

CITY OF DERBY RETIRED TEACHERS

ISSUE NO 62

# NEWSLETTER

March

2010

A happy Spring to  
all our readers



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- NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS -

# In Our Thoughts

We learned with sadness of the death of one of our members, Mr. Cedric Fowkes, from Woodville. We sent a card of sympathy to his family.

Richard Booker, one of our committee members, has had to resign due to ill health. He is awaiting an operation which, frustratingly was delayed, but we hope this is successful and that he will be back to good health in the future.

Another of our members, Angela Padfield, has had a spell in hospital but is now home and recovering well. We went to see her in hospital in Nottingham and at home and sent a card and flowers on behalf of everybody.

Terry Payne, who has been on many of our "outings" with his wife, had a motorcycle accident in January. He is still in hospital, but is now "on the mend" and becoming more mobile. We wish him a speedy recovery and have sent a get well card from us all.

The long Winter seems to be over at last and we can all enjoy the slightly warmer weather. We both wish everyone good health for the rest of 2010.

## For Your Diary



**Tues 6th April:** Coffee Morning. Guest Speaker: Susan Slater - 'Bletchley Park'

**Wed. 12th May to Sun. 16th May:** Extended visit to Venice

**Tuesday 1st June:** Coffee Morning: Guest speaker: Ian Hingley - 'Origins of sayings and other subjects'

**Tuesday 8th June:** Summer Outing to Oxford

**Tuesday 13th July:** Summer Ramble (see back page)

**Can you help?** Members who hear of colleagues who are ill, in hospital or in any other difficulty, are asked to contact Biddy on 01773-823954 or Ann on 01332-513412

**Biddy Robinson and Ann Salt**

*In Memoriam*

Cedric Fowkes

## Locked Away in My Home Town by Jerry Kelly

Recently I went by plane to Cork Airport and spent seven days in my hometown of Youghal where I stayed at a very comfortable bed and breakfast in Friar Street, close to the town centre and quayside. It was not too far from the lighthouse and miles of strand. I had so much to look forward to as I had not stayed in Youghal for over two years.

On arrival at my home town, I parked my car and met Angela and Michael with whom I was staying. They are a delightful couple and afforded me a Cead Mile Failta (a hundred thousand welcomes). It was around 4pm and after going to my bedroom and freshening up, I decided to walk the main street of Youghal hoping to see many local people and friends but I met nobody I knew and felt a stranger in my hometown. I hoped I would see the locals I knew in the evening.

The weather was an 'Indian Summer' and when I walked on the quayside so many people were fishing for mackerel, just as I fished for mackerel when I was a young boy. This evening I saw shoals of mackerel breaking in the harbour and hunting the bait into the quayside. The fish were in their hundreds, or maybe thousands,

and along the quayside anyone fishing was pulling in many mackerel. I had not seen so many since my childhood in the 1940's. Wherever I went each day on the quayside, or across the ferry point, fish were being caught. Anyone not fishing could go home with plenty of mackerel, gutted and filleted in the salt-water, at no cost.



**Youghal Clock Tower**

After a day or two I did meet many friends with whom I grew up with. I enjoyed lunch with them and conversations covering many years of happiness. This was again a time-warp for me. I was much older and the people I was delighted to meet were very much older. Once again, I was aware of my mortality. However, these wonderful local people reminded me of

so many happenings in my home town over the last fifty years since I went to live in Allestree. I went on holiday with a pal of mine in 1959 to his sister who lived in Allestree. There I met my wife-to-be and later returned to stay.

The boom is over and all over Ireland the cost of living is very high. The local pubs were the heart of every town where, over a few pints at a very reasonable price, news of all happenings, good or sad,

would be related to all locals like me returning for a holiday. This meeting at pubs has come to an end for most nights of the week. The good times have gone and Ireland is in deep recession with very high unemployment. A pint of Guinness can now cost from 4.80 Euros to 6 or 7 in Dublin city. Eating out is only for the few but the food is of outstanding quality if you can afford it.

A new format has taken place in wonderful pubs in my home town. Lots of people meet at pubs overlooking the harbour with yachts at anchor and enjoy quality coffee and home-made cakes. Lunches at pubs are popular and of high standard. Drinking Guinness, also of a high quality, is done in late evening. If one can afford it, a holiday in Ireland is unforgettable.

