

The Lockdown Lighthouse

THE INTERIM NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN
and missing it loads



No 11 - 11th June 2020

In this edition of The Lockdown Lighthouse:

BRAIN-TEASER ANSWERS

MEMORIES OF LIFE WITH FoSE

STORY TIME

COMIC CUTS

TALES FROM THE CHALKFACE

MORE GARDEN RAMBLINGS

A USEFUL TIP

IT WAS ME!

THE 12 WEEKS OF LOCKDOWN

AND FINALLY...

Arabian inconsistencies

For those of you, like me, who didn't manage to find all the inconsistencies in last week's story of Mahmoud and the cricket balls, Sally Roberson has kindly submitted the answers:

The brain-teaser components to the Arabian Tale from last time:-

- 1. The Gobi desert is more rock than sand, with marked extremes, & sudden falls of temperature, sometimes as much as 35°C. Much of it is very dry, though there are some largish bodies of water.*
- 2. Its position means that the inhabitants, such as they are, are of Han Chinese or Mongolian origin, so an Arab called Mahmoud wouldn't fit the profile.*

3. The people are nomadic herders so permanent dwellings (like a kasbah, or citadel) are not something one would come across. You're much more likely to end up in a yurt.

4. Food is animal-based, so fruit sherbet would be off the menu & you'd probably be drinking fermented mare's milk.

5. Crickets are fairly scarce & most of them are plant-eaters, so they'd be pretty hungry. A few are burrowing species, but require rocks or leaves, not sand.

Give yourself a good pat on the back if you noticed all of these.

The way we were

I thought as I haven't had many pictures sent in this week, I'd trawl my archives for some pictures of 'FoSE events I have known', which show what we used to get up to in the woods and garden - in the politest possible way. I hope they bring back some good memories.



BBQ and Lebanese Evening



FoSE's 10th birthday



Murder Mystery



Here's to the time when we can all get together for such events again.



If any of you get a ticket to visit Standen, do send in a few photos that can be shared with those who have not been able to get there.

The Piano Tuner

Here's another story from Pat Jilks. She told me that the genesis of the story was a journey to London:

I had got into conversation with a blind gentleman on the train and asked him questions that I had always wondered about being blind from birth and how the world appeared then. Luckily though, the ending in real life was that he got off at Victoria, so did I, and everything was all right!

If you read to the end of the story, you will realise why Pat described the real life ending as 'lucky'.

"Can I help you?" the young man said, taking hold of his arm without waiting for a reply.

"Thank you, that's very kind," the piano tuner replied with a smile, allowing himself to be helped to a seat on the train, accepting the offer, despite the fact that he was quite capable of finding a seat by himself.

Once, he had been proud and had refused such help. He had been blind from birth and had learned to find his way about, asking for help if he did need it. However, with maturity, he had learned to accept such offers with a smile. Kind actions were to be encouraged, not squashed at birth, the giver of kindness felt good if their offer was accepted and were more likely to act with kindness in the future and he felt good that his blindness had encouraged an act of warmth.

The young man, ascertaining that he was all right, left him and the piano tuner continued his journey, mentally counting the stations off as the train stopped. He could usually tell if it was not the station the train had stopped at but somewhere in between by the lack of passengers getting on or off, but if he was not sure, always asked.

He knew it was a very different awareness he inhabited compared to the sighted people. Somebody had asked him once if he dreamed and, if so, what sort of images were in the dream. He had replied that yes, of course he dreamed, but could not easily tell in what form. Just like his sighted friends could not explain colours to him or what a sunset looked like, neither could he explain the feelings or images that were in his own head to them.

Once, on a piano tuning job, he had replied a bit sharply to a lady who was obviously angry about something and who had been rude, talking to him as though he were mentally deficient as well as blind.

"Huh," she had replied, sounding a bit hurt, "I expect you don't like me because I'm black."

"Madam," he had said, "That is one thing of which I am completely unaware!"

