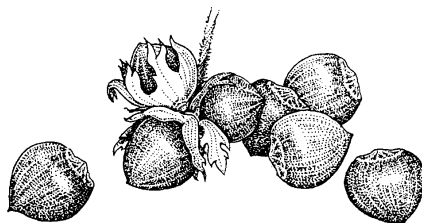


The Lockdown Lighthouse

THE INTERIM NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN
and missing it loads



No 9 - 28th May 2020

In this edition of The Lockdown Lighthouse:

BLUE-TIT BABIES

HUMAN BABIES

A LOCAL ENT MAYBE

CATERPILLARS IDENTIFIED

MORE LOVELY GARDENS

STORY TIME AGAIN

TIME FOR A JOKE

CHURCHILLIANA

AND FINALLY...

More fluffy fledglings

Mike and Jan Chapple have been playing host to a family of blue-tits. By the time this newsletter goes out they will probably have fledged, but until that time Mike has been keeping a weather eye out for them.

A jay has attempted to enter the box for easy pickings! When I see his beak appearing through the hole I rush out and clap my hands, which has the desired effect.



As the photos show, there were nine babies, meaning that the mother, and hopefully the father too, were kept exceedingly busy feeding their family.



Blue-tits eat insects, caterpillars, seeds and nuts. They are about 12 cms long, with a wingspan of 18 cms, and weigh a mere 11 grams. Around 15 million of them

overwinter in Britain.

Keep guessing the baby

Congratulations to Carolyn, Martin and Andy, who all recognised our nascent Head Gardener in last week's photo. I think it was the smile and the bright colours which gave it away. (Clearly choice of primary school was dependant on the colour of the uniform.)



Here are two more pictures for you to guess at. Do email in if you think you recognise them.

Different eras; different genders, but I think there are a few clues here to aid recognition.

Let your imagination go free

No, this is not part of the 'Guess the baby' competition. Ann Tasker took this picture of a tree on the banks of the River Mole. Its various knobbly extrusions and numerous holes invite either a story of how it achieved its appearance or about who or what might live in it, or even whose face it reminds us of. If you have any ideas, please let me know. For me, it personalises Tolkien's Ent.



Introducing the Ermine Spindle Moth

Many thanks to Mike Funnell for solving the identity of the caterpillars spotted by the Mottrams.

The species looks like Spindle Ermine Moth (I had to look up the species) [Yponomeuta cagnagella](#), and the food plant is Spindle and those look like Spindle leaves. If the hedge was at Standen then there is some of that plant in the ones we've laid.



Having followed the link Mike gave, and a few similar ones, I can now tell you that this is a relatively common species in England, especially in chalk areas, and that the larvae feed gregariously in a silken web on Spindle, occasionally completely defoliating the plant. The wingspan of the mature moth ranges from 19-26 mm, and flight time ranges from June to

October, which would explain this sighting in May. Does this count as learning a new skill during lockdown?

A visit to Arundel Castle

We are all relying heavily on James for our weekly fix of garden beauty, but if you want to explore further afield in the virtual world, Carolyn has found a Facebook video at <https://www.facebook.com/ArundelCastle/videos/3887014584702111/> in

which the Head Gardener at Arundel Castle takes a walk around the gardens there, showing off some of the 8,000 Camassias and 80,000 tulips planted there as well as Alliums, Pheasant Eye Narcissus and other gems. Well worth a watch.

Transfiguration

Here's another story for you from the imaginative pen (or keyboard) of Pat Jilks. I hope you enjoy her quirky approach as much as I do.

The car moved slowly along the winding country lane. The lane wound around as it did because the countryside was so hilly. At any time of the year, it was beautiful, but in this season of autumn, the reds, yellows and golds of the hedges and trees shone in the sun as though they had been lit from inside.

Margaret sighed. It was all so very beautiful and peaceful. Or - it could have been peaceful.

'Stop looking around like an idiot and concentrate on the map.'