My long, long, friend Kevin Hennessey and I are enjoying a drive and lunch and reminiscing of many years when Youghal enjoyed so many visitors. The days of Mick Del at the Showboat will never be forgotten. If we all lived two life times these could not be equalled. My holiday then comes to an end. I drive to the guest house where I am the only one staying. The house is mine as the owner has gone back to their farm to spend the night. After freshening up I am looking forward to going out and meeting more friends. I turn the key to unlock the door of my bedroom and it snaps in two! I am left with half a key and I am on my own!

I tried all I could but could not open the strong door. I was at the back of the house and opened the window wide. No one was around and all I could see was the sea and many seagulls. I had left my mobile phone in my car and could not

contact anyone, even my wife back in Allestree. I realised I was stuck so I settled down to watch RTE T.V.

The next morning I was awake at 7am. Angela arrived at 10.30 am. I was high up and opened my bedroom window and called out that I had been locked in my bedroom from 7pm the night before. She had a spare key but it didn't work as part of the old key was lodged in the lock. Angela said "don't worry; I will call the fire brigade". A wonderful man, Tom Walsh, put a ladder up to my bedroom window. I said no way was I going to climb down but he said 'don't worry Jerry, I will get you out'. It was now gone 10.30 am and I told him I had to catch a plane at Cork Airport at 12.30 pm. He went down the ladder to find an instrument that might open the lock.

Angela shouted "Jerry, I am getting your breakfast, would you like sausages, bacon, eggs and mushrooms?" I was trying to avoid fry-ups but felt I needed a lift up after my ordeal. I shouted "yes please". Meanwhile, Tom was still searching for an instrument to unlock my bedroom door. Angela, the owner, said "Tom would you like some breakfast too?" and Tom shouted "yes please". Tom's wife arrived to see if her husband was able to unlock my bedroom door and also was invited by Angela to have breakfast. Tom successfully opened the door and I enjoyed a full Irish breakfast. I laughed when I heard Angela say to Tom "thanks for saving the door". I was locked in my room for 15 hours! This could only happen in Ireland! I arrived at Cork airport in time for my flight. After returning the hire car, the weather changed; a down-

pour and strong winds put an end to the "Indian Summer".

When I reached the car hire office I was drenched to the skin and I asked if I could use a room to dry myself. This very Irish lady said the only facility she could offer me was the men's toilet. In the toilet I put my Cork Examiner newspaper on the tiled floor and knelt on it and put my head under the hand dryer. The warm feeling was so welcome. A Cork man leaving the toilet looked at me on my knees and said "what is our country coming to". I then realised that a lot of Muslims enjoy living in Ireland.

My flight to Manchester Airport was frightening. The weather included hail, fog and cross-winds. Our plane was tossed about like a cork in the sea. As the pilot approached Manchester Airport, he tried to land three times but had to abort with the extreme weather. The captain then said we would fly on to East Midlands Airport as conditions were favourable to land. When we landed there, the plane had to refuel and I told the Air Hostess that I was only thirty minutes from my home and I would like to leave the plane, most of the passengers being from Manchester or Liverpool. The Captain did allow me to leave the plane after signing an agreement form.

I was driven to the arrival lounge. However, all passengers had to leave the plane and airport coaches were standing by for them to board. They were drenched from the awful rain as they made their way to the coaches. I was enjoying a coffee in the arrival lounge, waiting for my son to take me home, when I asked the BMI Baby

attendant why all the other passengers had left the plane. I was told security would have to search the plane as I had left before its final destination at Manchester. The attendant told me they had to do this as I could have left something on board!

I was so glad to be home with Beryl and Barney (our golden retriever). I had received such a wonderful reunion with my friends and neighbours in my hometown. I look forward, God willing, to returning again soon.

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## **The D.A.T. Retired Teachers' Annual General Meeting**

**The AGM For 2010 will take place at the Imperial Rooms, Matlock on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> April at 2pm.**

We hope that, as usual, it will be of interest to the City of Derby members.

The speaker will be Julian Stanley, Chief Executive of the Teacher's Support Network (T.S.N.), who will outline the work which has developed in the last ten years since it succeeded the Teacher's Benevolent Fund (T.B.F.).

