

The Flame



FORTHCOMING FIREBIRDS EVENTS

TUESDAY

15TH DECEMBER 2020

Zoom Christmas Tea Party - mince pies advised.

TUESDAY 12TH JANUARY 2021

Bohemians in Bloomsbury - virtual tour with Sue King. Sue took us on the much liked virtual tour of Dickensian London. It is a pleasure to invite her back. Phoenix members are very welcome.

TUESDAY

23RD FEBRUARY 2021 - 3 PM

Zoom AGM. Details to follow.

FORTHCOMING PHOENIX EVENTS

FRIDAY 22ND JANUARY 2021

Guided walk around Hampstead Heath via Zoom. Information to follow. Likely cost £10 - £12 per household/screen.

FEBRUARY 2021

A Zoom evening with magician Alan Hudson. Date and time to be advised.

DEAR FIREBIRDS,



I started to cut my husband's hair in March and didn't expect that I would still be doing it in December. The thought of spending Christmas without the family had crossed my mind a number of times over the past 30 plus years, but it wasn't what I had in mind for this year. It was so lovely in the summer, when the rules allowed us to see family, visit second homes, go on holiday; there was even encouragement to have meals out. What am I doing? Sorry, I don't want to drag you down. In fact, following our vaccinations, we will all be able to go on holiday soon, have quality time and parties with our families and friends and shake a stranger's hand.

If you want some travel ideas, El Moss has written Part 1 of travels to Egypt and Rue Hoddinott is telling us about her journey through Cambodia and Vietnam (pages 4 and 7).

Zoom has been something that most of us needed to get to grips with and people have started to complain about 'Zoom fatigue'. Read Peter Green's article (page 17) about staying connected and it will probably take your fatigue away.

As some of you might be planning Christmas entertaining outside, nice warm sausage rolls might help to cheer you up. If you, like Vicky Nugée, think that home-made sausage rolls are superior to bought ones, you can try her recipe (page 22) to produce first class sausage rolls.

I wish you all a happy Christmas, together with health and happiness for 2021.

With warmest best wishes

Erika Gloyn (Masons)

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PANDEMIC THROUGH THE EYES OF A DOG

by Nicola Barclay (Saddlers)

I don't understand.

I still get walks but they are different. Human Strangers no longer want to stop and talk to me or stroke me, though I still want to say hello. The changes started with keeping me close, no more flexi lead, then we started walking before the sun was up. The walks are dark and lonely.

Human Mummy seems to have stored food for me. I'm a grazer (not like those greedy Labradors) when I'm hungry I eat, but only what I need. But there is more than one bag of food now. Why? I can only eat one at a time. She gives me cheese as a treat, but I don't need so many treats. Vet Edward will have something to say when I get on those scales; I hate getting on those scales. There are a lot of 11 year old Working Cocker Spaniels who are 17kg, my coat is tight because Human Mummy washed and shrank it.

I have a Urinary Tract Infection but my Humans thought my asking to wee so often was stress related. People! Eventually I had to wee on the piano to let them know it was serious. And also I was a little cross by then ...

I have been to see Vet Edward. He came outside to see me and Human Daddy put a mask on. I have 'cheese bombs' twice a day now ... I'm sure they have something inside. I don't need to wee as much now.

Every time Human Daddy comes home he has to have a shower and change his clothes. I'm a smart dog not some hippy Afghan hound. Where is my bath and my hairdresser? Even my tiny tail has a plume of hair growing from the end. Minti Cat tried to groom me but apparently the fur balls were too much and she's stopped.

I am a Gun Dog. I don't mind guns but I hate fireworks. I'm allowed on the bed for fireworks and thunder so I figured I should be allowed that privilege even for a small number of bangs. This year I played 'dead weight' after only 2 rockets and I knew I was safe, because Human Mummy isn't allowed to lift heavy things, gives up and goes to sleep pretty quickly. I can see when Human Daddy arrives home and scoot off the bed. I always manage to look as if I've been on the sofa for hours. That worked quite well until I stopped getting a bath and my hair cut and so started leaving dirty imprints on the bed.

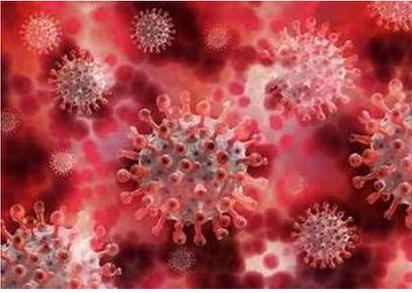


I can't understand what my Humans are saying, they keep covering their faces. I depend on facial expressions to help me understand what I'm supposed to do, especially now I'm a bit older. Sometimes they have to speak twice which they get annoyed about. People! I have cataracts, communication is tricky when you are older.

I am lonely. Of course my Human Family cuddle me, but I miss walking with friends.

Human Mummy usually waits until Human Daddy is out before she cries. It's OK if I shake, it distracts her; she thinks I am unhappy so she focuses on me and the tears soon pass. I'm very tired now, every day feels exhausting. The Human Family are tired, too, else they would protest at my nightly move to the bed - even without the fireworks.

I don't understand what's happening but my Human Family need me; that I do understand.



COMING HOME

by Mavis Springford (Watermen and Lightermen)

We have a Special Needs Son, aged 42 years, who lives in a residential care home with five other residents. Nicholas lived at home with us until he was 30 years old, then moved into his present care home, coming home to us every other week-end for family visits. Then Covid appeared and lockdown entered our lives.

At the end of September 2020 we had a lovely 16 days with Nicholas on a home visit. We could not do a lot, just rides in the car and walks by the river and train lines, as we agreed to self-isolate with Nicholas, so he stayed safe and also the other residents in his Home when he returned.

You may be interested in the process which enabled us to have him on a home visit. It was becoming obvious to all that Nicholas was showing signs of stress and wondering why he had not seen Mum & Dad for 7 months. Phone calls and WhatsApp only kept his interest for about 2 seconds!! Therefore it was agreed with the Manager and key staff at his residential home that we should try to arrange a home visit.

The Deputy Manager and I started to build a case:

Assessment of Specific Medium or High Risk - 4 Pages
Mental Capacity Assessment - 2 Pages
My Visiting Plan - Covid 19 - 4 Pages
Best Interests Decision - 3 Pages

This then went before The Care Manager (Social Services - Special Needs), Safe Guarding Teams at Nicholas` Home and Kent County Council. Thankfully it was agreed.

When we collected Nicholas from his residential home, we waited in the front garden. The Staff were ready to video, Nicholas came to the door, saw us, a big, beaming smile, he stormed down the front path, gave me a big cuddle, grabbed Richard`s hand and dragged him to the car, sat himself in the front passenger seat, seat belt on, and "Let`s go!". The video has been played many times by the staff since.