The voice of Dennis, her husband, cut across the scene like a sharp-toothed saw. Margaret was only too used to that voice. She had heard it sawing away for over 30 years now.

Once, when they had first met and were going out together, it had been different. The voice had been softer, speaking to her as though she was a person with intelligence and feeling. They had even talked together then, about all sorts of things and somehow, Margaret had thought it would always be like that.

She had noticed even then though that Dennis did not speak in such a kind and soft way to his widowed mother, with whom he lived and who waited on him like a servant. When he was speaking about her it was in a very harsh way too. 'She's stupid,' he would say. 'She gets on my nerves, she's so stupid.'

That had worried Margaret at the time and she had not liked it but had not dared to say anything because the relationship was new and she loved him. So she had pushed such disapproval to the back of her mind hoping that it would go away.

'I should have taken more notice of that,' she had often thought since.

'That should have told me something.'

Margaret now thought that Dennis' mother may not have been quite so stupid. She would have liked to have got to know her better but, shortly after Dennis and she had started going out 'seriously' his mother had become ill and died. Long afterwards, Margaret thought that perhaps she might have died with some relief. It was one way of getting rid of that harsh, critical voice that went on and on, nagging all the time.

Somewhere, she had read that a man should look at his girlfriend's mother very carefully, because that was how the girlfriend might become when she got older.

'Well,' she thought, 'A woman should take careful note of how a man treats his mother, because that is how she will be treated in her turn.'

And, so it had been. After the death of his mother, who had tended to all his domestic needs, Dennis soon arranged marriage to Margaret, who took over all those domestic needs and the others besides. Soon, all trace of softness had gone from the voice and, however hard Margaret tried, nothing could be done quite well enough for Dennis.

They had never had children. Dennis didn't want any. Nor was she allowed to go to work herself or have any sort of life outside the house. It wasn't as though Dennis beat her or even forbade her to do such things in words, but the disapproval was so heavy and uncomfortable and the nagging so intense if she did anything that he did not approve of, she soon learned the best behaviour for a peaceful life was to do exactly as he wanted. For Margaret was a gentle soul.

She had managed to make some friends secretly, but would never have dared to invite them home.

Her life had been boring enough, but at least there had been some peace and quiet when Dennis was at work. Now, though, that small amount of peace had come to an end, because he had recently retired.

No longer had he got his department to boss about any more. They had all said farewell to him, with what had seemed to Margaret to be a concerted sigh of relief and large smiles. Now, all his energy was focussed on her.

He followed her around all day, scolding her for things undone or not done properly. Dennis had carefully trained her to have no confidence in her own intelligence and ability. He had also made sure that all money was in his control, indeed, she had always had to account in precise detail for every penny spent. Lately, Margaret had felt that she could not carry on for much longer.

Margaret's present despair was ended by coming round a corner and seeing the Castle ahead of them. Dennis had particularly wanted to see this Castle, having read a book about it. Even though it was a mere shell now, the Castle certainly did look impressive, but Margaret thought it also looked a bit grim.

'Well, there's a surprise,' grunted Dennis. 'We've actually found it, despite your lousy map reading. Still, it's big enough for any idiot to find without trying too hard, I guess,' and he laughed at his little joke.

They parked the car and walked up the hill to the Castle, with Dennis grumbling about the car park, the walk and the cost of entry. Dennis always grumbled about everything. He never seemed to see beauty or good things. Margaret thought that, if he were suddenly transported to Heaven, he would look around and grumble about the state of the pearly gates, the noise the angels' wings made and how silly halos looked. She couldn't really imagine Dennis with a halo. It would be bound to be the wrong size. She imagined him with a halo so small, it perched on top of his head like one of the rings on a hoopla stall, then in one so large, it slipped down over one eye. The thoughts made her smile.

Dennis saw the smile and frowned.

'What's so funny,' he sneered. 'You should see how silly you look with that smirk on your face.'

'Perhaps I just feel happy,' said Margaret mildly.