During the afternoon we hope to hold a raffle. Any gifts for this will be greatly appreciated. The meeting will close not later than 4pm.

**Tom Neville, Derbyshire Retired Teachers' Secretary**

## Go Wild at Chillingham by Annette Brownhill

I've had a healthy respect for cattle ever since a school trip to the ruins of Chartley Castle in Staffordshire. Our group suddenly became the focus of interest for a number of cows grazing in the surrounding pasture. Any musings about the fate of Chartley's famous prisoner, Mary Queen of Scots, were rudely interrupted...

Some years ago whilst visiting the birthplace of the talented 18<sup>th</sup> century wood engraver Thomas Bewick at Cherryburn, I saw a copy of one of his most famous works 'The Wild Bull at Chillingham'. It depicted a ferocious looking beast and I was curious about its significance. On a subsequent short break in Northumberland I took the opportunity to find out more about the Chillingham herd.

The Chillingham Cattle are not only wild, but unique in the world, being free of human interference, and genetically identical! The great naturalist Charles Darwin was interested in these unusual animals, and ongoing scientific research has revealed that the cattle are amazingly a natural clone, a result of inbreeding over the centuries and periodic dips in the size of the herd! Despite this fact they continue to graze - as they have done for possibly over seven hundred years - in the grounds of Chillingham Castle. Their total lack of domestication - and absence from the food chain - make their origin the subject of continued speculation, links to White Park Cattle and even the ancient Aurochs having been mooted.

Visitors are allowed to view the herd - about fifty in number- at a safe distance and only in the company of the Chillingham Warden. The setting is lovely - lush pastureland fringed with trees. The animals' placid facial expressions and creamy coloured hide, tinged with brown, belie the fact that they are truly wild cattle. The calves are equally attractive and should never be approached. Human input in terms of feeding and veterinary checks is kept to



an absolute minimum to ensure the continuation of the cattle's natural state. Although there is no record of them succumbing to serious bovine diseases the herd was particularly fortunate to remain unscathed when in 2001 'Foot and Mouth' was confirmed in a farm six miles away.

At the beginning of this year the British media reported that Italian genetic scientists hope to recreate the ancient Aurochs, the European ancestor of domestic cattle. Weighing in the region of a tonne these horned animals were renowned for their very aggressive nature! Famously portrayed on the Lascaux wall paintings in France, the Aurochs eventually became extinct in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The purpose of this latest venture seems rather vague and possibly absurd. So, I suggest that if you are interested in 'living history' you should shun this future bovine version of 'Jurassic Park' and visit Chillingham Park instead! **The website is [www.chillingham-wildcattle.org.uk](http://www.chillingham-wildcattle.org.uk), telephone 01668 215250.**

PICTURE: From the engraving by Bewick

## Roman Food by Pat Wilson

At our AGM and coffee morning on 2nd February, 2010, the guest speaker was Martin Lawson and his subject was 'Roman Food'.

The talk began with us sampling a recipe for Roman biscuits made from wholemeal flour, oats, butter, honey and eggs – delicious they were too!

We were then taken through a banquet, observing the superstition to enter with the right foot (the left being bad luck). Egyptian slaves would wash the guest's feet and hands and then serve wine.

Diners would recline on three seater sofas and each course would be wheeled in on tables. They must have been creaking with the amount of food that was served. The courses were never ending and comprised of all kinds of meat, fish, vegetables and olives, all accompanied by wine.

One delicacy was edible dormice served grilled on skewers after the inedible parts had been removed in a rather gruesome manner! A silver dish showing the signs of the zodiac would then appear with the appropriate meats and fish on each sign (I don't think I would fancy Scorpio).

Then followed a whole chicken and a hare for each guest. Feeling sick, yet?



**A Fresco depicting a banquet, at Pompeii**

These banquets would begin at 10am and carry on throughout the day until the small hours of the morning. During this time, guests would be invited to take a hot bath, causing some of them to vomit thus enabling them to start eating again! Trays of

cats, dogs, rats, etc - all brown in colour - would be served, all made into sausage meat. Fruit wine, pickles and other exotic foods were readily available throughout the entertainment.

