might simply have wanted to squash me for being pretentious, but I rather doubt it.

History was well-taught too, by a brilliant and scary lay teacher. One never knew when she might, so to speak, toss and gore you, but she was never boring. We learned proper political history, rather than the soft-centred social kind which seems to be popular today, and had a good textbook illustrated with old political cartoons like "Dropping the Pilot". However, it was of course the socially important politics which was most interesting: the Reform Acts, the Factory Acts, the emancipation of slaves, and Robert Peel repealing the Corn Laws. Miss Niemann touched briefly on a number of interesting things which were not strictly speaking part of the syllabus, like the Plimsoll Line and the

Opium Wars, and, for some reason, Charles Bradlaugh's refusal to take the oath when elected to the House of Commons. I haven't yet got round to discovering whether it is true that he kept trying to take his seat and being dragged out of the chamber holding on to the benches, but I rather hope it is. It strikes me as interesting that a very devout mistress in a convent school should have left a conventionally-minded girl with the idea that, although misguided, Bradlaugh was a good sport.

We had the same teacher for English in Upper IV, and she also set interesting homework. One week she simply told us to write something horrific, and next we had to write something funny. I was at the age when funny characters had to have funny names, and I chose some uncouth syllables for one of mine. Several of us read each other's work before handing it in, and a friend came to me and said, "Ruth says you'd better not call him that. She says it's rude". "Is it?" I said, puzzled, "Why?" "I don't know," said my friend, "But Ruth learns German. Perhaps it's rude in German." That seemed a good enough reason to change it, especially in view of Miss Niemann's German surname, so I gave my character another peculiar name, and thought no more about it.

A dozen or more years later I discovered that one of the uncouth syllables I had chanced upon for my character's name was in fact very rude indeed. And not in German!

## And, by way of contrast (or perhaps mere editorial indulgence!) here are some brief thoughts on the Editor's own schooldays in Paisley in the 1970s

**T**he John Neilson High School was founded in 1852 and celebrated its 125th anniversary in 1977 during my time there. We had a special day of celebration featuring a thanksgiving service in Paisley Abbey and a concert at night. All of us, even someone as poor at singing as me, were allowed to take part in the grand whole-school chorus, performing the *Hallelujah Chorus* and the Easter Hymn from *Cavalleria Rusticana*. It was a good job that no-one suggested waiting for the 150th anniversary instead, since by the late 1980s, the school was no more, and now it exists only in the virtual reality of a 'Friends Reunited'-type website.

In the first two years we followed a general curriculum which covered practically every subject. Instead of Latin in the first year we studied what could loosely be described as 'Classical Civilisation'. Since History was my favourite subject from an early age, this was a good way of hooking my interest in Rome and Greece, and ensuring that I stayed with the Latin class throughout my schooldays. I was, from the start, hopeless at practical subjects. Academic study fine, but in one woodwork exam I managed to score 20% — as much for turning up as for anything I actually achieved! Of course the practical subjects were still rather sexist in those days pre-PC. Boys did metalwork and woodwork. Girls did sewing and cookery. I am not sure I would have enjoyed it at the time, but given my later love of cooking, perhaps I would have done better let loose in a kitchen than a carpentry room...?

In third and fourth year we studied for the Scottish Certificate of Education, Ordinary Grade. It was usual to take eight subjects, and English, Maths and Arithmetic were compulsory. I was able to maintain both science and arts at this stage, not being yet wholly certain what I wanted to do in life. So Physics and Chemistry remained on my list, while Geography was elbowed out — it clashed with History so that was no contest...

In fifth year we worked towards the Higher Grade examinations, which were the ones used as qualification for University. Maths and English remained compulsory (although one friend, who later became a well-known journalist insisted she would never have any need for maths and was excused — in a subsequent piece in the *Scotsman* last year I read her lament on this decision). French, History and Latin made up the remainder for me. French and History were timetabled together, so I took the formal French classes and was taught History with minimal supervision. This was actually good training for University and great fun, since it seemed to involve a lot of skiving and hiding in cupboards! Achieving the requisite grades to get into St Andrews University, I decided not to stay for 6th year. But all in all I had a good time at school, and remember many of the people I knew there with warmth.

# 1928 — was a very good year

Peter Richardson

**T**o be born. (True it means that I'm 77 now, but that's not the problem it may seem to our younger members. I'm with Joseph Rotblat who I heard say, aged 88: "For many years now I have been wondering what it is like to be an old man. And I am still wondering." Right on, young Joseph.)