'Huh!' said Dennis. 'With this country in the state it's in, only stupid people could be happy - ones that don't think a lot,' and he ranted on and on about the evils of government, prices, young people today, the weather. Everything was always wrong for Dennis.

Suddenly, Margaret felt as though she were trapped in a sticky black cloud. It felt as though she had been in it for a long time. Through the cloud, she heard someone saying something about a guided tour and fought her way up and into the sunshine again.

They joined a group of people who were waiting for the guide. When the guide came, Margaret could not at first tell if it was a man or a woman. She came to the conclusion after a while, that he was most probably a man. Anyway, he was unusual enough to cause a snort of derision from Dennis and unsavoury comments about his sexuality, followed by criticism of the sexuality of the nation in general.

Dennis glared at a small child who was smiling up at him. The child's face clouded over and she clung to her mother's skirt in sudden insecurity.

As he talked to them, Margaret looked at the guide's face. It was alight with joy as he told of the building of the Castle and the life that would have been led within its walls. He obviously loved the castle very much indeed and his enthusiasm soon transported her into the feel of how life would have been when the castle was a bustling and busy place. She tried to imagine living there herself, perhaps as the wife of one of the brave knights. Would he have been a happy knight, she wondered, or constantly complaining about the weight of his armour and about her?

'The most famous lady who lived in the Castle, or I should say, the most infamous,' the guide was saying, 'Was the Lady Beatrice.'

This lady, said the guide, was not exactly a nice person. She was devastatingly beautiful, but evil - truly evil. Everybody was afraid of her. It was because she seemed to have some sort of energy and power which did not quite belong to this world. It was lucky for her that she had not been condemned as a witch, but it seemed, from what he could gather, that nobody would have dared to accuse her, because everybody who crossed her in any way had soon come to a very unpleasant end. Nothing could be proved in these cases. The lady was never anywhere near the people when they met their horrid and sometimes bizarre fates, but it always happened.

Lady Beatrice herself died an old lady, having lived a long and satisfying life. The people of the Castle had breathed a sigh of relief but their relief was premature. Only too soon, they realised that some part of her was still there.

'In those simpler times,' said the young man, 'When people were more sensitive to atmospheres, they could feel her still around. Sometimes someone would actually see her, laughing, with energy pulsing all around her and then - they would run for their lives.'

'And,' finished the young man, 'She is still here. So watch out!'

The audience laughed and some small children squealed, but Dennis snorted.

'Lot of stupid claptrap,' he said crossly.

They all moved off, walking alongside a part of the walls that were not so badly ruined.

Out of the corner of her eye, Margaret saw an arch leading into the walls. For some reason, it attracted her and she stepped aside, into what was the start of a tunnel.

The group moved on and Dennis with them.

Margaret looked into the tunnel. It went straight for a few yards, then turned round a corner. She had always been attracted by tunnels and caves as a young girl and she felt like a girl again now, wanting to explore. It was a long, long time since Margaret had felt like that, with a sort of excitement in her and she was surprised and pleased.

She walked on, round the corner. It was dark ahead, very dark, the sort of darkness that modern life seldom offers - a darkness thick and black, that you could feel around you like velvet. Not a depressing black though, nothing like the black cloud she was used to inhabiting in her life with Dennis. No, this blackness was more like being within a potential in which anything could happen and it seemed to Margaret that everything was possible.

Her body felt as though it were full of a throbbing energy and it was fun.

'What on earth is happening to me,' she thought.

Suddenly, ahead of her, she saw what seemed to be a point of light. It was an intense blue sort of light and grew rapidly from a point into a disc. Then, in the disc, features started to appear.

Strangely, Margaret was not frightened. It was as if she were looking at something very familiar and known to her. Something she was pleased to meet again.

'Margaret,' breathed a voice that was not in front of her but inside her head. 'So nice to see you,' and the face formed. It was the face of a very beautiful woman, with eyes that held deep laughter but also, something else. Something that others, who were afraid, might have called evil, but which, to Margaret was neither evil, nor good, but just part of the whole. It was like looking into the whole Universe and how it was.