The normal Roman diet was healthier and some of the recipes resemble food that we eat today but some are best forgotten.

Footnote - for those who garden - we have to credit the Romans for the garden snail being brought to Britain (as food) - thanks!



## The Land of the Lambanana\* by Colin Clayton

Sometimes events work out perfectly and Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> March was one of those times. The planning and organisation, plus the delightful Spring weather coalesced to provide the perfect backdrop for our visit to Liverpool.

We arrived at the Albert Dock to be met by our Blue Badge Guide for our tour of the city. Les Cox turned out to be a remarkable guide, historian and commentator of all things Scouse. His knowledge was encyclopaedic, his enthusiasm limitless, and his energy inexhaustible. He guided us round a pageant of cityscape with anecdotes, memories and historical zeal. He explained the magnificent buildings, warehouses and dockland developments along the Merseyside to the stately Georgian Squares and Parks of *genteel* Liverpool, and for good measure the sites and streets of the Toxteth riots.

In 2004, the city was inscribed a World Heritage City largely due to its rich history as a successful commercial port. Visually the waterfront buildings and the dockland berths are stunning and obviously these paid a part in gaining the honour. The vibrancy of the city, the contemporary design, and the layout of the new buildings together with the em-

phasis on arts and artifice earned the city the title of Capital of Culture in 2008.

Liverpool is a remarkable place. Yet it is a city in transition, perhaps it always was. It is a frothy concoction of trade, enterprise, learning and adventure, and of course, religion. As our guide pointed out

to us, religion based on hope... well Hope Street! Hope Street is a conduit running from Brownlow Hill, the site of the splendidly modern R.C. Metropolitan Cathedral, to the traditional gothic style Anglican Cathedral.



Liverpool - Albert Dock & Anglican Cathedral  
Bill Grange

Liverpool 1 is the new Liverpool. The great new shopping area, not the usual massive arcade hosting all manner of shops in an 'all weather' shopping centre but an area laid out in traffic-free streets and walkways in the open air, leading to real shops!

This was an excellent day out, something for all: museums, art galleries, shops, bars and cafés, docklands and churches; and finally, on our homeward journey, we made a return visit to the Leigh Arms in Cheshire for an excellent evening meal.

\*The Super Lambanana (a hybrid lamb and banana), standing in the City centre, is an artwork by Japanese Taro Chiezo. Made of concrete and steel, it is 17 feet tall and painted bright yellow. Meant to warn of the dangers of genetically modified food, it was also thought appropriate to Liverpool, due to the port's history in the trade of lambs and bananas! It has spawned many smaller copies, of various colours, to be found all over the City.  
Bill Grange



## Judas Asparagus???

### Supplied by Barbara Ward

**A** child was asked to write a book report on the entire Bible.

I wonder how often we take for granted that children understand what we are teaching?

Here it is... through the eyes of a child... *The Children's Bible in a Nutshell*:

In the beginning, which occurred near the start, there was nothing but God, darkness, and some gas. The Bible says, 'The Lord thy God is one', but I think He must be a lot older than that. Anyway, God said, 'Give me a light!' and someone did. Then God made the world.

He split the Adam and made Eve. Adam and Eve were naked, but they weren't embarrassed because mirrors hadn't been invented yet. Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating one bad apple, so they were driven from the Garden of Eden. Not sure what they were driven in though, because they didn't have cars. Adam and Eve had a son, Cain, who hated his brother as long as he was Abel.

Pretty soon all of the early people died off, except for Methuselah, who lived to be like a million or something. One of the next important people was Noah, who was a good guy, but one of his kids was kind of a Ham. Noah built a large boat and put his family and some animals on it. He asked some other people to join him, but they said they would have to take a rain check.

After Noah came Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob was more famous than his brother, Esau, because Esau sold Jacob his birthmark in exchange for some pot roast. Jacob had a son named Joseph who wore a really loud sports coat.

Another important Bible guy is Moses, whose real name was Charlton Heston. Moses led the Israel Lights out of Egypt and away from the evil Pharaoh after God sent ten plagues on Pharaoh's people. These plagues included frogs, mice, lice, bowels, and no cable. God fed the Israel Lights every day with manicotti. Then he gave them His Top Ten Commandments. These include: don't lie, cheat, smoke, dance, or covet your neighbor's stuff. Oh, yeah, I just thought of one more: Honour thy father and thy mother.