We had to have a Covid Test just before Nicholas was due to return to his residential home. Both were negative. It was agreed by all that Nicholas would not tolerate a swab being put up his nose and down the back of his throat, so he was exempt.

You may be wondering why we did not do half hour garden visits with Nicholas. This was because I knew and the Staff knew that Nicholas would not keep his distance, his natural instinct is to give you a cuddle and hold your hand, and he certainly would be most upset if Mum and Dad just walked off after a brief visit and not take him with them. He would have caused chaos in the home after we had disappeared. Also, he will not tolerate wearing a face mask, One of the residents in the home is deaf and lip reads, not very helpful if everyone is wearing a face mask!!

There have been many letters from parents to Mencap and other disability organisations about the trauma this is causing to people in care - serious self-harming, temper tantrums, refusing to eat. One letter was from a mother who tried a half hour visit to her daughter in the garden. Her daughter tried to cuddle mum, two staff restrained her, the situation became so traumatic that the Mother left in tears. Her daughter has Angelman Syndrome, the same syndrome as Nicholas, which just confirmed my view about a half hour visit with Nicholas.

Pleased to say, Nicholas was happy to return to his residential home and meet up with his friends. We are very lucky in that the manager and staff at Nicholas` home are of the highest calibre and put the residents` needs above everything.

We look forward to the time when Nicholas can resume his home visits to us, and he can return to going to the theatre, cinema, swimming, train rides (he is mad about trains - steam and normal trains) and all the other activities that he and all other special needs young people are being denied.

Hopefully this will give you another perspective of how this is affecting people who cannot speak up for themselves.



EGYPT

Part One by El Moss (Horners)

Thursday 17th October – Sunday 3rd November 2019 – El Moss

We were booked to go on a 2-week cruise on the Nile from Cairo to Aswan but decided that we couldn't go all the way to Egypt without visiting Alexandria. This is a place that, before the war, was equivalent to the La Belle Époque Era. The most famous hotel in Alexandria is the Cecil Hotel and in its heyday the guests included Somerset Maugham, Noel Coward and Winston Churchill. The hotel was immortalised by Lawrence Durrell in 'The Alexandria Quartet' - not to mention films like 'Ice Cold in Alex'.

We flew to Cairo on 17th October. We had booked ourselves into the Golden Hotel which had come recommended by 'The Lonely Planet' guide. The hotel kindly sent us a taxi to pick us up and off we went to downtown Cairo. Imagine our surprise when we stopped at a 'hole in the wall'! There were shops either side but just a hole between them! Our driver then 'phoned someone while we sat open mouthed. 3 minutes later, a young man came flying out of the hole, greeted us warmly, took hold of our suitcases and off we went into the hole. Inside there were three stone steps that led into a pre-war lift with metal railings and French swing doors. We got in and rattled our way up to the third floor and there we were at the entrance to the hotel, which had a small reception area. The owner came out of the kitchen and welcomed us. He introduced himself as 'Nabil' and asked us our plans. Nabil was about 5ft 6in tall with a head of luxuriant white hair and a handlebar moustache. He said his English was quite good because his wife was Swiss!! Impossible to guess his age but could have been anywhere between mid 60s – mid 70s. He could not have been more hospitable. We explained that the next day, we were going to Ramses Station to catch the train to Alexandria. 'Don't worry' he said, 'I will get the tickets for you tomorrow morning and then we will take you to the station'. We were finally shown our room, which was small but comfortable with a small fridge in the corner. The en-suite was tiny but everything worked. Next morning, we had breakfast in the small kitchen.

About 10.30 am, Nabil returned with the tickets. He agreed to look after our suitcases for two nights and said that he would pick us up at the station when we returned, and take us to our boat, the SS Misr. Before we left for the train, he insisted that we take something to eat and took us next door to a small café, where a man was stir-frying pieces of chicken with tomatoes and spices which he then put into rolls for us - delicious. Then we were off to the station, the taxi driver, Husan, driving with Nabil in the front whilst we sat at the back. We negotiated the hurly-burly of Cairo traffic until we had almost reached Ramses Station, where we were left on one side of a roundabout. We gingerly stood on the edge of the road and were told that we would be picked up at the same place on our return. Hugh and I clambered through the safety bars and headed for the station. There was organised chaos, all the way there. Stalls, taxis, hawkers selling everything of dubious quality you could ever want. We were the only Europeans as we stumbled into the station, which turned out to be extremely quiet after the hustle and bustle outside. Our overnight bags were put through a scanner and off we went to find our platform. Once on the train, we found ourselves in very comfortable first class seats and settled down for the 2½ hour journey to Alexandria.

At Alexandria, an old taxi driver with a limp and missing teeth took us in his very ancient car to the Windsor Palace Hotel on the Corniche. The Lonely Planet Guide describes the hotel as a bejewelled Edwardian Gem, built in 1907. Although it has been refurbished over the years, the wonderful old elevators and the ground floor lobby were retained. We felt that we were stepping back in time to a place that attracted people from all over the world. To our added delight, there was an open air restaurant, facing the sea, on the top floor. It was still warm enough to sit outside and as dusk fell, the shimmering lights lit up all along the coast. Magical.



BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRIA

Apart from the romanticism of Alexandria, it also has one of the seven wonders of the Modern World - The Bibliotheca Alexandria. The building takes the form of a gigantic discus, embedded in the ground. The sloping roof has windows designed to let the sunlight flood in but keep out the rays that might otherwise harm the collection. Inside the jaw-dropping main reading room, the library can accommodate eight million books and 2,500 readers.

We thought it opened at 9.30 but when we arrived, discovered that it wasn't until mid-day. The Library is directly opposite the University where many students were milling around.

Some of the students thought that, as Westerners, we were a rare sight and insisted on 'Selfies' with us. The female students were delightful and beautifully dressed in their coloured headscarves and denim jackets! We noticed that there was a café nearby, so we joined the students and had the most delicious fresh mango juice. We then queued to get into the Library. Women in one queue and men in another. Luckily, someone in a suit saw Hugh and me in the female queue and beckoned us forward, and let us in. We spent about two hours inside and could only marvel at the design and the way the library was laid out.

We didn't see as much of Alexandria as we would have liked but will definitely return. After another wonderful meal on the roof top restaurant, we retired to bed.

The next day, we caught the 11.15 am train back to Cairo. This train stopped everywhere on the way back so we did not arrive until 3.10 pm. We made our way outside Ramses Station, through the stalls and people and finally through the bars and on to the edge of the roundabout, where cars raced by us. We stood there for 10 minutes, holding on to the bars for dear life, when suddenly a car came to a grinding halt and Nabil and Husan were there. Our suitcases were in the boot and as a surprise, Nabil had bought us sandwiches. He had given us strict orders not to eat any food that was provided on the train. Then we were off to the SS Misr for our cruise up the Nile. The

Nile flows down to the Mediterranean, so the cruise takes two days longer to Aswan than on the return to Cairo, where the boat is going with the river.