But didn't it mean living through an economic depression, a world war, the dreary post-war years of constant shortages, an economic collapse with rampant inflation, a constant threat of atomic war, the collapse of the Empire, and no TV? Indeed it did. Not much of a Golden Age, eh?

When I was young I read Dornford Yates (yuk) and I was struck by a passage in which his hero, born about 1890, mourning the loss of the world he grew up in, said, around 1930: "To have died, full of years, in 1910 .....". And, with reservations, he was right. Given good health, inherited wealth, a self-centred blindness to the myriad glaring faults of his world, and the ability not to worry about a grim future that he couldn't do a thing about, such a man could have lived and died happy. It goes without saying that he was a white Englishman. And that he probably lost his first wife in childbirth.

And now, a century later, I too could die full of years in 2010 after a happy life in which my wife hasn't died and which might well look like a Golden Age by 2030.

I too am a white Englishman; I've been blessed with good health, thanks to modern medicine (starting in 1828 I'd have been dead twice by 1890), didn't inherit wealth, which did me no harm, and don't get upset by the myriad faults of my world. I can do very little about them and can put them out of my mind. As we did with the atom bomb.

So – what was so good about being born in 1928? Well, take the Great Depression. That was indeed a terrible time for almost everybody. Not me. I knew nothing about it, never went hungry, never knew that I lacked anything, and was, I'm told, a happy child. And, as I grew in awareness, things improved and people grew happier.

What about WW2? Can you imagine living in a country all agreed on the one overwhelming objective for everybody – to win the war? It was inspiring. And I never doubted that we would win; initially because I believed that Britain always won – I was only 11 – and as I matured, so it became clear that we would.

But the terrible hardships? Didn't notice them and don't remember being hungry or cold. As a nation we were remarkably lean and fit.

Those dreary postwar years? I think 1945 to 1965 was a wonderful time unlikely to be repeated. Eh? Well, name another period when, for most people, things got better every year and you *knew* that they would. A great time to marry and start a family and buy your first house, TV, and car. In that order. Harold Macmillan was right – we'd never had it so good. Not for much longer, though.

Economic collapse and rampant inflation? Not good. But we moved house in 1968 and I borrowed three times my annual salary to do it. My father said I was mad. Inflation made the mortgage repayments trivial within five years. (And since I retired in 1985, it's been so low that my pension has been index-linked – *ex gratia*. Thus far!)

Who today can confidently expect to work for the same company for 41 years, and retire on a comfortable pension based on terminal salary for at least the next 20? (Or have a house worth 40 times what it cost, not that I ever confidently expected that!)

Can you imagine working in a world where you got far too many letters and went to far too many meetings - but never got an E-mail? Or had a mobile phone? Bliss.

Or living in a world with no burglar alarms; where the idea of anybody taking drugs like cannabis, let alone heroin, or of having drug peddlers in every town or village was inconceivable; where women were quite relaxed about going out alone after dark; where nobody ever saw a handgun, let alone carried one; where teachers and doctors and nurses were respected and worked without fear of being attacked - or sued? A world without 42 inch TV, true, but also without Rupert Murdoch? I've done it.

I know that septuagenarians have always moaned that things aren't what they used to be, which is quite true. But their complaint has always been they've got worse.

For me and most of my generation in this country things have got better all through our lives. There is plenty to moan about, as I've suggested, but it's never seriously affected me. Will those born in 1978 be able to say the same? I'm virtually certain that those born in 2028 won't.

Why so pessimistic? Because on the small scale of our country I don't see anything to stop the slide from top nation to insignificant also-ran. And then the privilege of being a white Englishman will no longer be a guarantee of a place in the world's top five per cent for wellbeing.

On the world scale, how long before we've cut down all the forests, used up all our fossil resources, emptied the oceans of all the fish, and are facing the consequences of global warming on our climate? How will the struggle to cope with all that affect us and our lives? We may survive but it won't be comfortable, whatever we do. Worst of all, how long will it be before population growth is stopped, as it must be in the end, by war, disease, and starvation?

It's a long time since David Suzuki talked about the test tube full of nutritious gel with just one bacterium in it. On day two there were two, on day ten there were 1024, and so on; and he calculated that by day 30 107million bacteria would have filled the tube and consumed all the nutritives.