One of Moses' best helpers was Joshua who was the first Bible guy to use spies. Joshua fought the battle of Geritol and the fence fell over on the town. After Joshua came David. He got to be king by killing a giant with a slingshot. He had a son named Solomon who had about 300 wives and 500 porcupines. My teacher says he was wise, but that doesn't sound very wise to me.

After Solomon there were a bunch of major league prophets. One of these was Jonah, who was swallowed by a big whale and then barfed up on the shore. There were also some minor league prophets, but I guess we don't have to worry about them.

After the Old Testament came the New Testament. Jesus is the star of The New. He was

born in Bethlehem in a barn. (I wish I had been born in a barn too, because my mom is always saying to me, 'Close the door! Were you born in a barn?' It would be nice to say, 'As a matter of fact, I was.')

During His life, Jesus had many arguments with sinners like the Pharisees and the Democrats.

Jesus also had twelve opossums. The worst one was Judas Asparagus. Judas was so evil that they named a terrible vegetable after him.

Jesus was a great man. He healed many leopards and even preached to some Germans on the Mount. But the Democrats and all those guys put Jesus on trial before Pontius the Pilot. Pilot didn't stick up for Jesus. He just washed his hands instead. Anyways, Jesus died for our sins, then came back to life again. He went up to Heaven but will be back at the end of the Aluminum. His return is foretold in the book of Revolution.

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## Record attendance at our AGM

There was a record attendance at our 2010 Annual Meeting, which preceded the February Coffee morning.

At the meeting the Officers' reports and the balance sheet were all approved. We had had another packed and successful annual programme clouded by the death of our Chairman, David Slater, in September.

Rosemary Lancaster was appointed as our new Chairman and Marian Edge was elected as Vice Chairman.

The retiring officers and Committee had all agreed to stand for re-election with the

exception of John Willcox and Richard Booker. The rest of the Committee were re-elected en bloc.

Gill Horth and Marie Garner were nominated to join the Committee and this was agreed by the meeting.

Richard Booker was thanked for his work as a Committee member and John Willcox was especially thanked for his erstwhile work as Treasurer and for his work connected with the NUT. Tributes were paid to Frank Wilson for all the extra work he has taken on and to Bill Grange for his excellent production of the Newsletter.

**NEW COMMITTEE:** Chairman: Mrs E R Lancaster, Vice-Chairman: Mrs M L R Edge, Secretary: Mrs B R Ward, Treasurer: Mr F P Wilson, TSN Representative: Ms J McGarry (ex-officio),

Committee: Miss A Brownhill, Mr C Clayton, Mrs H M Garner, Mrs D K Grange, Miss V M Holmes, Mrs G Horth, Miss C M Jowitt, Mrs B A Kelly, Mrs E Monk, Mrs E Robinson, Mrs A Salt, Mrs J M Watson.

## Subs 2010

Members are reminded that subscriptions were due for payment on 1st January! Cheques should be made out to:

*'City of Derby Retired Teachers' and sent to Mr. F. Wilson, 15 Willson Road, Littleover, Derby DE23 1BY.*

*Prompt payment will be greatly appreciated!*

## A New Zealand Experience by Bill Grange

In January and February, 2010, Diana and I experienced the most ambitious of our holidays so far. This consisted of a 26 day tour, taken with eighteen other people, plus our attentive young lady courier, Helen, of both North and South Islands of New Zealand. It was an organised coach excursion, laid on by the travel firm, Explore.

We flew out from Heathrow on a freezing day, with snow lying, breaking our journey with two nights in Hong Kong. Then it was on to Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, Auckland has a population of 1.4 million and, although by far the largest city in the country, it is *not* the capital. It has a collection of (to me) unlovely skyscrapers, which seem to be the rule in any city of any size these days. Lording over these is the 'sky-tower', looking like an overgrown airport control tower on a gravity-defying slender column. Rising to 328 metres above the traffic-thronged streets, it is 'the tallest man-made structure in the southern hemisphere'. Fortunately, Auckland has some tranquil green areas too, including a huge park built inside an old caldera or collapsed volcanic crater. In the centre of this is the neoclassical building of the Museum of Auckland, containing, most notably, a staggering array of carved wooden Maori artefacts. The weather, by the way, was warm and sunny January being high summer in New Zealand. It was to remain so for much of the holiday.