SPHINX

We had a lovely cabin with en-suite bathroom and French windows onto a deck, which ran past all the rooms. The next day, the tour started in earnest. Off at 7.00 am to see the Pyramids and the Sphinx. The Pyramids are the last of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The Egyptians had discovered how to stabilise such large and heavy structures without using mortar. The elite were buried in pyramids and everyone else in the desert sand. The Sphinx has a broken nose thought to have been done by marauding invaders. Back for lunch on the boat then off to the Egyptian Museum where we saw a special exhibition 'Treasures of Tutankhamun'. The most spectacular piece was a magnificent solid gold sedan chair. Finally, back to the

Boat, a brief lie down and then dinner. There were 40 passengers and tables laid for 6 people, so we moved around each evening. It is worth describing what the waiters wore: they were in long black skirts with long black jackets on top with embroidered white thread round the edges and a black fez on their heads. Egyptian haute-couture!

Tuesday was a welcome day off as we set off up the Nile to Beni-Suif, where there was a medium-sized pyramid. We climbed up to the entrance and then went into a narrow corridor, descending 122 steps into the tomb. Half way down, I did wonder how on earth I was going to climb back up. But with people behind me and the small passage way, I had to carry on. Definitely not suitable if you are claustrophobic. Having descended into the tomb, there was nothing much there. How I managed to climb back to the top, I will never know. It was all down to Hugh pushing me on my backside. Thank goodness the rest of the day was off. Thursday, we were off at 6.00 am to Tuna El Gebel where there is the important tomb of Petrosiris which is in the form of a temple. Here we saw hieroglyphics carved on the wall and carvings showing ancient Egypt. If I had thought yesterday was a bad day, for steps, today was even worse. In the afternoon, we climbed 245 steps up to more tombs without a handrail! Most of the tombs on this site dated from 2125 – 1795 BC. This era is called the Middle Kingdom. Back on board after dinner, we were entertained by a whirling Dervish. He was wearing wonderfully coloured clothes. He whirled around faster and faster for 15 minutes and then let his clothes light up with brightly coloured lights. It was amazing. I thought that he was going to pass out but he did manage to bow at the end.

We are now on Saturday 26th October and this evening, we had an Egyptian Buffet Extravaganza with the suggestion that we dress in Egyptian style. The shop on board is next to our bedroom and I had got to know the owner quite well. He managed to produce a white kaftan for Hugh and a long white cotton scarf which he wrapped around his head. I already had a kaftan with me but bought a wonderful belly dancer's head covering hung with shiny green beads. I have to say we were a sight for sore eyes, but it was good fun.



DEPICTION OF FALCON GOD HORUS

Sunday, was a free day as we set sail for Sohag. Monday, we visited the incredible Temple of Abydos, dedicated to the god Osiris. There are several temples here but the main one is the Grand Temple of Seti I (1294 – 1279 BC). It has been beautifully restored with exquisite decoration. There are two open courtyards built by Seti I's son Ramses II who also finished the hypostyle Hall. The carvings on the pillars and the walls are incredibly impressive. Some depict Pharaohs and Gods as well as everyday life. The Gods they worshiped were either animal or bird gods, e.g. Horus, the falcon god because he flew over the agricultural land, keeping it free from insects, mice, etc. The colours are remarkable after thousands of years. The Italians

invented a cleaner in the 20th Century that could remove dirt but not damage the colour. The colour of the ceiling is the most beautiful sky blue and the carvings are in brown or green.

Hugh had a birthday, while we were on the boat, which turned out to be huge fun. He was presented with a big birthday cake after which the waiters appeared with drums and tambourines which made a cacophony of sound, while Hugh had to lead us in a conga round the dining room!

I will leave you at Abydos and let Erika take over; she will write PART TWO (in the Spring Flame), flying from Cairo to Luxor and from there cruising to Aswan.

Egypt Part Two will appear in the next Flame.

JOURNEY THROUGH CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM

by Rue Hoddinott (Fanmakers)

This year my husband, Paul, and I broke our journey on the way back from Christmas in Australia. We flew into Siem Reap in the North of Cambodia, tourist city for Ankor Wat, the world's largest religious monument; fabulous in scale with finely carved stonework, it fully lives up to its reputation.



For me, though, the ruined temple at Ta Prohm is the more atmospheric, swallowed by the jungle with Strangler Figs and Kapok trees having entwined themselves around and over the ruins; think Indiana Jones. Originally Hindu but now Buddhist, the many temples at Ankor Wat were built between the 9th and 15th centuries, when the Khmer Kingdom was at the height of its power.



A contrasting visit was to Kampong Khleang, a large village on very tall stilts built beside a river; we were there in the dry season, when there was scarcely enough water in the river for our boat to pass down but in the rainy season the whole area floods to a great depth.



One evening we were entertained by a show of traditional dances, performed with grace and humour by girls and young men.



Our next stop was Phnom Penh, capital of Cambodia, a bustling modern city. Parts of the Royal Palace are open to the public, revealing buildings in traditional Cambodian style and immaculately tended gardens.



On a more sombre note, we visited the Tuol Sleng Museum that reveals the full horror of Pol Pot's genocide between 1976 and 1979 when a quarter of Cambodia's population was put to death, often after brutal torture.

Moving on to Saigon in Vietnam, also known as Ho Chi Minh City, we found ourselves in the exuberant economic powerhouse of the country; with free enterprise evidently rampant, it was difficult to reconcile this with the knowledge that Vietnam is a Communist country. The

Vietnamese are understandably proud of having won the American War, as they call it; we visited the Cu Chi tunnels, a vast underground labyrinth that was at the Southern end of the Ho Chi Minh trail.



A further reminder of those war years came at the Reunification Palace, the luxurious palace of South Vietnamese Presidents before the fall of Saigon.



A gentler day was spent in the Mekong Delta, where we took a sampan down one of the many channels and saw rich and hugely productive farm lands.

Hoi An was our next stop, about 530 miles to the North of Saigon. Hoi An is a charming old town, formerly a port on the Silk Road, reflecting the influence of Chinese, Japanese, French and Portuguese merchants who have settled here over the years. Today its tailors have a fine reputation and will produce a bespoke dress, trousers or suit in any style you please. I had an evening dress made with two fittings, all in 24 hours. Near Hoi An is Tra Que village, a show community that runs an organic market garden; a spritely and humorous farmer demonstrated their methods; there is, he said, a big demand for organic vegetables in Vietnam.