And that on day 29 there would be lots of bacteria arguing that for Crissake the tube was only half full and that those who were warning of the end of their world were crazy. I think of those bacteria every time I see George Dubya.

I'm grateful that 1928 fell neatly between the world's worst wars, thus far, and that I didn't get shot at at all; but I'm more grateful that my lifetime fell well short of day 30. I'd guess about day 27. It gives that trite old farewell "Have a nice day" a whole new meaning, doesn't it?

## Border Country

### Paul Slater discusses the work of Raymond Williams

**B**order Country is the title of a novel by Raymond Williams. Once, in a questionnaire, I listed it as one of my three favourite novels, and there is no doubt that when I first read it in the middle or late nineteen-sixties it made a great impression on me. To a certain extent autobiographical, it tells of a boy growing up in a Welsh border village, below the Black Mountains in what was Monmouthshire. The boy's father is a signaller, and the novel describes his work on the railway as well as his hobbies, his friends, his marriage and the world of the people in the village. The story begins after the First World War and ends in the nineteen-fifties, with the boy – now an academic in London, with a wife and a young family – having to go back to his home village when his father becomes seriously ill. At the end of the novel, the father has died, and his son says goodbye to the village and returns to his life in London.

*Border Country* can be enjoyed as a social and political novel, and the General Strike of 1926 and its consequences form one of the book's main themes, but I enjoyed it as a novel about railways – there seemed to be very few of those

– as a regional novel set in an attractive countryside, and as a novel about growing up, leaving home, then going back and remembering. The setting of *Border Country* – Abergavenny and the valley to the north where the main road and railway from South Wales climb to pass between the Black Mountains and the isolated hill of Skirrid Fawr – was a stretch of country I had never visited, and it became one of those places which I knew well from reading without ever having set foot there.

In due course I read two other novels by Raymond Williams, but they did not appeal to me as much as *Border Country*, nor did I find much of interest in the sections of two of Williams’ political books, *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution*, which I had to read as part of my librarianship studies. I do remember, however, a scathing comment on *Take It From Here*, one of my favourite radio comedy programmes from the nineteen-fifties, to the effect that it was an example of the most corrupt culture in contemporary Britain.

On days out with my parents I did eventually glimpse the attractive countryside which is the setting for *Border Country*. When the railway through Abergavenny began to be used on a fairly regular basis by special steam trains, I thought of an interesting idea for an excursion with both railway and literary appeal, and on a chilly February day in 1983 I was at Abergavenny to see two of the Severn Valley Railway’s steam locomotives hauling the “Welsh Marches Pullman”. Quite early in the story of *Border Country* the main characters remark on the way the main road through their valley is being widened and straightened and is starting to take traffic from the railway; in 1983 the new Abergavenny by-pass gave me a splendid vantage-point for watching the engines doing run-pasts with their train and then climbing noisily, with much smoke and steam, up the gradient into the fringes of the Black Mountains. Banking engines were commonly used here on goods trains in steam days, and the central incident in the General Strike episode of *Border Country* concerns just such a goods train and its banker. I watched the “Welsh Marches Pullman” climb into the hills; my map showed the remains of two stations on this stretch of the line, Llanvihangel and Pandy; either could have been the basis for Glynmawr, the station in the novel, but both had been closed for some years and I did not bother going in search of them.

Just over a year after I had seen the “Welsh Marches Pullman” at Abergavenny, I climbed Skirrid Fawr, and on a beautiful warm sunny Easter Monday I looked down at the landscape of *Border Country* from the summit of what appears in the novel under the name “the Holy Mountain”. The young hero of the tale sometimes climbed the hills around his valley to enjoy the magnificent views, and I felt a definite sympathy with him that day. Far below, a diesel locomotive slowly climbed the gradient out of Abergavenny with a northbound train.

A few years later, I read in the newspapers of the death of Raymond Williams. The obituaries concentrated on his sociological and political writings, his Marxist-influenced thinking and his involvement with left-wing student protest, but I associate his name with *Border Country* first and foremost.

I read *Border Country* to my wife in instalments as a “Book at Bedtime” quite recently, and it was interesting to see how its appeal had stood up to the passing of time. I still enjoyed it as a railway novel; I still loved the descriptions of the countryside and the life of the villagers, but the business of growing up and returning home with nostalgia did not come across so strongly, and the political and social aspects of the story, and the relationships between the characters, were much more noticeable. The relationship between father and son, and the intensely moving account of the father’s final illness and death, had rather passed me by at the first reading, but now seemed much more important.