It would perhaps be tedious to present a day-to-day account of the tour, so I thought I would instead describe some of

the highlights (missing out much of what we saw), and make some general points on New Zealand's environment.

Auckland is situated towards the north of North Island, which still has some active volcanoes and is the stronghold of the Maori, the peoples who were occupying New Zealand (though they weren't the original human inhabitants) when Europeans invaded during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The topography is generally hilly, though not truly mountainous, except for a range of high volcanoes in the centre.

South island is substantially larger, but has a much smaller human population. There are some featureless flat areas, especially around Christchurch, but the dominant feature is a magnificent range of snow-capped mountains, the Southern Alps, running like a spine along the western seaboard and reaching 3,754 metres (12,316 ft) at Mount Cook. The western coast, especially to the south, broken by a series of dramatic drowned, formerly glaciated, valleys, is appropriately called 'Fjordland'. This is the region used for filming the 'Lord of the Rings' films.

The white settlers cleared huge areas of native forest throughout the country, replacing it with pastureland, mainly supporting sheep, bringing in grass seed from Europe. The consequence is that a huge range of European grassland wild flowers now dominate. I must admit that, although I knew that alien plants had been introduced to New Zealand, I wasn't prepared for the scale of it. It doesn't end

with the flora, though, as the settlers brought in familiar birds from back home. On the second day of the tour, we travelled by ferry to a small island off the coast to the north-east of Auckland to visit some vineyards. As we stood among the rows of ripening grapes we heard blackbirds singing, house sparrows twittering, while a skylark gave out its liquid song from above. With a surrounding sward supporting wild carrot, ox-eye daisies, bird's-foot trefoil, red and white clover, etc., it was difficult to believe that we were not in England. I must admit to a feeling of disappointment in travelling to the other side of the planet to meet the same wildlife we would have met at home! Before humans arrived, New Zealand was a biological curiosity, due to its isolation, with many of the birds becoming flightless as there were no mammals, apart from insect-eating bats, to prey on them. The Maori, arriving from Polynesia about 2000 years ago brought dogs, which decimated the flightless birds. The white settlers then finished the job, especially by clearing the forest. They also ejected the Maori from much of their former lands.

During the first few days of our tour we travelled to the far north, to appropriately named Northland province where the most memorable sight for me, was Tane Mahuta, the 'Lord of the Forest', the largest tree in New Zealand. This is a kauri gum, a member of the conifer

group, reaching a height of 168 feet, with its massive trunk, of 46 feet in circumference. The tree, probably 2000 years old, is sacred to the Maori and indeed our lady Maori guide, sang an appropriate reverential song in front of it. It stands in a fragment of the original temperate rain forest at Waipoua, which also supported a staggering array tree ferns and mosses,

a wonderful contrast to the agricultural grasslands which now make up much of New Zealand.

From there we wended our way southwards to the capital of New Zealand, Wellington, which lies at the far south of North Island.. Along the way we experienced some wonderful sights, including the cave at Waitomo, with a roof covered in thousands of 'glow-worms' (actually midge larvae, which glow to attract

insect prey to dangling sticky threads), which we viewed from a boat pulled along by ropes. At Rotorua we were treated to a Maori evening at an 'authentic' Maori village. This was slightly Hollywood in nature as the Maori, though still keeping alive their traditions, are fully integrated into New Zealand society, living in modern houses and driving cars - and they don't ordinarily walk around dressed in feathers and wear war paint! However, we suspended disbelief and entered into the spirit of things. The dancing and music was excellent, as was the meal afterwards - with the meat and vegetables cooked in a traditional under-



Tane Mahuta

Note the people in foreground

ground oven. There was quite a lot of humour thrown in, too, especially gentle gibes at the Australians, whose huge continent is often referred to as 'West Island'!

Although not actually seeing New Zealand's iconic flightless bird, the kiwi (of which there are several distinct species, all now rare) in the wild, we did visit a kiwi breeding programme at the Rainbow Springs Nature Park, where we saw various stages in incubating the eggs, each enormous in comparison to the size of the bird - and then some actual kiwis scurrying around in the dim light of a nocturnal

house where we had to keep absolutely quiet so not to scare them.