Because he was. The lady had no different manner of speech, so how was he to know? He didn't even know why 'black' should be considered different. Colours

were an unknown to him. She could have been red, yellow, blue or green for all he knew or cared.

The piano tuner reached his station and tapped his way to the exit. He was off to a customer whose pianos he had tuned for about 10 years now. It was a good job, because there were always several to do, usually very interesting ones too. This customer was a dealer in pianos and, over the years, he had tuned many different types there. He always thought of the pianos as characters. Sometimes, he had dealt with very superior and grand pianos with good voices and pure tones, at other times, good old workhorses that were reliable and stoic, uncomplaining in their role of being thumped on by unwilling children and always placid. There were also the dependable pianos that had once been part of family sing-songs but were now usually played by elderly people who had rooms with high ceilings and who did not 'do' electronic stuff. His favourites were the down-to-earth cockneys that jingled in a tinny way and who still smelled vaguely of pub smoke from the days when the piano and piano player could hardly be seen for the fug.

Most of these characters were now destined for long sea voyages to join their new owners and he always hoped that they would find a good home and be kept busy and happy.

The shop owner greeted him warmly and sat him down with a cup of tea.

"I've just got in a piano that I'm sure you'll be interested in," he said. "I've never seen one like it before. I'd love to know who the manufacturer was and where it came from because I can't find a maker's name anywhere on it, which is most unusual. I bought it at an auction. They'd collected it from a load of musical instruments that had been lying in a warehouse for years but nobody knew where they had come from or who owned them. Now, as nothing could be found out about the previous owners, they were allowed to dispose of them.

'The other instruments seemed normal enough,' the shop owner told him, 'but there's something very different about this one. I don't really know what. I know it means nothing to you, but it's black, a sort of dense black. And the sound - well, that's very strange. See what you think.'

The piano tuner could hardly wait to try this new addition and finished his tea quickly. He was then led to the piano and sat down to test out the notes. He brushed his fingers over the piano but withdrew them quickly. It had felt, not as though he was touching a hard surface, but more like a living thing. He had almost felt a heartbeat there for an instant, but then laughed at his own over-active imagination. This piano may well be an unusual character but it was, after all, only a piano.

He started at the bass keys, working his way up to check what was in tune. The sound was good but unusual. It rang with a purity that was pleasurable to his ears. Surprisingly, the keys that made sound were still completely in tune which he had certainly not expected considering how long this piano had been sitting in the

store. There were, however, three, near the bass end that made no sound at all and just one, almost at the very top that was also dead.

It was not easy to lift the top of the piano to investigate. It had been fastened down with screws, for all the world, he thought, like a coffin. That thought somehow made him a bit uncomfortable. What was in there that someone had not wanted to be seen, but he shook his head as though to clear it from such stupid over-imagination.

The shop owner had been standing by with interest so, with his help, the lid was raised. Thankfully, there was no gasp of horror from the owner and, feeling inside, the piano tuner felt what seemed to be a normal overstrung frame. He soon found out what it was that had impeded the missing notes from sounding. Somebody had fastened them, to ensure that they did not move when those keys were pressed down. He could not imagine why this had been done.

His fingers were dexterous and he soon managed to release the keys, checking that the movement was now normal. So far, this had been an easy job. The other keys had been surprisingly in tune, but these released ones could not possibly be after such mistreatment and, so it proved.

He dealt with the high one first and tuned it to satisfaction. Then, he played it several times in succession, listening with ears that could hear perfect pitch.

Somewhere in the shop behind him, there was a loud **crack**, followed by the sound of shattering glass. The owner uttered a curse and moved quickly to see what had happened. He returned and angrily announced that the shop window had indeed shattered.

'I'll bet it's those hoodies from the council estate. I'm always having trouble with them, but no sign of them now of course. I'll leave you to it and clear up the glass. Then I'm going to phone the police and put in a complaint.'