While staying at Crewe a few years ago, I took the opportunity to ride all the way down the Welsh border line; I had never travelled the section south of Hereford before. Much of that line passes through pleasant countryside, but the most attractive part of the whole journey is the stretch north of Abergavenny, the Border country of which Raymond Williams had written. I noted with pleasure the first distinctively Welsh-looking cottage beside the line, and admired the views of the Black Mountains. Returning some hours later, I sat on the other side of the train, and looked out at the hills of the border lit by the sunshine of a beautiful June evening. I realised that the train was definitely climbing north of Abergavenny, and I thought of the steam goods trains and their bankers. Trees had grown up along the by-pass, and I did not recognise my vantage-point for the “Welsh Marches Pullman” in 1983, but I could clearly see the summit of Skirrid Fawr where I had stood the following Easter and looked down at the Border country. I saw old-fashioned signal boxes and semaphores still in use at several places along that line, but between Abergavenny and Pontrillas there were none; I could see no trace of a station that could have been Glynmawr or a signal box that might have been the one where the boy’s father in the novel worked. As the train gathered speed on the downgrade towards the border with Herefordshire, I looked back across the fields at Skirrid Fawr and thought of a man whose writing about this stretch of countryside with its people and its railway had once captivated me.

# Davi(e)s

## Timothy Robey

In the freedom-founded nation  
Abraham and Jefferson  
Starred with stripes or bars together —  
Till they needed only one.

Summer symphonies unfolded  
Watched by seated Albertus;  
A and C were the conductors  
Of the music omnibus.

“Life is poor,” thought William Henry,  
”If it is so full of care.  
Would this supertramp finds *Leisure*  
So that he can stand and stare.”

Father, brother, son-cum-nephew,  
Joe and Fred and Steve by name,  
Smile on cue to make a photo  
For a pocket picture frame.

Leader of a waning party  
Clement kept its hopes alive  
When he turned down Churchill’s offer  
So that Liberals could survive.

Dwight and Miles and Peter Maxwell,  
*Glenys, Gena* and Siobhan,  
*Adam Hart-* and other Davies  
Living, dead or not yet born.

# Twentieth-Century Music

## Fred Dyson

Webern: Passacaglia, Opus 1. 1908

Schoenberg: 5 Orchestral Pieces, Opus 16. Originally 1909

Bartok: String Quartet No. 3. 1927

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Her finger traced the air,  
Her gray eyes smiled —  
Her transparent hair shone in the moonlight,  
Outlining her invisible form.  
She looked at me and smiled —  
Her finger touched my face, drawing —  
Silently, she spoke

Premonitions — everyone has those.  
The Passacaglia had risen, towered from silence, nowhere —  
Stretching to a limit unimaginable,  
Suspended above and by silence  
Where it faded imperceptibly

The Past — everyone has that.  
Premonitory voices whispered, sighed here —  
Time before and time after were gathered in a common knowing,  
Or was it gathered, common or known?  
Yes, it was.

Here, strings contained the quietness,  
Sounding something lower than this understanding —  
Bartok outlined and almost resolved his agony,  
Drawn through a timeless ecstasy in and from Beethoven

Chord Colours — Technical  
A Centre, a turning-point  
An Apex, a fulfilment?  
Another question

This moment has been and is transfigured a million times  
Before and after this metamorphosis  
Above and below this endless change  
This ever-forming —  
This ecstasy  
The silent containment  
Which expands with the thought,  
Singing within its own being

Publisher's Titles. Music has no need for words.

Her gray eyes smiled, clear in the moonlight —  
Her transparent form flowed, and held me —  
Intangibility touched me, and she smiled again —  
Her hair fell across the sky as light —  
She spoke.

# Rime of the Ancient Visitor

Lance Haward

So my name's mud. But how was I to know

That courtesy would rebound in my face  
And doped-up Samuel would go on so?

When all is said and done, it's not as tho'

I gate-crashed on some function, out of place  
As uninvited. How was I to **know**?

Nor is it, after all, luck's normal show:

It cannot be considered commonplace  
For poets to be doped up, raring to go –

The probability, it must be low

Of opium smoked in Addison Bridge Place.  
So kindly tell me: how was I to know?

As for some subterranean water-flow

Cut off, being a loss to th' human race...!  
Only a dopey poet would think so.