The apparition glowed brightly and moved to hover above Margaret. There was a deep humming sound that filled her whole body and the light descended, with a whoosh, through the top of her head. She felt amazing, like she had never felt before, not even as a girl. There were memories she had not had before too and

she laughed at them. Now, she was what she should have been, not the wimpy, humble woman, who had been crushed year by year by a parasite. Huh! That parasite could soon be dealt with. Now, she could live again.

*Margaret laughed out loud and the laughter echoed around the tunnel, vibrant and triumphant. **Life!** What fun!*

She turned and walked back, around the corner and into the light. How beautiful the scene before her looked. White clouds scudded across a blue, blue sky, the sun shining down on the brilliant autumn hues. The whole total of potentiality was there before her.

Dennis came round the corner, looking angry.

'Where have you been?' he shouted at her. 'I've been searching for you everywhere!'

Margaret looked at Dennis, at the miserable scowling face. Many possibilities came into her mind.

She smiled.

If you like Pat's style, I can recommend *Before I Grow too Old* which is available as a Kindle book. It recounts her walk from John o' Groats to Lands End, and is full of funny and heart-warming incidents.

Something to smile at

Anne sent in my favourite Trump joke of the week, although the president now has competition, so I make no apology for adding a couple of Cummings jokes, one sent by Martin and one very rude tweet forwarded to my son, and then on to me.

*If you need to drive 260 miles to find the nearest person willing to help keep you alive you should start considering the possibility you might be a bit of a ****.*

Lol 😂

There is a plane carrying 5 passengers:

Nicola Sturgeon, Boris Johnson, Donald Trump, The Pope and a 10 year old school boy.

The plane begins to go down and is about to crash. There is only 4 parachutes on board.

Nicola Sturgeon says "I have to live, I have the Scottish independence to sort out." and takes a parachute and jumps.

The Pope says "I have to live, I have sort out the Catholic Church." and takes a parachute and jumps.

Donald Trump says "I have to live, I'm the smartest man in America." and takes a parachute and jumps.

Boris Johnson looks at the 10 year old school boy and says "You can have the last parachute. I'm alot older than you and I've lived my life, yours has yet to begin."

The 10 year old school boy says "Don't worry Mr Johnson. There's 2 parachutes left. The smartest man in America just took my school bag."

Anyone fined for being out under lock-down can now apply for a refund under the new law of Cummings & Goings

On a less political level, Martin also sent this one. I don't know where he finds them!

Having spent many an hour of total boredom invigilating exams during my time as a teacher, I was much amused by a list of exam 'situations' sent in by Anne. I'm glad I never experienced any of them. The worst that happened to me was losing count of where I had got to on the breeze blocks making up the back wall of the hall.

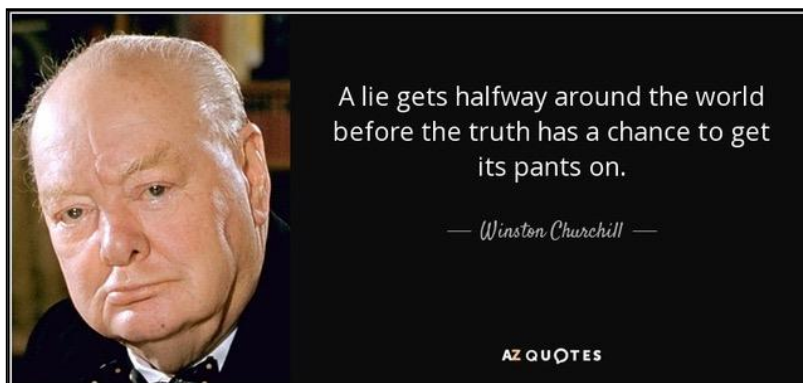
I yelled "COW!" at a woman on a bike and she gave me the finger. Then she plowed her bike straight into the cow.

I tried.

I haven't copied the whole list - maybe more in the next edition.