Hue is the former imperial capital of Vietnam. The Imperial Citadel, Vietnam's own Forbidden City, was heavily damaged in the war for independence from the French and again in the Tet Offensive, when US Marines fought a bitter close quarters battle with the Viet Cong. Now some of the buildings have been restored and it is possible to glimpse its former glory. Mausoleums of the Emperors are very grand; one built for the puppet Emperor Khai Dinh in the 1930s was so expensive that he had to persuade his French colonial masters to raise taxes by 30% to pay for it. Our final stop was Hanoi, Vietnam's capital. The French influence is obvious from the public buildings, while Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum looks borrowed from Soviet Russia;



but his nearby house is modest and a marked contrast to the Palace of the Presidents of South Vietnam. A cultural speciality from Hanoi are water puppets; we were fortunate to visit the humble home of the foremost water puppeteer, approached through narrow alleyways which gave some insight into the standard of living away from the main boulevards. The puppeteer's wife gave us a show and afterwards came out to demonstrate how the water puppets are controlled – with rods which cannot be seen under the somewhat murky water. I had a go, it was hard work!

No visit to Vietnam would be complete without a cruise on Halong Bay. We took an overnight cruise in mist and drizzle, giving an air of mystery as the small, steep-sided islands loomed out of the murk. I opted out of the visit to Sung Sit caves and was glad I did when Paul returned to say he had counted 719 steps. A pair of Sea Eagles gave us a display as we sipped sundowners under the upper deck awning at the end of a memorable visit.

WHERE DO BEADLES COME FROM?

*Many of us will have come across the ubiquitous **Peter Thompson**, Beadle and Toastmaster, as he shepherds us around at various Livery functions. Here he tells us a bit about the role, and about his interesting story.*

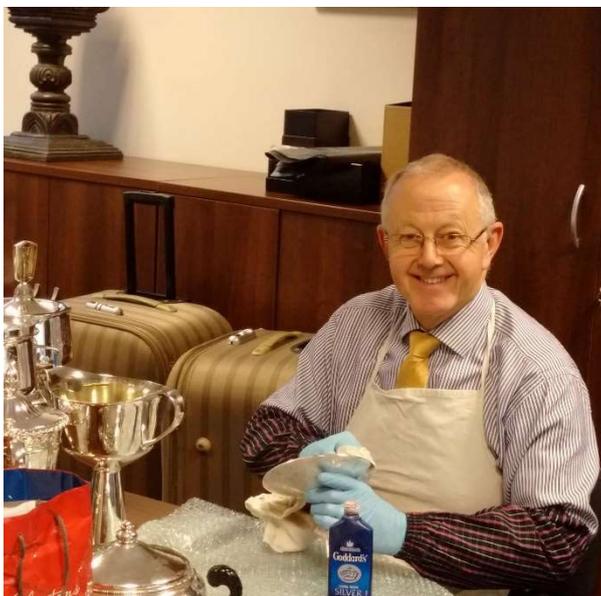
Beadle, sometimes spelled "bedel" is derived from the Latin "bidellus" or "bedellus", rooted in words for "herald." He was originally an official of the Roman Temple. The word Beadle has also been used to describe early policemen and church or parish wardens.

The Livery Companies, as they evolved, needed a point of contact between the Master, Wardens, and Court and the Livery in general. They therefore appointed (and paid for) a Beadle, who took care of the Company's meeting place (Hall), called the Court members and/or Livery together on behalf of the Master and enforced any disciplinary measures decided by the Court.

The Beadle would also find suitable apprentices, and would organise the social and ceremonial functions. He was, in summary, a policeman, an almoner, a friend, social worker and communicator.

He would be issued with a Staff of Office, often wrongly called a mace, with which to protect the Master and enforce discipline. The Staff is usually a tall one so that it could be used as a rallying point at Common Hall etc. when the Livery was summoned to "attend upon the Master".

Whilst the Livery all lived and worked within the Square Mile, the Beadle was able to summon them personally, but, as people became dispersed, there grew a need for someone who could write and so use the new postal services to summon the Court. The humble Clerk then began his rise in importance to his position today as the chief executive of the Company. The office of Beadle, meanwhile, has become a ceremonial function.



NOT JUST MAKING SURE THAT THE TREASURES ARE PRODUCED FOR FUNCTIONS, PETER OBVIOUSLY ALSO CLEANS THEM

The Beadle, in many Companies, retains his stewardship of the Company's property, including in many cases, the fabric of buildings owned by a Company. The Beadle advises on matters of protocol, and acts, in collaboration with the Clerk, to ensure all Livery functions take place smoothly and with due decorum; that the required regalia and treasure is produced, in place, and returned to the vaults after a function. He will attend the Master and Wardens on all proper occasions, to ensure that they are properly gowned and badged, and to assist the company by acting as Toastmaster at all its functions.

Like so many Beadles I came to the City late in life.

Having left school at sixteen, I started training as an accountant. Knowing that some of my friends were having a great time as police cadets with no real responsibilities, I left after a year of office work to join them, aged seventeen. Before becoming a proper policeman, when I was nineteen, I broke my back in a

gymnastics accident and still have a crushed vertebra. My long time in hospital was an amazing experience. For example, the staff pushed our beds out onto the terrace to sunbathe and brought us cold beer from the fridge. Well done the NHS - and their excellent work continues, although I don't think that they would nurse their patients with beer these days!

That injury has, thankfully, not prevented me from doing things in my life. My hobbies have included rugby and a variety of martial arts but my real love has been scuba diving. I have been privileged to visit many amazing dive sites and also to teach and examine diving instructors around the world.

By 1978 I was newly married to my wife Gillian and was by then a member of a police team, some of whom formed the SWAT team, which also worked on large murder and serious crime enquiries, drugs and building raids, public disorder management, specialist (including bomb) searches etc. This was a 'great fun' job for a young police officer, but more difficult for Gillian.

Having been promoted and after spending some time at our local police station, I became a firearms training officer and then went back to supervise the headquarters team I had been attached to previously.

By that time our family was growing and our two small children often saw Dad disappearing at very short notice to deal with one incident or another. One such call-out of the diving unit was on a Sunday when my wife was ill. Being short of sufficient available team members to allow me to stay at home, there was only one answer - they had to come, too. While I recovered the bodies of two brothers who had died in a local fishing lake, they were completely oblivious to what was going on around them, they considered it an adventure to spend the afternoon sitting in the diving van with one of my team, armed with colouring book and crayons.

After about 20 years of having fun, and thinking that I might be too old for crashing cars and arresting armed robbers at gunpoint, I did some 'proper' police work. I became a detective



sergeant and, as well as investigating murders, armed robberies and serious crimes, I supervised a 'Special Investigation Unit' of about 15 officers. Our remit was the investigation of child abuse and child protection matters, serious sexual crimes, adult protection, domestic violence, racial and homophobic crime and anything with a vulnerable victim.