Still in North Island, we enjoyed another unforgettable time when we walked around the Waitotapu thermal area, where we were reminded of the volcanic turmoil just below the surface, with erupting geysers, bubbling mud pools and acres of steaming ground.

A casualty of the unstable nature of the earth's crust was the town of Napier on the east coast which was destroyed in a massive earthquake as recently as 1931, but rapidly rebuilt in art deco style. It is now a World Heritage site, having the largest collection of these appealing buildings anywhere.

Near to Napier, at Cape Kidnappers, is one of the largest mainland colonies of gannets in the world. After a bumpy ride on the back of a tractor-pulled trailer along a boulder-strewn beach below awesome crumbling cliffs, we walked up to the gannets - hundreds of them on the flat cliff-top, some feeding their fluffy young, others wheeling around in the sky uttering a cacophony of cries.



Doubtful Sound

Eventually reaching Wellington - which at first sight looks more or less like Auckland with its hideous high-rise but with some attractive 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings remaining - we took the ferry (the ship as large as

a typical one plying across the English channel) across to South Island. During the two hour voyage, the mountainous scenery of wooded inlets and islands made for another memorable experience.

South Island held yet more delights for us. At Punakaiki on the west coast we visited the famous pancake rocks, where the limestone cliffs and stacks have been eroded to produce a strange layered structure. Near here we stayed at what was probably the most attractive of the many hotels we stayed at on the tour. Here the accommodation consisted of a series of separate chalets facing a rugged beach, with the surf crashing on the rocks and where we witnessed a spectacular sunset over the sea.

We also stayed near the head of a valley penetrating the Southern Alps, with snow covered Mount Cook towering over all. This was at the huge and uncompromising steel and glass Hermitage Resort. Fortunately, from a distance, the buildings are dwarfed by the surrounding mountains. As if gazing up the valley, away from the buildings and towards the mountain on which he learned his mountain skills as a young man, was a splendid bronze statue of the joint conqueror of Everest, that quintessential New Zealander, Sir Edmund Hilary

I was delighted, on a walk up the valley, to discover an environment consisting of native bush and grassland, with some native New Zealand butterflies. While at the mountain resort, Diana and I joined a short excursion to a lake beneath the Tasman glacier. On an inflatable boat, driven by an enthusiastic young woman, we visited - and even touched - in turn, several of the icebergs, some as big as houses, which had broken off from the glacier, floating around on the dark lake.

I think we, and most of the rest of our party would have voted our overnight stay on a small ship cruising along one of the most inaccessible fiords on the west coast, Doubtful Sound as *the* highlight of the whole holiday. We approached this via a launch trip across vast island-studded freshwater Lake Manapouri. Then we travelled by coach over a mountain pass to our ship. Doubtful sound is a huge branching inlet, hemmed in by almost vertical cliffs, which are thickly festooned in native temperate rain forest, most decidedly Tolkien country. During the afternoon, the ship cruised gently down the

sound, stopping at one point to allow some of the passengers to try out kayaking and others, including ourselves, to swim. The water near the surface was remarkably warm and it was a magical experience indeed to be swimming while looking up at the awesome tree-clad heights rearing above us. More delight was to come later, in the shape of a pod of gambolling bottle-nosed dolphins, coming very close to the sides of the ship. Eventually we reached the mouth of the Sound and the open sea, where small islets had colonies of fur seals. On one of them, a tiny youngster was learning to swim in his or her own rock pool. Then the ship returned back along the sound to anchor in a secluded bay, while we enjoyed a gourmet meal on board before settling down in our bunks for the night. The next morning, the bright sunshine of the previous day was replaced by a heavy sea mist, with the forested hills rising into heavy murk, giving an even more sinister Lord of the Rings effect. A magical ten minutes was enjoyed when the Captain switched off the engines so that we could experience an awesome silence, broken only by the faint song of the woodland birds.