And can we get the record straight? 'Twas no

Spur of the moment thing. I'd told the case  
Three weeks before. So he at least should know:

To here from Porlock via Rotten Row

It takes all of three weeks at carriage pace –  
Why must the cut-short poet go on so?

Some wacky Mongol proto-Fontainebleau

With psychic ancestors utt'ring from space?!  
Come off it — how was **anyone** to know?

It just won't do, such labels to bestow.

A by-word for bad timing? A **disgrace**  
That he and half the world should go on so!

Okay he's lost it. I'm not going to crow,

And change my tenor into something base.  
I'm **proverb** now; but how was I to know?

So that's it then. Now where am I to go?

Perchance to sea — and maybe sea birds chase...?  
Some harmless exercise with the cross-bow?  
Our Samuel can't **forever** go on so...

## Ballet Quiz Answers

Patricia Cowley

Solution:

### *Column A*

A Antoinette  
B Bronislava  
C Celia  
D David  
E Erik  
F Frank  
G Giacomo  
H Henry  
I Ivan  
J Judith  
K Katherine  
L Lupe  
M Marius  
N Nicolas  
O Olga  
P Pearl  
Q [defeated Patricia]  
R Robert  
S Sonia  
T Ted  
U Ursula  
V Vladimir  
W Walter  
X Xenia  
Y Yuri  
Z Zizi

### *Column B*

A Adams  
B Barnes  
C Clarke  
D Dandré  
E Elvin  
F Fuller  
G Gould  
H Hall  
I Ivanov  
J Judson  
K Kidd  
L Lander  
M Mosaval  
N Newman  
O Orloff  
P Pantz  
Q Quirey  
R Rodrigues  
S St Denis  
T Trecu  
U Usher  
V Vyroubova  
W Webster  
X Ximenez  
Y Young  
Z Zanfretta

### Results:

Patricia received 5 entries for the quiz. One, from Martin Wyatt, arrived after the closing date, so the prize goes to Gery Bramall, to whom our heartiest congratulations are offered.

Gery Bramall	49 (winner)
Martin Wyatt	49
Paul Emerson	48
Anne Leaney	47
Mike Formby	43

## A Greek Quiz

### Michael Schwartz

Ken – as promised, a quiz centred on Modern Greece. It's really aimed at prospective travellers to Greece who would like some potted highlights of the country – and who would like to hold their own when offered an ouzo, as they assuredly will be in this most hospitable of countries.

Answers are not just about people but also aspects of Greek life. I see that you, Ken, already bagged Z for your own recent film quiz!

Please send your entries to Michael Schwartz, 8 Hardwick Square South, Buxton, Derbyshire SK17 6PY or email to the (appropriately named) [greekmultilingual@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:greekmultilingual@yahoo.co.uk).

In true Greek style I will commend entries written during siesta time (1pm-5pm) and delivered to the nearest postbox during the volta - that slow evening walk up and down the main street where Greek people greet one another, agree to build houses for one another and marry off their children. O Theos mazi tous (God be with them).

- A King who died of a monkey-bite
- B Down-market relative of the bouzouki
- C King who preferred Germany in WW1
- D Everyday spoken version of Modern Greek
- E Greece as the Greeks call it
- F Theodorakis' pet singer; became Socialist MP
- G Ex-King Constantine's dynasty
- H Highly popular Greek composer; rival to Theodorakis
- I Brigadier who ousted Papadopoulos in 1973
- J There is no J in Greek so pour yourself an ouzo instead
- K Prime Minister 1955-1963, 1974-1980
- L Commemorated in the film Z
- M Took control in 1936 - got his Constitution from Salazar
- N Known to us as Lepanto - and the Greeks as...?
- O Airline was taken over by Government after death in 1975
- P George was the Liberal, Andreas the Socialist
- Q There is no Q in Greek, but who was Modern Greece's first Queen?
- R Music banned by many governments but popular since 1974
- S Took over as PM from Andreas P above
- T Liberal PM, built up infrastructure in late 19<sup>th</sup> century
- U U lucky people - nothing begins with U (time for another drink)
- V MP for Crete, oversaw Greece expansion by 65% in 1912-3
- W CIA station chief murdered in Athens 1975
- X Classical composer, born to Greeks in Rumania
- Y Greece's major North-Western town (can start with I)
- Z Greek resistance leader attacked by Communists