At around that time I decided that I was rather 'artless' and therefore started courses which culminated in my Open University Degree. This gave me an excuse, among other things, to take Gillian to Rome as one course module involved studying the Colosseum.

On retiring from the police, and clearly not depressed enough, I became the Coroner's Officer for the Tunbridge Wells area for the next three years, investigating all manner of deaths.

It was then that a breakthrough occurred. Whilst speaking to a friend he mentioned that he was having great fun as a toastmaster and I subsequently enrolled on a residential training course. On the completion of that I returned to work, had an epic row with my boss, and left. I was then a self-employed toastmaster, or rather largely underemployed toastmaster, for three or four years before it all started coming together and I became very busy. I have now officiated at many events from castles to village halls.

The same friend then suggested that I should try to become a beadle. 'What is that?' I asked. I ended up becoming the beadle for the Worshipful Company of Plumbers on 15th of February 2010. That really opened my eyes and I fell in love with working in the City. I have worked for many Livery Companies (and a Society!) in many beautiful venues and have met many distinguished, delightful and interesting people.



As everyone will be aware, there are occasional challenges for the Beadle. A notable example being the event at which I was to announce the entertainment by the pianist. On arriving at the Livery Hall on the afternoon of the function I asked the Clerk, 'Where is the piano?' I am sure you will have guessed - there was no piano and a rather worried look on the face of the recently appointed clerk. The day was saved as there was also a masonic meeting in the same hall that evening and the masonic assembly very kindly allowed us the use of their keyboard.

The Beadle however cannot please everyone. This was evident at a dinner at Mercers' Hall for the Mercers' Company on a day where horrendous weather brought very severe disruption to public transport. When it was time to call for dinner, possibly one third of the diners were absent. Half of those already there had said, 'Beadle, please can you wait as long as possible to call for dinner as my guests have not arrived.'

The other half had said, 'Beadle, please can you speed things up as much as possible so that my guests and I can get away to catch trains.' An interesting position to be in but easily fixed.

I have been able to take time to pen this small piece as there is no work on the horizon for toastmasters and little for beadles. I have also had time to read about some of the marvellous initiatives that have been developed to cope with the response to the Coronavirus pandemic. I am humbled by the dedication and commitment of those in the Livery in the front line of the crisis. I am also amazed at the imaginative ways that Liverymen have applied themselves to make the most of the enforced down time. The Flame Summer 2020 was such a good read that all work ceased here until I had finished it.

There will be an end to this crisis and I look forward to the day when we may all meet again as the City gets back to some form of normality but, in the meantime, I hope that everyone keeps safe and keeps smiling.

2021 BECKET PAGEANT FOR LONDON

by James Winterbotham (Skinners)

As well as COVID, this year has been dominated in the Winterbotham household (and that of a few other Phoenix Masters/Firebirds such as the Chambers') by **Becket**, more specifically the pageant taking place on **18th and 19th June 2021** in Guildhall Yard to mark the 900th anniversary of St Thomas Becket's birth on Cheapside. I hope most Firebirds will be well aware of this forthcoming event by now – especially since, as well as the show, there will be a Livery Crafts Fair, organised by Mark Chambers, showcasing the Livery movement. As the whole event is open-air and in the middle of the summer – and with all the good news coming out on the vaccines – everything is looking very promising for a fantastic two days!

A short video has been made to give a taste of what is to come - <https://vimeo.com/458078963> - and I thought Firebirds might be interested to read about the ideas and inspiration behind the event in the attached note.

The Lord Mayor has stepped up as Patron, and the hope is that every Livery Company will be involved in some way – whether showcasing craft skills, performing, working front of house, volunteering or providing that all important sponsorship. It is also perhaps worth re-iterating that this is all not-for-profit and aimed at supporting hard hit artists as well as Youthscape, a charity nominated by the current Archbishop of Canterbury.



PROCESSION ALONG CHEAPSIDE IN TUDOR LONDON

The Becket Pageant for London (subtitled 'London's Turbulent Son') will return former Patron Saint of London, Thomas Becket, and the lost tradition of open-air community theatre, to the City on the nine hundredth anniversary of his birth on Cheapside.

A new work of musical theatre has been conceived and written by playwright, director and Phoenix Master, Emmeline Winterbotham, with music by rising young ex-Guildhall composer Vahan Salorian which will be delivered by a multi-talented professional and community cast and live band.

The show will vividly bring to life the story and legend of Thomas of London in a playful re-imagining seen through the eyes of 16th century guildsmen. While referencing the narrative content, late medieval dramatic conventions, dramatis personae and context of the original 1519 pageant (*see below) – the focus will be primarily on Becket the man, whose identity as the talented son of a medieval merchant and meteoric rise to power, culminated in a deep personal struggle between conflicting loyalties and eventual martyrdom. Subsequent canonisation and pilgrim cult (immortalised by Chaucer in C14th) established him as one of the most influential figures of medieval Europe and London's Patron Saint.

The tone of the 2021 pageant is playful and upbeat, featuring fast moving dialogue, memorable new songs, stunning spectacle, choreography and costumes, culminating in a celebratory parade of giant puppets and participants from City of London communities.

There will be an appearance by the well-loved Gog and Magog giant puppets (created by the Basketmakers' Company) which traditionally lead the Lord Mayor's show, who will be joined by specially commissioned puppets, including 'The Spirit of London' created by London secondary schools and City residents.



Giants were a much-loved mythical element of late medieval pageants – in this case, the inference is that they represent this turbulent son of London's giant personality and legacy and, as such, the spirit of London itself.

True to the concept of the original pageant, performers will be drawn from livery company members appearing alongside professional artists. They will be supported by young singers from local schools (including St Paul's Cathedral School who are believed to have made an appearance in the original pageant). A final climactic parade will include representatives from resident groups, schools, livery and other volunteers who have had a role in the making of the pageant.

TUDOR EXPERIENCE AND LIVERY CRAFTS FAIR

Full advantage will be taken of the pageant's historic setting within Guildhall Yard, which will be styled as an immersive early Tudor environment – with crafts displays, themed food and drink (including a new Becket branded beer) and costumed street artists enhancing the immersive effect.



Between 10 -15 stalls will showcase the skills, traditions and living trades of the guilds, including those active in 1519 as well as more modern crafts which have contributed to London's position as a world leader past and present.

A VISIT TO THE 1500s EXPLAINS SAYINGS AND A WAY OF LIFE

by Von Spofforth (Chartered Accountants)

I absolutely love researching historical, quirky and astonishing facts about the Liveries, ways of life, the square mile and anything relating to the City. This piece is taken from my daily posts on our City Consorts Face Book Page and is in the process of being published on our website. I started on June 1, and am still going – plenty more of useful and useless information to come.

1) Let me transport you back in time; London is old and small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people. They would dig up coffins, take the bones to a bone-house and reuse the grave. When re-opening these coffins, 1 out of 25 were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive ... So, they then would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (**the graveyard shift**) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be **saved by the bell** or was considered a **dead ringer**.

2) Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination could knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. If they were taken for dead, they would be prepared for burial and laid out on the kitchen table for a few days. The family would gather around and eat and drink and wait to see if the drunkard would wake up. Hence the custom of **holding a wake!**

3) This is for the Curriers - back in the 1500s, they used urine to tan animal skins. Families used to all pee in a pot and then, once a day, it was taken and sold to the tannery. If you had to do this to survive, you were **p*** poor**. However, the really poor folk couldn't even afford to buy a pot - they **didn't have a pot to p*** in**.

4) Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and they still smelled pretty good by June. However, if they were starting to smell, brides carried a bouquet of flowers to cover body odor. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

5) Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and other men, followed by the women and, finally, the children, last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty, you could actually lose someone in it ... hence the saying, **don't throw the baby out with the bath water**.

6) Houses had thatched roofs. To keep warm, household pets like cats and dogs lived on the eaves. When it rained heavily, the animals were washed off the eaves, hence **it's raining cats and dogs**.



7) As there were no ceilings, there was nothing to stop things from falling from the thatched roofs into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and droppings could mess up the bed. Therefore, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how **canopy beds** came into existence.

8) The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence the saying **dirt poor**. The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on the floor to help keep their footing. As winter wore on, they added more thresh until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. Therefore a piece of wood was placed in the entrance-way, i.e. **a thresh-hold strip!**

9) In the 1500's they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire (no elf and safety in them days den!), and added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes the food in it had been there for quite a while - sowing the seed for the rhyme **Pease porridge hot, pease porridge cold, pease porridge in the pot nine days old**.

10) It would be a very special occasion if they could procure some pork. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could **bring home the bacon**. They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and **chew the fat**.

11) Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning deaths. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous!

12) Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle and guests got the top, or the **Upper Crust**.

CHRISTMAS TIDE CUSTOMS

by Erika Gloyn (Masons)

In England the 'Lord of Misrule', in Scotland the 'Abbot of Unreason' and in France the 'Prince des Sots', was an officer appointed by lot during Christmastide to preside over the Feast of Fools. The 'Lord of Misrule' was generally a peasant or sub-deacon appointed to be in charge of Christmas revelries, which often included drunkenness and wild partying. In the Tudor period the 'Lord of Misrule' is mentioned a number of times by contemporary documents referring to revels both at court and among the ordinary people.

The Church in England held a similar festival involving a boy bishop. By the 15th century boy bishops had become the principal form of status inversion associated with the rituals of the Church. On mid-winter feast days especially associated with children (St Nicholas on 6th December and Holy Innocents on 28th December), a choirboy was elected by his peers to assume the duties of the bishop or abbot. As documented in cathedrals and numerous abbeys, clad in a miniature episcopal mitre, boy bishops led processions and even preached sermons. This custom was abolished by Henry VIII in 1541, restored by the Catholic Mary I and again abolished by Protestant Elizabeth I.

STAYING CONNECTED

by Peter Green (Framework Knitters)

As we enter our ninth month of restricted access to family and friends, Zoom-fatigue is ever present. But imagine 2020 without our periodic Firebirds' Virtual Tea Parties. Our regular City Trivia section therefore moves beyond the square mile to look at how long-distance communication has evolved over the millennia. And yes, I am old enough to remember 'Press Button B' on public payphones.

Humans have always found ways to communicate through a combination of symbols, gestures, and primitive language. Useful when face to face, but sending messages verbally is unreliable – remember the game of 'Chinese Whispers' (apparently known as 'geese to geese' in China - the first trivia).

The Sumerian **cuneiform** of the 4th millennium BC is the earliest known written language, comprising of a complex system of wedge-shaped marks, usually imprinted on clay slabs, and contained over 1,000 different characters – approaching the typical 25,000 word vocabulary of an 'average person' using a mere 26 characters in written form.

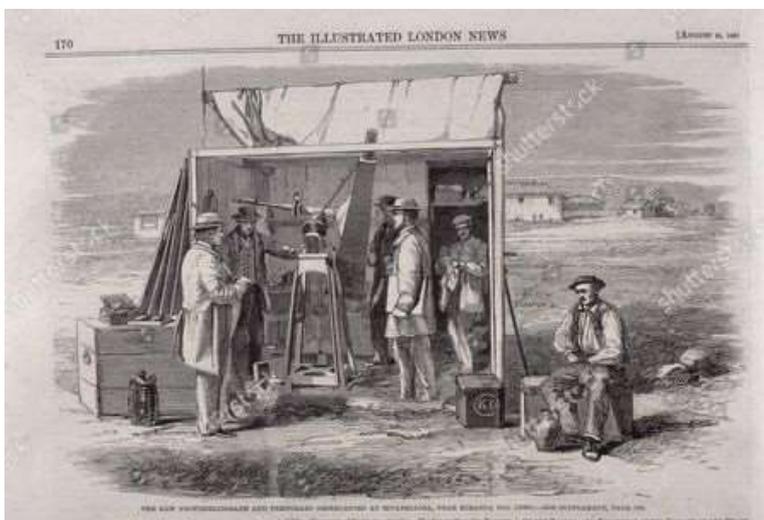
The **hieroglyphs** of ancient Egypt came next around 3100 BC, the basis of which were pictorial symbols or "glyphs". By using papyrus, the Egyptians were able to communicate a specific message on the more transportable medium of papyrus compared with the clay slabs of cuneiform.

Next we move to the inventive Romans, well known for their extensive road building. (My history teacher "Why did the Romans build straight roads?" and his favourite answer "So the robbers couldn't hide round the corner"). The **cursus publicus** was the state mandated courier service. The Emperor Augustus created it to transport messages, officials, and tax revenues between the provinces and Italy. This service functioned until the first half of the sixth century in the Eastern Empire.

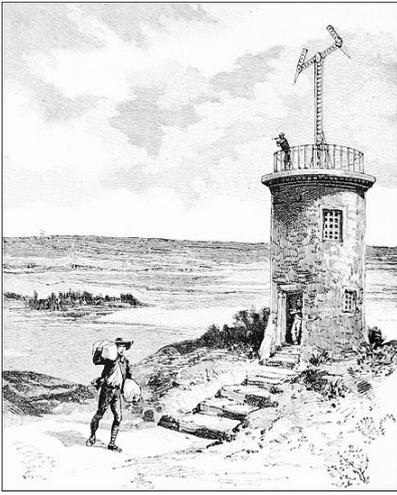


Bad news travels faster than good news, and in the case of the Romans, this was literal. A laurel was attached to the correspondence with news of victory, but a feather, indicating haste, was fixed to the spear of a messenger carrying bad news who typically covered 60 miles a day, double that of regular communications.