All too soon, our time in New Zealand was over, though we did extend the holiday by a few days by staying with some friends in the tropical heat of Cairns in Queensland. On leaving New Zealand, as our plane from Christchurch on the east coast, passed over the western coast, I was disappointed to see that the Southern Alps were shrouded in cloud. However, just as we left the coast, the clouds parted momentarily to reveal Mount Cook in all its awesome splendour.

## Some Quiz Howlers - Supplied by Val Holmes

### UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE

Jeremy Paxman: *What is another name for 'cherrypickers' and cheesemongers'?*

Contestant: *Homosexuals.*

Jeremy Paxman: *No - they're regiments in the British Army, who will be very upset with you!*

### BEG, BORROW OR STEAL (BBC2)

Jamie Theakston: *Where do you think Cambridge University is?*

Contestant: *Geography isn't my strong point.*

Jamie Theakston: *There's a clue in the title.*

Contestant: *Leicester.*

### LATE SHOW (BBC MIDLANDS)

Alex Trelinski: *What is the capital of Italy*

Contestant: *France.*

Trelinski: *France is another country - try again.*

Contestant: *Oh, hum - Benidorm?*

Trelinski: *Wrong, sorry, let's try another question. In which country is the Parthenon?*

Contestant: *Sorry, I don't know.*

Trelinski: *Just guess a country, then.*

Contestant: *Paris.*

### THE WEAKEST LINK (BBC2)

Anne Robinson: *Oscar Wilde, Adolf Hitler and Jeffrey Archer have all written books about their experiences in what: Prison, or the Conservative Party?*

Contestant: *The Conservative Party.*

### UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE

Bamber Gascoyne: *What was Gandhi's first name?*

Contestant: *Goosey?*

### GWR FM ( Bristol )

Presenter: *What happened in Dallas on November 22nd, 1963?*

Contestant: *I don't know, I wasn't watching it then.*

### LINCS FM PHONE-IN

Presenter: *Which is the largest Spanish-speaking country in the world?*

Contestant: *Barcelona.*

Presenter: *I was really after the name of a country.*

Contestant: *I'm sorry, I don't know the names of any countries in Spain.*

### NATIONAL LOTTERY (BBC1)

Presenter: *What is the world's largest continent?*

Contestant: *The Pacific.*

## The Summer Ramble, 2010 by Val Holmes

The date of ramble is **Tuesday, 13th July** (and not 6th July as previously indicated). We hope this does not inconvenience those who wish to come on the walk. The ramble will start at Ashover and is on good paths with lovely views over meadows and hills, mainly flat until a short descent at the end and no stiles! It is only a few miles and ends at The Poets' Corner pub for a delicious lunch. There is a good choice of main meals, baked potatoes, baguettes and a selection of various sausages sourced locally. Their internet address is: [www.oldpoets.co.uk](http://www.oldpoets.co.uk) - where you can see the meals that are available.

To get there, head north on the A38, leave at the Alfreton turning and continue north on the A61 via Higham towards Stretton. Look for the B6014 on the left signed to Matlock and Ashover. After one km. bear right on to the B6036 for Ashover. Once in the village turn right past the church to the Parish Hall. The free car park is on the right. We will meet at 10.30 a.m. to start the walk at 10.45a.m. We look forward to seeing you there. Ashover is a lovely village with lots of history and well worth having a look around.

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### Frogs by Bill Grange

At the time of writing (22nd March), the frogs in my garden pond are in a frenzy of mating activity. They only appeared this week, following the prolonged cold winter - 'the worst in 30 years'. In other years they have been 'at it' as early as January. In frogs, fertilization is external - the female first laying the eggs, which are then fertilised by the male releasing sperm into the water, so they aren't having as much fun as creatures which mate 'normally'.



The self-satisfied grin of the frog in the picture (in my pond in Allestree) is therefore hard to explain!

As it happens, female frogs are often drowned by having several amorous males clinging on at once!

Each egg is surrounded by a layer of mucous, which swells up greatly on contact with the water, providing the protective jelly which is such a delightful feature of the egg-mass - 'frog-spawn'.

The tadpoles which soon hatch are at first vegetarian, eating algae and other water plants. Later on they become meat-eaters, mainly scavenging dead creatures. They will also eat cheese! To speed up their development, I throw lumps of 'mousetrap' cheddar into the pond - not that this is all that cheap nowadays!