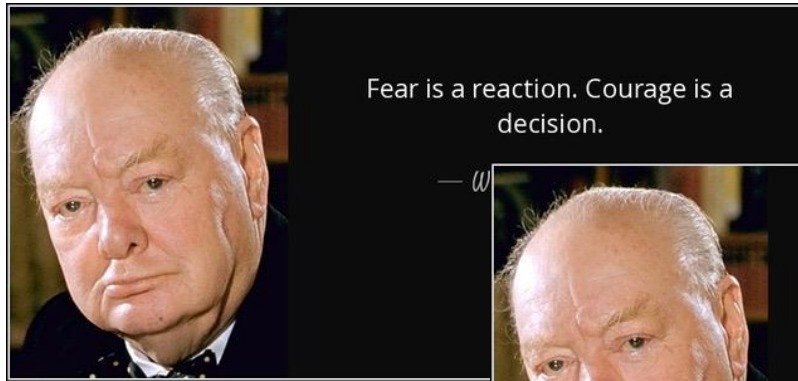
- An Invigilator in Surrey was so bored during an exam that he was fiddling around with the things in his pocket, one of which was a push button cigarette lighter. Pressing the button he managed to set fire to his trousers. As his crotch area burst into flames in the middle of the exam he grabbed a nearby water bottle to extinguish his sensitive parts and ran from the room. The Exams Officer had to arrange a spare pair of shorts from the PE department so that he could get home with his modesty (if not his dignity) intact.
- A sole Invigilator in Bedfordshire was leaning back on just two legs of his chair when he fell backwards, banging his head on a radiator and knocking himself out. The pupils were unsure what to do as they had been told that they could not leave the room without permission, but common sense prevailed and one ran off to get a member of staff.
- In a school in Essex, a fire engine on an emergency call missed a bend, slid across some grass and crashed through the wall of an exam hall whilst a GCSE exam was in progress. With bricks raining down and Firemen climbing from the engine, the exam was cancelled.

Words of wisdom

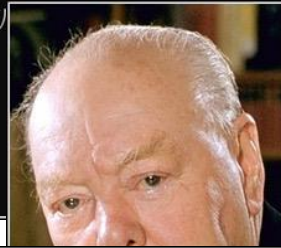


Anne also sent in a long list of sayings by Winston Churchill. They came with the caption: *'Seen anybody today with this kind of wisdom and insight?'*

Here is a selection.



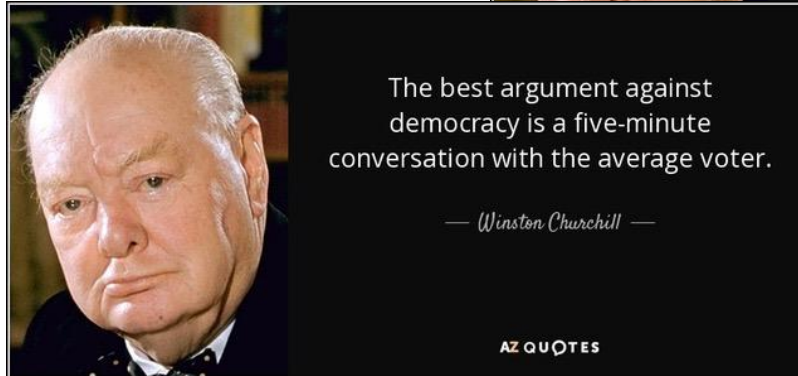
Can't argue with any of these.



Diplomacy is the art of telling people to go to hell in such a way that they ask for directions.

— Winston Churchill —

AZ QUOTES



The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter.

— Winston Churchill —

AZ QUOTES

And finally...

Idly googling, I came across the following statistics for May weather in the East Grinstead area. According to <https://www.myweather2.com/> the average daily temperature should have reached a high of around 16^o and we should have had about 2" of rain, with roughly 16 days being drizzly. I don't know if we've had summer early, but if I have to be locked down, I'd rather it was in sunny weather. However, it would be nice not to have to water the garden every evening.