In addition to language-based communication, ancient visual cues have been used to communicate over long distances.



The **Heliograph** (from Greek "helios" and "graphein" for sun-write) uses the reflected light of the sun to warn allies of invasion, ask for assistance, or convey a range of other messages. The heliograph covers vast distances at the speed of light. With a code based on alternating flashes created by moving an object through the reflected light's path, the heliograph could deliver a fairly complex message. The instrument was so simple and effective that it was used regularly by the British army until the 1960s.



The first **Semaphore** message (from the French *semaphore* - "a bearer of signals") was sent from Paris to Lille in 1792 along Semaphore lines. These constructions involved mounting a set of movable shutters (resembling old fashioned antennas) on top of an outpost. A codebook was established where each change in the positioning of the shutters would correspond with a different message. The semaphore network was one of the reasons Napoleon could conquer Western Europe. They lasted until telegraph lines replaced them in the 19th century.

Used in mountainous areas of Turkey, **whistle language** is spoken by as many as 10,000 people. When deployed by expert practitioners, it can be understood up to 5 kilometres away and could therefore be used to communicate emergency messages from one village to another.

Smoke signals, well known from the Western films, were used by American Indians to alert others of multiple situations - to warn of danger, to call the people to a common meeting area and to transmit news. These types of non-verbal signals enabled communication among diverse groups.

There were a few commonly understood signals, although each tribe had their own unique language beyond these common signals. One puff meant ATTENTION. Two puffs meant ALL'S WELL. Three puffs of smoke, or three fires in a row, signifies DANGER, TROUBLE OR A CALL FOR HELP.

The significance of the number three goes much beyond that of smoke signals. Amongst outdoors people, three shouts, three whistles, three shots from a gun, three smoke signals, three fires in a row at night in a place where they might be visible, all should be interpreted to convey the message that a person is in danger or requires assistance.

The arrival of electricity heralded a new era of communication, from telegraph, radio, television, the internet, and Zoom. And I, for one, am most grateful that our three-family bubbles can be virtually extended this Christmastime.



ZOOOOOOOOOM!

by Erika Gloyn (Masons)

Since Lockdown One, the Firebirds have had a number of Zoom Tea Parties and the Firebirds Committee held all their committee meetings via Zoom. It really was very strange to start with, i.e. where to click to find out who is attending, when was it alright to talk and when to be quiet, did people hear what you said, did they think you were being rude because it appeared that they were interrupted – 101 things to worry about. Peter Green has enabled these Zoom meetings and he has been our guide and saviour through this quagmire. I, for one, am getting better at it.

Lots of artists, churches, friends and family are using Zoom to remind us that they still exist. We have watched orchestras and magicians, been on virtual tours through art galleries and the City of London and are now being offered Zoom Christmas Carol Services. While it is not the real thing, it is better than nothing.

The next Firebirds Zoom events will be a Christmas Tea Party on 15th December at 3.30 pm, Bohemians in Bloomsbury tour with Sue King on 12th January and the Firebirds AGM on 23rd February 2021 at 3.00 pm. We look forward to seeing many of you on the Zoom screen. It's really easy – no horses, stone tablets or smoke signals!



KNIT FOR COMMUNITY

by Peter Green (Framework Knitters)

The 'Knit for Community' initiated by the Framework Knitters in Lockdown One had, at that time, the ambition to create around thirty blankets to distribute via three charities. How are we doing for the 'end of year report'?

The response and offers of help have been astounding. Over 430 volunteers across the country (and one from the US!) have created squares for 189 blankets and 120 lap blankets.

With such a positive response we added *Small Acts of Kindness* in Watford (lap blankets for their Winter Warmer and Christmas packs) and *Smart Move* in Calderdale to the initial three charities – *Action Homeless* in Leicester, *Meadows Hope Food Bank* in Nottingham and *Glass Door* in London. We have featured on three BBC regional news programs plus local radio, been promoted in *Let's Knit* magazine, and been 'adopted' by various *Knit and Natter* and other groups.

With the colder months approaching, the blankets are being distributed - 15 blankets to *Smart Move*, 20 blankets to *Action Homeless*, 20 blankets to *Meadows Hope Food Bank* and 120 lap blankets to *Small Acts of Kindness*. An online auction of 30 blankets, including special *Leicester City Football Club* and *Leicester Tigers* blankets, raised over £5,000 to be shared between the five charities.

Liz has received many comments about providing a positive focus of knitting during lockdown, self-isolation and the darker evenings. It seems that this initiative really resonated – providing benefits for those creating and those using the blankets. The middle part of the process has seen the arrival of over 350 parcels to our house. The production line of logging, sorting, tracking, photographing and distributing has kept Liz more than busy, and free floor space at home has been a rarity.

Thanks to all who supported through knitting, assembling, bidding and donating. And a special callout to Chairman Vicky and Jennie Hubbard – enough squares for their own individual blankets!



SEASON OF MISTS AND MELLOW FRUITFULNESS

by Georgina Hall (Water Conservators)

Here in the UK, unlike our Continental friends, we have a deep distrust and fear of foraging for fungi for food. Many toadstools are edible but some are poisonous. Fly agaric, *Amanita Muscaria*, probably the most iconic toadstool of all, is one which should be avoided.



With a very distinctive bright red cap and white spots, the fly agaric can have a cap 20cm across. Found in woodland amongst birch and pine trees, its name is derived from it traditionally being used as an insecticide. The cap is broken up and sprinkled into a saucer of milk. The acid contained in the cap is said to attract and kill flies.

The fly agaric is poisonous and is infamous for its psychoactive and hallucinogenic properties. Deaths of adults from ingestion are rare; it has been calculated that the fatal dose would be 15 caps. Nonetheless, the ingestion of one cap can induce a psychedelic response known as Alice in Wonderland Syndrome. Lewis Carroll's 'magic mushroom' that made Alice change size to enable her to fall down the rabbit hole was said to have been inspired by the

hallucinogenic effect of the fly agaric

There is a long history of the use of fly agaric in religious ceremonies where it was an ingredient in sacred and hallucinogenic rituals. The Sami shamans of Northern Europe were said to use it as a way of inducing a trance-like state. In Siberia shamans would give it as a gift in December.

In Victorian and Edwardian times fly agarics began appearing on Christmas cards as a symbol of good luck and its colours are reputed to have inspired the red and white robes of Father Christmas.