The piano tuner frowned. Something was not quite right. That note had been more than pure - it had been knife-like. Again he thought it was his imagination playing tricks on him.

'Getting old and fanciful,' he said to himself and turned to the freshly released bass notes.

Three of them there were and each one resonated with a deep throbbing sound that seemed to make the very air vibrate. He tuned them all and then noticed that these three notes would make a chord.

Without even thinking about it, the piano tuner raised his left hand to bring it down on the chord. At the same time, without knowing why he was doing it, he pushed down on the right 'loud' foot pedal.

There came a reverberation of sound such as he had never before heard. It was deep and booming, the echoes joining together and building up resonances so that the whole world seemed to be vibrating. The ground shook, the noise reached

a crescendo and there was the additional sound of collapsing buildings, cars colliding, terrible screaming.

*Then silence. **Complete** silence.*

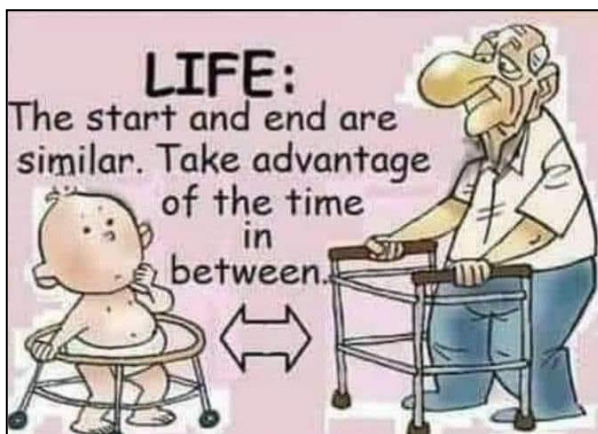
The piano tuner sat stunned with shock. He could not know this, but he sat, with the piano, on an island that was in the middle of the great chasms that surrounded him.

He waited.

Once again, thanks to Pat for allowing me to share items originally intended just for her creative writing class. I think they deserve a wider audience.

Smile!

A few jokes from Martin. What would we do without him?



He didn't know the author if this - but I love it:

Back in the days of tanners and bobs,
When Mothers had patience and Fathers
had jobs. Where football team families
wore hand me down shoes, and T.V. gave
only two channels to choose. Back in the
days of threepenny bits, when schools
employed nurses to search for your nits. When snowballs were harmless; ice slides
were permitted and all of your jumpers were warm and hand knitted. Back in the
days of hot ginger beers, when children remained so for more than six years.
When children respected what older folk said, and pot was a thing you kept under
your bed. Back in the days of Listen with Mother, when neighbours were friendly
and talked to each other. When cars were so rare you could play in the street.
When Doctors made house calls; Police walked the beat. Back in the days of

105 year old woman's remedies to her health



"For better digestion – I drink beer. In the case of appetite loss, I drink white wine. In the case of low blood pressure, I drink red wine. In the case of high blood pressure, I drink scotch. And when I have a cold, I drink Schnapps."
"When do you drink water?"
"I've never been that sick."

Via LoveThisPic.com

Milligan's Goons, when butter was butter and songs all had tunes. It was dumplings for dinner and trifle for tea, and your annual break was a day by the sea. Back in the days of Dixon's Dock Green, Crackerjack pens and Lyons ice cream. When children could freely wear National Health glasses, and teachers all stood at the front of their classes. Back in the days of rocking and reeling, when mobiles were things that you hung from the ceiling. When woodwork and pottery got taught in schools, and everyone dreamed of a win on the pools. Back in the days when I was a lad, I can't help but smile for the fun that I had. Hopscotch and roller skates; snowballs to lob. Back in the days of tanners and bobs.

I don't know if there are any fans of *Fascinating Aida* out there, but I came across the following the other day, sung by Dilly Keane on the occasion of her 68th birthday. Spoiler alert; it's political, and entitled *Song for Dominic Cummings* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ona2Y_74_mk but it also has some interesting truths perhaps about how the older generation is seen. I sent the link to my sister, who is a big fan of *Fascinating Aida*, and who responded in kind with, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnfE0lArq6Y> *The Ofsted Song*. It's a little earthy in places, but will appeal to anyone who has been on the receiving end of an Ofsted inspection, or anything similar.

Finally, with this newsletter comes as an attachment an inspired piece of satire on Trump's trip to St John's church. It seems God was not to be mocked.

Tribulations of an examinations officer

Sally Roberson wrote to comment on Anne's stories about incidents which have taken place during school exams:

Your stories of exam disasters led me to consider the years I spent as an Exams Officer; while nobody ever pulled a gun on me, & nobody had access - at least not at school to the best of my knowledge - to any pornographic videos, there were some interesting interludes, a few of which I send for your consideration. The details about Mr D & his quirks are, as you will see, necessary to the scene-setting ...

Tales from the chalkface

Hearing about other people's exam hiccups brings back memories of some of the close encounters I had in what now seems like life in another age (& quite possibly on a different planet).

I spent the last few years of my teaching career as (among other things) the Exams Officer in a large single-sex school in South London. The girls were very

bright & did not suffer fools, the school was fee-paying, the Head demanding & the parents even more so. Exam time was, as one might expect, a time of intense paranoia on all sides, in which it was my job to orchestrate & calm down the incipient hysterics. For the duration of the summer exams I got up to start the admin preparation at four every morning & was lucky to be home by 6 in the evening.

The Head of History, a Mr Dodsworth, was a wonderfully gifted teacher who brought his subject to vivid life, as my daughter could testify. He was also highly camp & at break would spray himself liberally with Chanel eau-de-cologne before going out to do battle with whichever period of history he had to encounter next. **'That's to make sure that, in any of the class-rooms, at least ONE of us smells nice!'** he declared, before sweeping majestically out of the door. The Sixth-form girls adored him, & were completely unfazed by his sexual orientation, of which they were well aware, although the Head took the stance that she didn't know anything about it.

In the run-up to the exams, in the last-minute revision period the girls, as one might expect, would bombard their teachers with their queries & anxieties. It was like enduring non-stop rounds of Mastermind or University challenge. Before they went off on study leave it was customary for the A Level students to have a whip-round & present their subject teachers with a card & a small gift. One year the girls gave Mr D a thank-you card with a picture of the Andy Warhol version of the Queen's head on the front; inside they had written **'We saw this & thought of you'**. On another occasion, one girl said wistfully on the last afternoon, **'Oh Mr D, I wish I could take you home & hide you in my wardrobe, so I could ask you questions whenever I needed to!'** **'Darling!'** exclaimed her teacher, **'I came out of the closet a long time ago & I'm not going back in it for you!'**

One summer, on the very first day of the main exams (so about ten different papers running at the same time) Mr D was senior invigilator & therefore the person who started & ended the exams. The Hall was at capacity, A Level students on one side, GCSE on the other; the papers had been distributed, all eyes were on the clock, the invigilators had checked everybody in, exam titles & codes were marked up on the boards at the front of the room. The atmosphere was vibrating with nerves & focussed attention.

Looking quickly round the Hall, the second invigilator gave the good-to-go signal to Mr D by declaring, **'OK, Mr Dodikins, take it away!'** The whole room, nearly 150 teenaged girls, erupted into cheers, whoops & shrieks of laughter. The look on the second invigilator's face when he realised he had just used the (very private) staff nickname for the Head of History was memorable.

When the rumpus had abated enough for me to make myself heard, I bellowed, 'OK, SETTLE DOWN!!!' And to my amazement, they did, the tension diffused & the atmosphere much more positive than before.

What a wonderful story. No doubt the students did better on that occasion for having let off steam first.

Nancy's news

Despite looking after an immobilised husband, Nancy Watkins has still found time to update us on what is going on in her neck of the woods.