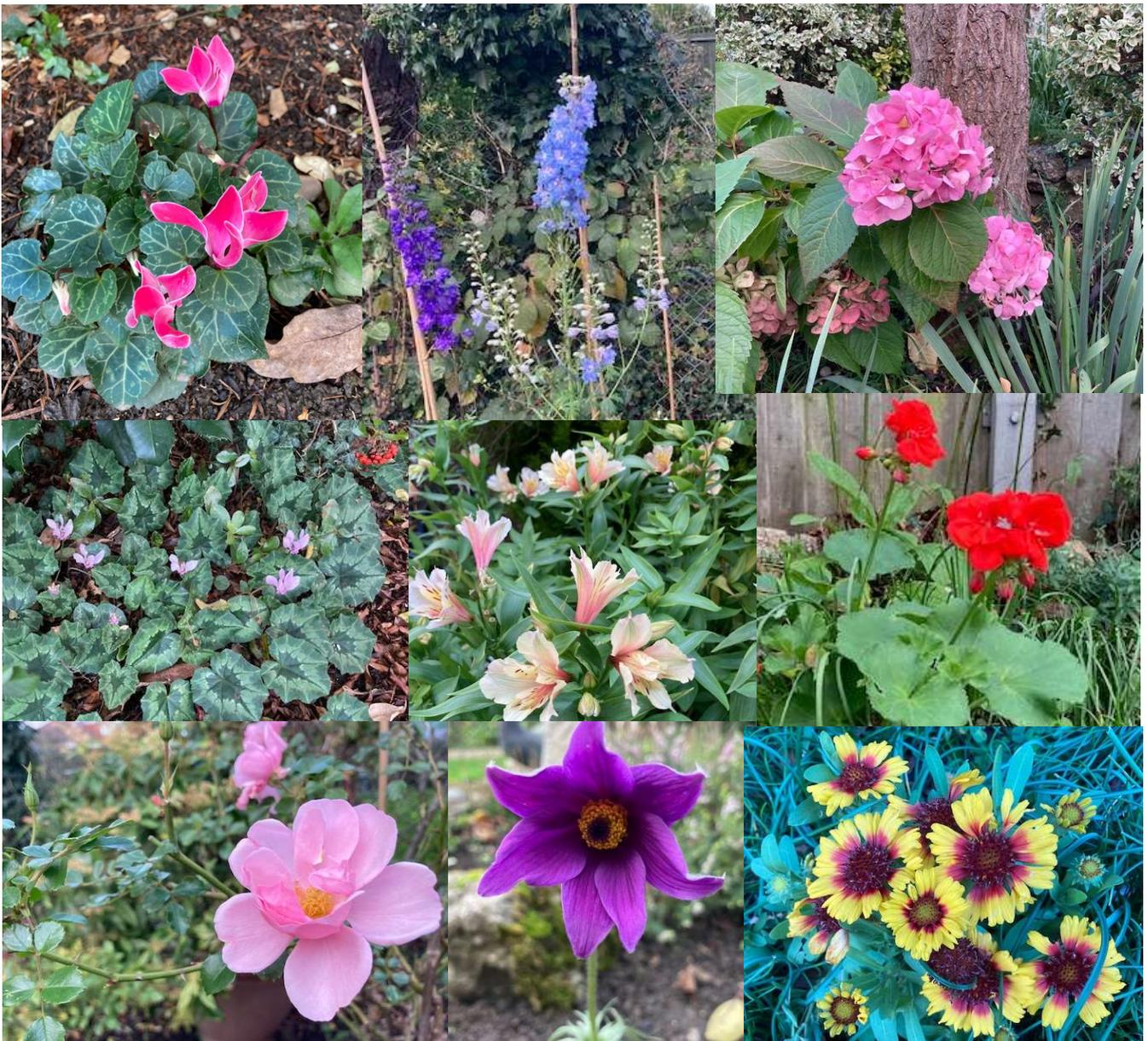
The fly agaric is, as every child knows, the home of fairies and pixies in enchanted forests. It features in childhood woodland illustrations, a reminder of our happy, innocent days and the fairy stories we so loved. As yet I haven't found a fly agaric with a little door and a tiny window to suggest 'little people', but last year we did have a fairy ring of another variety of toadstool so perhaps I should keep looking!



WHAT IS UNSEASONAL? by Erika Gloyn (Masons)

2020 presented us with unusual weather. It confused the birds and the plants and produced a number of surprises in our garden, amongst them a wonderful second bloom of delphiniums, rhododendrons and a pasque flower. I took the photos below on 12th November 2020. Unfortunately my timing wasn't brilliant, the rhododendrons weren't worth photographing and the delphiniums were past their best; it was quite late in the day and I missed the brilliant sunshine that was out intermittently that day. However, I just wanted to show you the striking colours still in our garden this November.

Gardens and gardening have become more important than usual for many of us during this self-isolating time and many of you have posted lovely photos of your gardens on WhatsApp. I know it is a little early to canvass for the next issue, but that doesn't stop me asking you for your garden highlights for the spring issue of the Flame.



Clockwise from top left: Cyclamen, delphinium, hydrangea, wild cyclamen, alstroemeria, geranium, sweet climbing rose, pasque flower and gaillardia aristata (blanket flower)

VICKY'S SAUSAGE ROLLS

by Vicky Nugee (Weavers)

Fresh, home-cooked sausage rolls are vastly superior to the shop-bought variety. I make these (several times) every Christmas season and they're hugely popular. The particularly delightful thing about this recipe is that it's so quick and neat – there's no wastage.

Ingredients:

1 pack Jus-Rol puff pastry at room temperature (if you try to unroll it cold, it cracks)

1 pack 12 chipolata-sized sausages

flour

1 egg, beaten

- Preheat the oven to Gas 6, 200C.
- Unroll the pastry on a floured surface, and with a rolling pin, roll it out so that it's about an inch bigger in all directions, but keeping the shape.
- Use scissors to slice the sausage skins, then peel them off and discard them, again keeping the shape.
- Position the pastry so that the long side faces you. Near the top edge, lay four sausages end to end; they should fill the width of the pastry. (Fig 1)



- Carefully roll the top of the pastry over the sausages, brush the flat part of the pastry with beaten egg so that it sticks together, then roll a bit more so that you have about half an inch pastry overlap. Slice all the way along the pastry, then gently rock the long sausage roll back and forth so that the join underneath is sealed. (Fig 2)



- Repeat twice more, so that you have 3 long sausage rolls. Brush them with beaten egg.

- Gently feel along the rolls for the ends of the sausages inside and cut each long roll into 4. You can leave them this size if you wish, but I prefer smaller sausage rolls and so I halve them again.



- Take a large non-stick baking tray, add a spoonful of flour and shake it so that all the surface is covered. Sausages produce enough fat of their own without adding any to the tin. Lay the rolls in the tin, as far apart as the space allows, (Fig 3) and bake for 25 minutes, until golden and lovely.
- You can freeze the cooked sausage rolls, or uncooked, unglazed.



Thinking about this recipe, Vicky realised that it's one of those that you just do without thinking about it and, in order to write it down, she made a batch of sausage rolls – an excuse to start the Christmas feast early. (Ed.)