Hello again,

Not so much gardening this week, the ground is so hard and dry despite some rain. However some Rhododendrons are still lovely and the Peony has flowered, also some Sweet Williams which come up every year, somewhere, this year they have mixed in with Geranium Rosanne.



Some of you have made kind comments about the garden. However, it does flatter to deceive a bit. The problem being that my Husband and I have very different ideas about how a garden should look! He grew up in a flat and his garden was the local park, therefore he likes lots of grass and openness. I like 'rooms' and secret places but there is too much grass and not enough beds and

hard landscaping. Never mind I keep plugging away and recently, when bemoaning a space for my growing supply of roses, It was suggested that I make a new rose bed but the ground is so hard, I can't dig!

I also have a friend who follows me around like a dog. I call him Squeaky. We always have many pheasants in the garden but Squeaky is not quite the same as the usual birds. He is a darker colour and has different feather patterns.



Unusually, he is a loner, no ladies at all. Strangely all the other pheasants have disappeared and only he is left. Squeaky would eat from my hand but I haven't allowed that to happen, as he pecks really hard at his food! I have had to put a gate up at the greenhouse door, as he got in when I wasn't there and upended one of my cucumbers, I was not amused! A few years ago we had a pheasant who we named Freddy, he had broken tail feathers and was easily recognisable and came to the garden three years in a row. Freddy became so tame that he would come into the kitchen and eat the food put out for our cat, Puss, who just ignored him!

I remembered that I said I would show the blanket and matching cushion that I crocheted, when finished. I have started another one but it will take much longer as it is made of 77 different coloured squares. Watch this space!

On a different note, my five year old grandson Oscar went back to school this week. He loves school and was very excited. When I spoke to him and asked the best thing about going back, his reply "I have got my very own desk"! What goes around comes around.....



Happy gardening

A good way to conserve water

Diana Burch was moved by the Mottram's tale of using stream water on their garden last week to write in with a tip of her own:

For those of us that don't have a handy spring at the bottom of the garden. Our hot water in the kitchen takes a little time to come through so I collect the cold in a jug that I keep by the sink and then pour it into a watering can by the back door. It always surprises me how much there is that normally we would just let flow away.

Good advice, Diana. Who would have thought in February that we would be worrying about drought in June?

Put out the flags!

Not only was Andy the first to get the baby picture right this week, he was the only one to get it right, though it seems I may have one or two look-alikes among the Standen volunteers. The picture was of me, aged 2, stylishly dressed in 1950s double-breasted coat and sun bonnet! I clearly don't have the same rosy cheeks and wrinkle-free forehead anymore! Or perhaps it was the lack of mud-stains which confused people.



Time to compose

Bob Fielden has come up with an inspired idea. Next week will see the twelfth edition of *Lockdown Lighthouse* and he has suggested that we might like to come up with a song, based on *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. He has sent in possible themes for two suggested versions, one based on shortages and the other on how we have kept ourselves sane:

*On the First week of lockdown, my true love sent to me one Ocado foodbox
On the second week of lockdown, my true love sent to me 2 toilet rolls
(remember when they were like gold dust?)
On the third week of lockdown, my true love sent to me 3 bags of flour...*

Or:

*One Lockdown Lighthouse
Four facemasks
Five box sets
Six jigsaw puzzles
Twelve garden videos*

Your challenge - should you choose to accept it - is either to come up with a complete version or to send in individual lines, and I will try and put them all together, or if that proves impossible, at least share them with you all. So get

your thinking caps on and your creative juices flowing. I look forward to reading your suggestions.

Ooops

Now I've seen the *Look South-east* bulletin Richard posted on this week's update I realise why I was getting dirty looks from a man with a camera on the House Terrace when I bumped into Anne Scutt (not physically, I hasten to add) on the Lower Terrace last Wednesday. I suspect that our lively conversation after not having seen each other for several weeks may not have helped with the sound quality of his report.